

The Three Chain Bridges

The Chain Bridge crossing the River Dee at Berwyn near Llangollen is today a picturesque local tourist attraction, however in its first form it was built to carry goods over the river from the canal to Thomas Telford's Holyhead Road..

The Chain bridge would not have been possible without the massive engineering project of the Ellesmere Canal. Or originally designed by Thomas Telford and William Jessop on the instruction of a group of local mine owners from Ruabon to transport raw materials that were needed for the building of the newly industrialising cities of the North West. Geographical deposits of limestone, quick lime, iron and slate, clay and copper were now in great demand in the rapidly industrialising areas of Britain. Local Entrepreneurs, industrialist and investors were eager to take full advantage of this by planning a network of canal to process the raw materials and transport them foundries and factories. The plan was to move Copper from mines in Llanymynech, with coal Limestone and iron stone as well as finished products such as quick lime, iron bar, tiles and bricks made in the area around Llangollen on to the port at Netherpool (which became Ellesmere Port) to meet demand for these goods in Liverpool and Manchester

The Llangollen to Berwyn section, finished in 1808 was the last part of the canal to be built it was originally designed just to feed water from the Dee at the Horeshoe Falls at Llantysilio, through Llangollen into the Trevor Basin and on to the rest of the network.



217. Llangollen, View on the Canal, near

The story begins when Exuperious Pickering (1760-1838), who described himself as a "coal master", leased "all mines of coal and ironstone under commons called Cefn Mawr, Cefn Bychan Rhosymedre in Ruabon". He saw the potential of bypassing the tolls at Llangollen Bridge by using the feeder canal and building a bridge across the Dee onto the Holyhead road ready for transport. He spent considerable time petitioning the Llangollen Canal Company to improve the section and allow him access to the wharves and bridges. When they finally agreed they were so impressed by his vision and ingenuity they made a footpath free of charge. By 1817 he had designed and built the Chain Bridge, an Inn and a coal unloading depot.

Pickerings bridge was constructed of two sets of four oak pillars set into the built into the river bed, on top of this were twelve sets of wrought iron chain link running from bank to bank. Over the chains were attached split timbers followed by stones and rubble which were compressed down. This was unusual design was called an 'Underslung Truss', 'Fishbelly' or Inverted Suspension Bridge. The iron chain links made it remarkably strong and resilient able to sustain a constant stream of cart-loads of limestone.



Photographs of the bridge in the later days show a fairly ramshackled appearance but luckily the newly built version was well documented by French engineer and possible industrial spy J. Duten. His admiration for Pickering's work was clear when he wrote:

"One cannot assign a limit to the genius ...There exist in London examples of chain bridges but the conception of the bridge of the Dee is preferable"

By 1865 Llangollen to Corwen railway was completed, it was a continuation of the Vale of Llangollen Railway but made under the separate: Llangollen to Corwen Railway Company. With

the railways came the Railway engineers, a new set of industrious, Victorian entrepreneurs. With the advent of the railway, there was no need to maintain the canal/road coal business, and the bridge fell into decay.

By 1870 the bridge was in a dilapidated state as this article in the Wrexham Advertiser shows:

We first of all descended the railway bank and crossing the ruinous "Chain Bridge," said to be one of the first structures of its kind ever erected. Its present state is, however, most unsafe, and in rough weather, with the Dee flooded and rolling in torrents underneath, it would be utterly impassable, and I should not be at all surprised to hear of its destruction during the coming winter. However, we got safely across the creaking old timbers, and passing at the back of the picturesque hostelry, got on the prettily-shaded canal banks.

6th May 1870

THE CHAIN BRIDGE. – This bridge, which is situate about two miles above the town bridge and which is said to have been one that suggested to Telford the idea of suspension bridges, is now in a most dilapidated condition. The beams, which had been laid transversely, and on which the stone and earth were placed, are now bare, so that the road resembles an American corduroy highway. There are no railings at the side consequently night travellers are in immanent danger. The bridge is a very necessary one. There was a public right to a footway, but horse and vehicles should not cross without the payment of a toll.

Thankfully the bridge lasted a few more years and in 1876 an advert was placed asking people to tender for the building of a new bridge:

12th February 1875

A NEW BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER DEE.-By an advertisement in another column, it will be seen th.at a new bridge is about to be built to supersede the delapidated Chainbridge, near Berwyn Station, which will be a great boon to the neighbourhood.

TO BUILDERS AND OTHERS.

Persons desiring to Tender for a NEW SUPERSTRUCTURE TO CHAIN BRIDGE, BERWYN can inspect the plans and specifications at my office on and after 12th inst. Tenders to be sent in on or before 20th inst. The lowest tender will not necessarily be accepted.

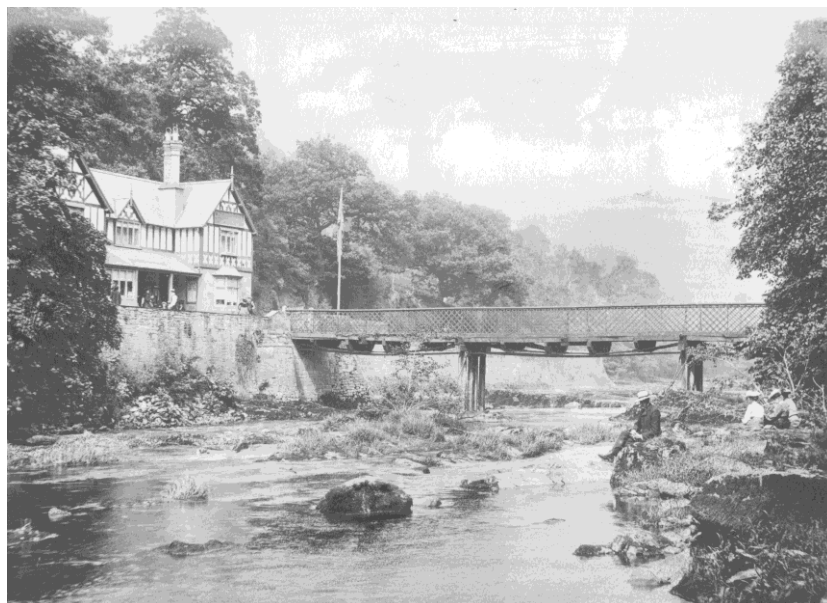
STANHOPE BULL Llangollen 11th Feb 1876.

18th June 1875

THE CHAINBRIDGE.-This old and dangerous bridge is, at last, being pulled down, to give place to a superior structure. The new bridge, which will be ornamental, is also to be built of wood and chain, and so its erection will occupy a few weeks.



The project was taken up by politician, industrialist and prolific railway builder, Henry Robertson (11 June 1816 – 22 March 1888) who had managed Thomas Brassey's work on of the Llangollen to Corwen Railway. Local landowner Charles Tottenham had requested the building of a station at Plas Berwyn to provide a stop for visiting guests. At this time Robertson's close friend, Locomotive builder and business partner at Brymbo Foundry, Charles Beyer had built and taken residence in nearby Llantysilio Hall. Robertson had bought the Chain Bridge, the Inn and surrounding properties in 1863. It may be because of the station and the fact that Robertson owned both the Chain Bridge and the hotel that he decided to replace the now rickety bridge to encourage train passengers to stop and use the hotel.



The second Chainbridge

The new bridge was similar to the first, retaining the original chain links as supports for the deck. However, unlike the first bridge more parts were made of iron forged at Brymbo Ironworks, Wrexham, where Robertson was Co-owner.

By 1909 the Bridge had undergone repair works by Henry Robertson's son:

3rd December 1909

CHAIN BRIDGE. Mr. R. Ll. Baker moved that the Council adopt a hearty resolution of thanks to Sir Henry B. Robertson for having taken in hand and satisfactorily repaired the Chain Bridge, at Barwyn. The bridge is one of the attractions of the Valley and it had fallen into a dangerous state of disrepair.- Mr. J. Nanson seconded and Mr. Fred Evans supported the resolution, whereupon Mr. W. B. Roberts suggested that the Council might approach Sir Henry and offer to take over the Bridge with a view to keeping it permanently in repair.-The Clerk pointed out, however, that the approach from the Holyhead-road down to the river was not admitted by the Railway Company to be a public highway and it was also stated that the Chain Bridge is not entirely in the area of the Urban District Council's authority and that, therefore, difficulties might arise in this connection.-It was decided, with the utmost unanimity, to thank Sir Henry Robertson for the good work that he has done

Some repairs were carried out to the decking in 1909 trees, etc., which formed a dam across the up-stream side, the water was about four feet higher above the bridge than on the down-stream side, the water flowing over the bridge decking. The old structure gave way at 6-20 p.m., under the strain, and parts of the decking" were found at Sun Bank.

The twelve supporting chains after the flood had subsided: the two columns had been swept away, and also two 3 inch x 1 inch iron bars running the whole length of the span for bracing the columns were broken and twisted by the current, but the anchorages held good. One chain was broken, and a cracked link was found later.



The destroyed second bridge



In the following spring, in keeping with tradition Sir Henry Beyer Robertson (4 May 1862 – 2 June 1948), son of Henry Robertson decided to rebuild and redesign the bridge completely, retaining the old chains, Several designs were considered, and work commenced in earnest on July 2nd 1929, erection being done in the evenings and Saturday afternoon's the various details being prepared at Brymbo.

“We were fortunate in having fine weather and the river low for the job. The work was completed and a little opening ceremony was arranged on September 21st, 1929, the cutting of the tape on the railway end was done by Mrs. Luther Griffiths and on the canal end by Mrs. Fred Griffiths, Chainbridge Hotel. Those who had worked on the job, together with friends, forming a procession. There being forty-five persons on the bridge at that moment.”

They were received at the canal end into his parish by the Rev. Dr. Aeron Davies of Llantysilio Church. Sir Henry Robertson had kindly provided a conveyance from Brymbo, photographs and tea for the party, and all were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Griffiths to supper after which a concert was held the talent for which was supplied by the party including the renowned Professor. Leano. The event was greatly enjoyed by all.

The twelve chains originally spanned the river only; and were under the decking, but in the new bridge, six chains span the river and canal, being anchored in the rock above the canal. There are also two chains under the decking spanning the river only, but they take no stress, being supported by $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter hangers from the main chains, the sag in the chains is arranged so that the stress in the material will be about 3 tons per square inch with a load of 100 lbs per square foot on the deck, or approximately 500 lbs per foot run on the bridge, the stress in the hangers is about equal to that in the chains. The column in the main channel has been dispensed with, this gives a clear span of 77 feet for the catenary, 38 feet from the column to the railway end anchorage, and 72 feet from the column to the anchorage above the canal. Leaving out the column in mid-stream gives a much better waterway at flood time. also the sag in the chains below the deck, and the heavy timbers are 4 feet more headroom for the river. The vertical load on the column in the river is $7\frac{1}{2}$ tons, but there is very little load on canal end column owing to the angle of the chains, there is a brace on the up-stream side to the mid-stream column at deck level, the whole is encased in approximately 32 tons of concrete well bonded into the rock.

For anchoring the main chains above the canal, two trenches were cut into the bank for 20 feet back from the edge exposing the rock at 8 feet deep, two 3 inch diameter holes were then drilled 3 feet down into the rock, and two $2\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter steel bars grouted in, two bolts 2 inches diameter with crosshead plates connected the three chains at each side to these anchor pegs. The six chains were then adjusted separately to the correct sag, and the whole anchorage encased in concrete for protection. The total pull on the anchorage with the bridge loaded at 100 lbs per square foot is approximately 18 tons, the earth loading in addition to the grip in the rock is 36 tons. An attempt has been made to design a bridge that would not mar the beauty of this spot, which every year attracts thousands of visitors. The bridge was the private property of Sir Henry Beyer Robertson

On 27th September 1929 announcements were made in the local newspaper:

New Chain-Bridge Opened at Berwyn

The new chain bridge over the River Dee at Berwyn near Llangollen, which has been built by Sir. H.B. Robertson, to replace the one washed away by the flood about two years ago, was opened on Saturday evening by Mrs. Fred Giffiths, Chain Bridge Hotel. The new bridge is built on similar lines to the old one and resembles the suspension bridge which crosses the Menai Straits. It is one of the most picturesque structures in Wales.

In 1929 a new bridge was built to replace the one destroyed by the flood by Sir Henry Beyer Robertson, son of Henry Robertson, and was probably inspired by the famous suspension bridge across the Menai



Strait built by Thomas Telford in 1826. Robertson reused Pickering's chain links to create suspension cables to hold up the decking from above, with a further two placed under the deck for extra support.

The Chain Bridge continued to be a 'must see' attraction in the area and picturesque asset for the Chain Bridge Hotel. Also, for visitors travelling by rail, horse-drawn canal boats or walking on the towpath. Many would sit on the river bank, enjoy a picnic, have their picture taken on the bridge or even enjoy a romantic stroll across the bridge after one of the themed disco evenings at the hotel in the 1970s

However, by the 1980s the bridge had fallen into disrepair and become unsafe and was eventually closed to visitors. Llangollen Town and Llantysilio Community Councils bought the historic bridge for a £1 after it and started a project to restore it. The councils worked to raise funding for the bridge's repairs since 2007 and in 2013, The Heritage Lottery Fund pledged £350,000 towards its restoration.

Planning began to recondition the bridge and a meeting was held between Llantysilio Community Council and Llangollen Town Council to look into joint ownership of the bridge. Mr Bob Hodges of Opus International also attended the meeting to offer expert advice regarding construction and maintenance. Both councils agreed that, as the existing bridge was falling into disrepair, and this was a great opportunity to bring it into public ownership, and with grant funding the Chain Bridge could be repaired.



The bridge being dismantled



The bridge was carefully labelled and dismantled and for the first time. Certain parts were heavily corroded, some of the chain links had to be remade. The separate parts were taken by steam train to Llangollen Station, marking the first steam freight train for over 50 years. From here they were remade or restored.



Forging a new chain

The refurbished bridge reopened Thursday 28th May 2018. The project had a large grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund plus funding from WREN, which distributes funds donated by FCC to the Landfill Communities Fund, Denbighshire County Council, Cadwyn Clwyd and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).





The Chainbridge after restoration





Lord Mayor taking the first walk over the bridge.

The Chain Bridge Hotel



The first bridge and the first inn.

A hotel on the bank of the Chain Bridge or inn first appears on record in an 1841 Census but surprisingly the tithe maps of 1838 make no mention of the bridge or the Inn however we do know the William and Elizabeth Davies were living at the hotel from 1838 from their details in their daughters Christening record at nearby Llantysilio Church. William is listed as a publican in 1841 but by 1851 the occupant is Samuel Roberts, coal merchant. Ten years later the occupant John Roberts was described as both a Coal Agent and an Innkeeper.

We can see the changing roles of the tenants from the Census records:

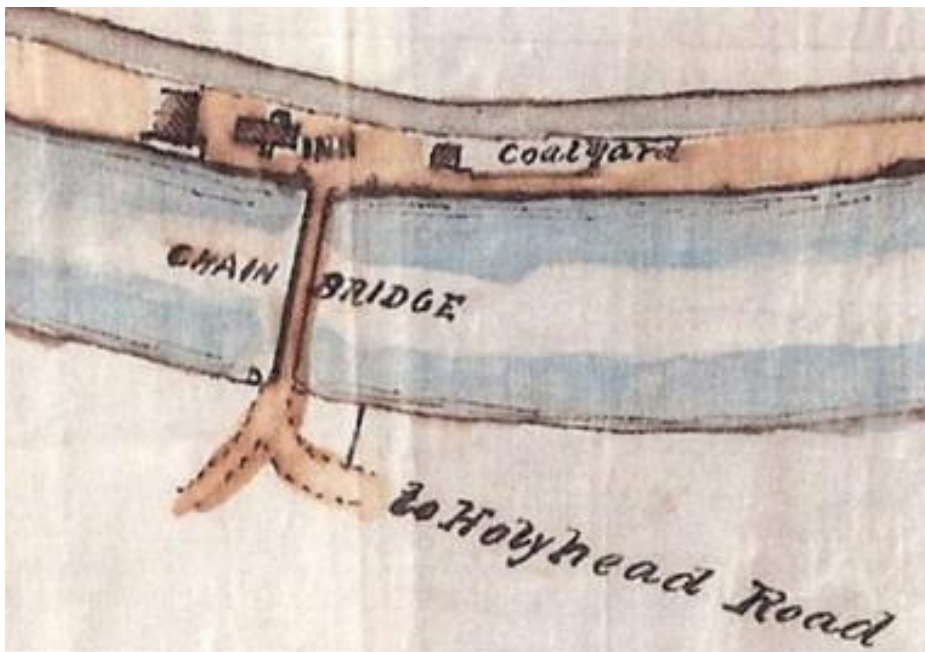
1841 Census				
Chain Bridge				
William Davies	40	1801	Publican	N
Margaret Davies	35	1806		N
Elisabeth Davies	3	1838		Denbighshire
William Williams	25	1816	Labourer	Denbighshire
John Jones	25	1816	Labourer	N
Susannah Jones	15	1826		N

1851 Census					
Chain Bridge					
Samuel Roberts	Head	m 58 (1793)	Coal Marchant	Caernarvonshire	
Ann Roberts	Wife	m 63 (1788)		Llanarmon Lal	

However, we see that by 1861 John Roberts had listed two careers, Coal agent and Inn Keeper.

1861 Census					
Chain Bridge					
John Roberts	Head	m 35 (1826)	Coal Agent Inn Keeper	Cefn Mawr Ruabon	
Margaret Roberts	Wife	m 33 (1828)		Hafod Y Maidd	
Anne Roberts	Dau	s 5 (1856)		Hafod Y Maidd	
Richard Roberts	Son	s 4 (1857)		Llantysilio	
Mary Roberts	Dau	s 1 (1860)		Llantysilio	

On 25th August 1863 the hotel, bridge and wharf etc were sold to John Dickin by Sir Watkin William Wynn, who immediately readvertised it. It was then bought by Henry Robertson, who was at the overseeing the construction of the Llangollen to Corwen line and the building of Berwyn Station and the road bridge.



Several of the buildings were in connection with the coal trade as described in the 1863 sales information as Stables, Buildings, Coal Yard, Iron Chainbridge and Weighing Machine. It is not known if the public house was here from the start, or built late.

20th October 1863

Lot 1 All that Licensed Public House, Stables, Buildings, Coal Yard, Iron Chainbridge, and weighing Machine, together with the Garden, and Wharves,

called the Chainbridge, the whole lying between the River Dee and the Canal, in the parish of Llantysilio, and now occupied by Mr John Roberts.

Henry Robertson engaged Morriss Roberts to rebuild the hotel in a Tudor revival style in to echo the style of the Station opposite.

18th December 1868

On Wednesday evening there was a housewarming dinner at the pretty house of Mr. Roberts, the Chainbridge, near this town.

25th December 1868

Local And District - Llangollen

HOUSEWARMING DINNER.—On the 16th a housewarming dinner was held at the splendid house lately rebuilt, called the Chainbridge Inn, parish of Llantysilio, opposite the romantic and beautiful station of Berwyn. A great number of very respectable people collected together to show their good will to Mr and Mrs. Roberts, the worthy host and hostess, amongst whom we noticed Mr. Garrett, brewer; Messrs. Roberts and Co., builders, with several friends, Mr. Edward Jones, Avonroe, Steward of Colonel Tottenham, with several respectable farmers, Mr. Griffith Evans, keeper of Colonel Tottenham, Mr. Jones, Rhosynwst, Mr Robt. Evans, Rhydonen Ucha, Mr. D. R. Edwards, Dolygwaliau, Mr. Thomas Edward, Butcher's Arms, Rhewl, Mr. John Francis, Sun Inn, Rhewl, Mr. Hugh Roberts, Ty'nymynydd, Rhewl, Mr. Seth Roberts, Plas Bilmon, Mr Thos. Jones, Maes-yr-ychain, Mr. Jno. Roberts, Llandynan, Mr. Henry Jenkins, Llandynan, Mr. Thomas Hughes, Llandynan, Mr Evan Parry, Tanycoed, and a great number of other gentlemen too numerous to mention. The dinner was of first-class order, and too much praise cannot be given to Mr. and Mrs Roberts for the very excellent viands they had prepared for the numerous guests. The cloth being removed, Mr. Garrett was elected to the chair, and Mr. Morris Roberts (the builder of the Inn) to the vice-chair. Mr. Garrett proposed the usual loyal and patriotic toast. Also the toast of Col. Tottenham, Mr. Robertson, the Great Western Railway Company, Mr W.W. Wynn, Mr. D. R. Edwards, and the toast of the evening—the worthy host and hostess all of which were responded to. He then in a neat speech said they had come there to show their respect to Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, as well as to Mr. Robertson, the famous engineer, who got up for them such a pretty and substantial house, and he hoped they would prosper there. He then called on a glee party from Rhewl to amuse the company, which they did by singing several glees and songs. Mr. Jones, the Cambrian Hotel, also gave a song in English and Welsh, causing great merriment among the audience. Mr. Owen, the auctioneer, then made a speech about the large number of birch trees in that neighbourhood, which in ancient time was a hallowed tree, and that it was no wonder that the old Abbey was built in close proximity. Mr. M. Roberts, builder, then said that the house they were in was built by Mr. Robertson, who made all our railways, that he was a gentleman who wished to make all his tenants happy, and that he intended ere long to repair the old Chainbridge, which as all knew was in a dilapidated state. He also praised Col. Tottenham as a gentleman wishing the success of all his numerous tenants. Several other speeches were given, but we are sorry we have no space left to extend our report. After a concluding speech by the Chairman, the company departed highly delighted, if not edified, by the evening's proceedings.



The rebuilt Hotel, with the original bridge

With the advent of the railway, there was no need to transport coal along the canal on this route and the bridge fell into decay.

A newspaper article - 6th May 1870 highlighted the bridges dangerous state:

THE CHAIN BRIDGE. – This bridge, which is situate about two miles above the town bridge and which is said to have been one that suggested to Telford the

idea of suspension bridges, is now in a most dilapidated condition. The beams, which had been laid transversely, and on which the stone and earth were placed, are now bare, so that the road resembles an American corduroy highway. There are no railings at the side consequently night travellers are in imminent danger. The bridge is a very necessary one. There was a public right to a footway, but horse and vehicles should not cross without the payment of a toll.

The 1871 Census show that the Roberts family were growing and they could now afford a servant, Mary Hughes.

1871 Census				
Chain Bridge				
John Roberts	Head	m 45 (1826)	Coal Agent Inn Keeper	Ruabon
Margaret Roberts	Wife	m 43 (1828)		Llangollen
Anne Roberts	Dau	s 15 (1856)	scholar	Llangollen
Richard Roberts	Son	s 14 (1857)	scholar	Llangollen
Mary Roberts	Dau	s 11 (1860)	scholar	Llantysilio
Sarah Roberts	Dau	s 6 (1865)	scholar	Llantysilio
John Roberts	Son	s 3 (1868)	scholar	Llantysilio
Margaret E Roberts	Dau	s 1 (1870)		Llantysilio
Mary Hughes	Serv	S 20 (1851)	gen serve	Llantysilio

ROYAL HOTEL,
LLANGOLLEN.

G. NEWBERY

RESPECTFULLY begs to announce that he
has taken possession of

THE CHAINBRIDGE HOTEL,
BERWYN,

In connection with the above Hotel, and hopes that, by
paying every attention to VISITORS, he may secure
their patronage and recommendation.

***BOTTLED ALE AND STOUT**
OF THE BEST QUALITIES AND LOWEST PRICES.

WINES & SPIRITS—FINEST BRANDS.

CLARETS PER DOZEN AT WHOLESALE
PRICES.

Special Arrangements for PIC-NIC PARTIES.
(523)

After over 29 years at the Chainbridge hotel the Roberts family had moved on, In May 1879 John Roberts moved to West Street Llangollen, to become an insurance agent with the Royal Liverpool Co. George Newbry installed Rose Hannah Chambers as manageress.
4th April 1879

28th March 1879

Temporary Transfer of Licences. —The licence of the Chainbridge Inn was transferred to Mr. G. Newbery, of the Royal Hotel;

5th April 1879 Field Magazine

TO ANGLERS, TOURISTS &c.—CHAIN
BRIDGE HOTEL, on the Bank of the Dee,
Berwyn, Llangollen, N.W., close to station Free and
preserve fishing, excellent accommodation. Terms mode-
rate.—**G. NEWBERY, Proprietor.** Also of Royal Hotel,
Llangollen.

Mr Newbery employed Rose Hannah Chambers to run the Chainbridge:

1881 Census				
Chain Bridge				
Rose Hannah Chambers	Head	m 31 (1850)	Barmaid and Houskeeper	Inkbrow
Maria Davies	Serv	s 17 (1864)	General Servant	Llangollen

A newspaper wedding announcement from **23rd June 1882**

June 20, at Llantysilio Church, by the Rev J.S. Jones vicar, Mr Richard Windsor Coedterfyn, Llantysilio, to Miss Chambers, formerly manageress, Chainbridge Hotel, near Llangollen.

1882. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Llantysilio in the County of Denbigh

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
196	June 20 th 1882	Richard Windsor	33	Bachelor	Bank Worker	Canal Cottage	John Windsor	Bank Worker
		Rose Hannah Chambers	33	Spinster	-	Chain Bridge Hotel	John Chambers	Noble Manufacturer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church after Banns by me, J. S. Jones, Vicar

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Richard Windsor in the Presence of us, Henry M. Jones
Rose Hannah Chambers Edith Chambers

Following his marriage to Rose Hannah Chambers, Richard Windsor took over the license in 1884.

On the 5th June 1885 sad circumstances brought the ChainBridge Hotel into the news:

THE CHARGE OF CONCEALMENT OF BIRTH.

On Monday last, Ellen Thomas. charged with concealing the birth of her child at the Chainbridge Hotel, was brought up in custody charged on remand before G. Ll. Dickin, Esq., and Capt. Best. Mary Ann Jones, fellow-servant with prisoner at the hotel, repeated in detail the evidence given by her at the adjourned inquest held on the previous Thursday, a report of which appeared in our last issue. The following further evidence was also taken James Pratchett Drinkwater I am a physician and surgeon, practising at Llangollen. On Monday, the 18th May, I was called by Mrs. Windsor to the Chainbridge Hotel. I saw the prisoner in the kitchen. Previously to seeing the prisoner, Mrs. Windsor had told me about the discovery of blood. I examined the prisoner externally she objected to everything else. She was doing her work. I saw Mrs. Windsor again. I left there, and sent prisoner some medicine. On the following day in the after- noon I was sent for again. I went upstairs and found the body of a full-grown male child in a tin- box dead. The child had been dead some time. I went down and saw the prisoner, who was at her work. I told her I knew what happened. She did not deny it. I told Mr. and Mrs. Windsor to send for the police, and left there. On the 21st May, the coroner gave me an order to make a post-mortem examination, which I did. The result of my examination was that the child had been still-born, not having had an existence separate from its mother, and, therefore, the child was dead before being put into the box, where I saw it. I examined the prisoner, and she admitted having been confined, and I found traces of recent delivery. Sergt, Hugh Jones said I apprehended prisoner on the evening of the 19th May, and brought her to Llangollen. She was ill for some days, and attended by Dr. Drinkwater. On Thursday, May 28th, I went to the cell and charged her with concealing the birth of her child found in her box at the Chain- bridge. She said, "It was my child." In reply to the usual question, prisoner said, I have nothing to say." She was then formally committed for trial at the next assizes.

In 1892 the Hotel chained hands again.

2nd January 1891

Transfer of Licence. —The licence of the Chain-bridge Hotel was transferred from Mr. Rd. Windsor to Mr. Thomas Marchant.

By the time of the 1891 census Richard and Rose had moved to Berwyn and were living on their own means. Thomas Marchant, from Battle in Sussex, had been working as a gamekeeper at Llansantffraid before coming to the Chain Bridge.

1891 Census				
Chain Bridge				
Thomas Marchant	Head	m 52 (1839)	Licenced Victualler	Battle
Ann Marchant	Wife	m 51 (1840)		Wellington
Thomas N Marchant	Son	s 21(1870)		Carrog
Frank Marchant	Son	s 14 (1870)		Carrog
Louisa Cadwalader	Board	s 20 (1871)		Overton

Thomas's wife Ann died here on 10th Novemebrr 1899, Thomas Marchant later married Annie Hill in Bradford in July 1900. They were joined by Ann's son, Frank Hill and her elderly mother Mary Bass as shown in the 1901 census.

1901 Census				
Chain Bridge				
Thomas Marchant	Head	m 52 (1839)	Licenced Victualler	Battle
Annie Marchant	Wife	m 47 (1854)		Bradford
Frank Hill	S Son	s 12(1889)		Liverpool
Frank Marchant	Son	s 14 (1870)		Carrog
Louisa Cadwalader	M-i-l	w 85 (1816)		Willington
Sarah Roberts	Serv	s 23 (1878)	Gen Serv	Llangollen

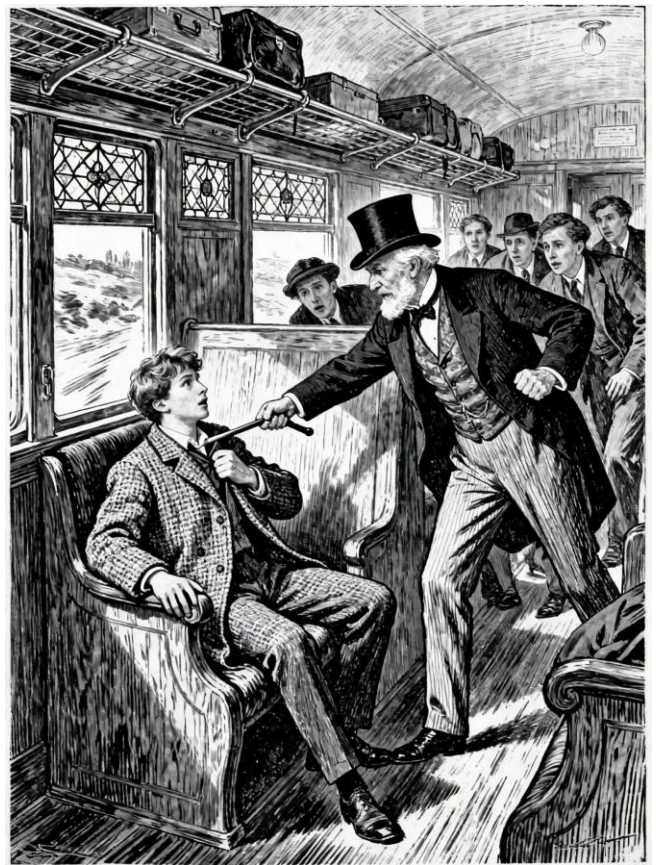
In 1902 we discover that the Landlord of the Chainbridge had a short temper!

28th March 1902

PASSENGERS ON THE G.W.R.

Thos. Marchant, landlord of the Chainbridge Hotel. Berwyn, was charged that on February 10th, at Llangollen, he wilfully interfered with J. Jocelyn Lodwick, a passenger by the G.W.R. to his injury and annoyance.—Mr. Stone, of Liverpool, who appeared for the Railway Company, said that at the time the 8 45 morning train was leaving Llangollen on February 10th, a young man named Lodwick came up and got into a third-class carriage from which the defendant alighted. There was an empty place in the far corner in which he sat. There were four people on one side and four on the other and there was nothing on the seat Lodwick took to lead him to suppose any passenger would claim it. When the train was about to start Marchant came in and said Get out of that seat it is mine." Lodwick said defendant had no particular claim on the seat, and that he did not-intend to leave it. Marchant, failing to get him out, sat on complainant to Ruabon. He might say that defendant had in his hand a stick, and caused serious annoyance not only to complainant but to other parties in the train and he would point out that in no place where a man could be was he so much at the mercy of another as in a railway train. He had no option but to fight or stand and it was a serious thing, when a train was in motion, for such an assault to be committed, and the Company had taken the matter up to protect their passengers. —Joeelyn Lodwick said he was studying to become a veterinary surgeon, and was living at Oswestry. On February 10th he was travelling from Llangollen to Ruabon, and he went to a carriage which defendant got out of. There were some vacant places in the carriage, and he took one in the corner. When the train was on the point of moving, and the door had been closed, defendant got in, and said to complainant, Get out of that that is my seat! He told him he had no special claim to the seat he was occupying, and defendant then tried to drag him out, and went for him a second time. He had a stick in his hand, and witness was terrified. He made use of indecent language, and called him a d- cad, and said he was no gentleman. Complainant retorted that he would be sorry to take Marchant's word as to what a gentleman was and that his personal appearance would tell anyone what he was. This was after he had been assaulted twice. He was ill for a fortnight after the assault. —Cross-examined •It was his vindictive feeling, he supposed, that made defendant assault him. There was a lady sitting on the other side of defendant who did not move in order to get out of the way of dripping water. —Arthur Roberts, butcher, Gwersyllt, and Miss Florence Rowlands, Llangollen, corroborated.—The defend- ant denied the assault in tote. Ha said that he was always anxious to get into a carriage on the far side, that people might not have to crowd past him, as he was

suffering from a wound on the leg that was just healing. He got out at Llangollen to get a cheap ticket to Liverpool. He did not see Lodwick get in; but when he got back to the carriage he found that several people had got in whilst he was away. He put his hand between Lodwick and the window, reminded him that it was his (Marchant's) place and that, if he acted as a gentleman he would vacate it. He never shook him and if he crushed up against him at all it was to escape from the wet which was dripping from the roof into the carriage and on to his coat. -The Chairman said the bench had no doubt that the case was proved and that an assault had taken place. They were very glad that respectable people should come forward to press cases of the kind which were very annoying. He felt certain that, if he were placed in the same position as Lodwick, he would be alarmed, and very few people but defendant's lawyer would say anything different. It was not very pleasant to be attacked by a big man in a small space, and they hoped the case would be a warning to others not to interfere roughly with people in railway carriages. A fine of £1 and costs would be imposed.



We can also see problems caused to landlords with an Act of Parliament reinforcing the prevention of alcohol being sold on Sundays.

22nd August 1902

SUNDAY CLOSING IN WALES. REMARKABLE SCENES NEAR LLANGOLLEN

The administration of the Welsh Sunday Closing Act in accordance with the decision given some months back at Llangollen petty session is causing renewed difficulties in this district. The hotel keepers in the town, after the series of raids last winter, are most strict in enforcing compliance with the magisterial dictum that a bona-fide traveller to be entitled to refreshments must have travelled more than three miles '• for business or pleasure' and be able to prove that his purpose was not purely to obtain drink. Houses in the town being largely closed against this class of custom," travellers have taken to seeking refreshment" in the outskirts. On Sunday afternoon two men who had come to Llangollen on a visit proceeded by canal about a mile out of the town and demanded refreshment at the Chain Bridge Hotel. Not satisfied as to their condition Mr. Marchant, the landlord, refused to serve them and declined to admit them into the hotel, closing the means of communication against them. They protested against this treatment, and made a hostile demonstration against the house, breaking the windows and hurling missiles into the bar. The landlord escaped to the rear premises, and took means to summon the police. The "demonstrators," however, had decamped, and no arrests were made but the police are making active inquiries with a view of their discovery

. By 1911 Thomas Marchant had moved to Tranmere.

9th May 1910

LICENSING. The license of the "Chain Bridge" Hotel Berwyn, was transferred from Mr. Mathews to Mr Fred Griffiths.

Frederick James Griffiths was a bookkeeper, from Wrexham. On 25th April 1910 he was a commercial traveller living in Market Street, when he married Lily May Hawthorne, daughter of Walter Richard Hawthorne, landlord of the Bull Inn Castle Street

1911 Census				
Chain Bridge				
Frederick James Griffiths	Head	m 29 (1882)	Hotel Keeper	Wrexham
Lilly May Griffiths	Wife	m 22 (1889)	Assistant in Business	Stratford
Catherine Chatham	Serv	s 16(1895)	Domestic	Gwersyllt

Fred enlisted on 18th July 1916 in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, but he served in the Royal Army Service Corp. His brother George was a sergeant. On anecdote Lily told of that time was when Sergeant George Griffiths who was staying with her and her husband whilst he was on leave. Lil's husband, Fred paid for a certificate to let George have a longer leave as he was only allowed home for a very short time.

One day Fred went into Corwen on business and George's wife Mabel went shopping in Llangollen, leaving Lil and George alone in the Chain Bridge together. George asked if there was anything he could do to help around the house and Lil suggested he go out into the yard to chop some sticks. George did this and whilst he was outside, two orderlies came into the bar looking for George. They had been told he was ill with influenza and they'd come to take him to hospital! Lil ran out into the yard and called to George "Come to bed George!" Then she had to sneak him upstairs without the orderlies seeing before returning to them in the bar. In the end the orderlies took him to hospital in an ambulance and he was kept there for a fortnight, during which time Mabel had to visit him and take him flowers.



Lilly and Marjorie Griffiths

Afterward, when George was back home again he said to Lil "It isn't often you get an invitation to bed from your sister in law!"

Frederick and Lily had two children, Marjorie Hawthorne Griffiths, born 2nd July 1912, and Philip Gordon Griffith, born in April 1921.

27th September 1929

New Chain-Bridge Opened at Berwyn

The new chain bridge over the River Dee at Berwyn near Llangollen, which has been built by Sir. H.B. Robertson, to replace the one washed away by the flood about two years ago, was opened on Saturday evening by Mrs. Fred Giffiths, Chain Bridge Hotel. The new bridge is built on similar lines to the old one and resembles the suspension bridge which crosses the Menai Straits. It is one of the most picturesque structures in Wales.

1939 Census			
67 Chain Bridge			
1	Frederick J Griffiths	30 Sept 1881 m	Company Secretary
2	Lilly May Griffiths	29 Sept 1888 m	Unpaid Domestic Duties
3	Phillip G Griffiths	6 Mar 1921 s	Assistant Mngt- Book Keeper
4	Sarah E Hughes	3 Jan 1923 s	Waitress
5	Sarah A Hawthorns	21 Mar 1886 w	Incapacitated
6	Robert F Grant	25 Jan 1837 s	Under School Age

6th April 1948

RETIREMENT OF WELL-KNOWN LANDLORD.

On Saturday last, the Chain Bridge Hotel, Berwyn, was the scene of a very interesting little ceremony the occasion was the retirement of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Griffiths, who have played the part of "Mine Host and Hostess" so successfully for thirty-eight years. Their friends at Berwyn presented Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths with a very handsome Barometer, and to Miss Clarke (better known as Sarah) a purse of money.

Mr. Ellis Ellis of Vivod, as oldest patron, made the presentation, and in a few suitable words expressed the company's regret that Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths were leaving the Chain Bridge, but nevertheless hoped that they would spend a long and happy retirement. Mr. Griffiths thanked all present for their very kind thoughts, also for the wonderful present received, and expressed his happiness at still being near to Chain Bridge, thereby making it possible for him to be a customer instead of the landlord.

Frederick James Griffiths died on 17th February 1950, and his wife Lily Mary died in early 1966.

The new landlord was G.W. Chamberlain

CHAIN BRIDGE HOTEL,

BERWYN.

Adjoining the Horseshoe Falls.

Morning Coffee, Teas, Refreshments.

Prop.: G. W. Chamberlain. Tel.: 2215

23rd July 1955 Yorkshire Post

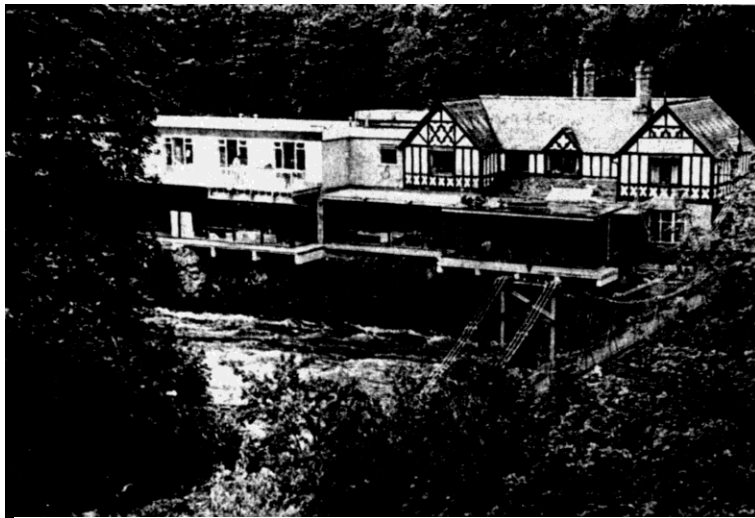
Great Opportunity – For Sale, Freehold and Free. CHAIN BRIDGE HOTEL, BERWYN, LLANGOLLEN, in the beauty spot of North Wales; tourist centre on the banks of the River Dee; cost £12,500, will accept £10,500 for quick sale; quarter-mile salmon fishing; hotel adjacent A5 Holyhead Road; details on application; serious illness reason for sale.

William Watson of Heswall, a veteran motoring enthusiast had bought the chain bridge around 1960, he died in 1961.

On the 11th June 1957

Hotel License of Chain Bridge Hotel to Mr R R Marshall

This new landlord had big plans which he publicised in a lavishly written advert on the 30th June 1965 in the Liverpool Daily Post.



The new extension on the left

£80,000 EXTENSION AT CHAIN BRIDGE

Fifteen feet below the tables 20,000,000 gallons of water roll down the Dee in the time it takes to eat a meal at the Chain Bridge Hotel, Llangollen which opens its extension today.

Salmon leap in the pools within sight of the diners and waterbirds flit across the racing waters.

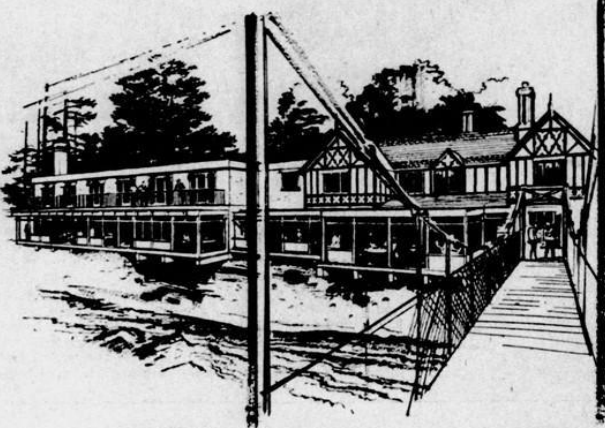
On either side, the Berwyn and Eglwyseg Mountains enclose the south facing bend of the river where the hotel stands in the eye of the sun.

A hundred and twenty diners can sit at the tables and every one within full view of the river in the new dining room

cantilevered out over the water on massive concrete beams.

Yet for all these spectacular extensions which have cost £80,00 and two hard work, the Chain Bridge Hotel remains in essence an old world hostelry in the deepest rural setting. The extensions have trebled its

original size of eight years ago when Mr Charles Charlett came as managing director with his Hungarian born wife.



THE CHAIN BRIDGE
Llangollen's luxury riverside hotel

Here, in a setting of unrivalled beauty, is a new hotel which offers you only the very best, whether you stay for a few days or a few hours.

The traditional character of the old Chain Bridge Hotel has been carefully preserved, the new extension blending with the old to offer the highest standards of comfort.

Enjoy the superb cuisine in the luxurious new dining rooms overlooking one of the loveliest stretches of the River Dee. The new river bedrooms have private bathrooms and balconies on to the same panoramic view.

For your comfort the hotel is centrally heated throughout. For your enjoyment the excellent cellar, international menu and heated outdoor swimming pool combine to make your stay a memorable one.

CHAIN BRIDGE HOTEL

TEL. LLANGOLLEN 2215

First part built 500 years ago

The Chain Bridge is as old as life in Llangollen. Five hundred years ago the first part of it was built when the monks from Valle Crucis used a primitive bridge across the Dee gorge to take them to the rough track winding down the valley to Corwen where Telford later took his highway and the A5 now speeds travellers to the mountains and the sea.

The A5 is only a couple of hundred yards away but not a murmur of its traffic reaches the hotel balconies beside the river far below. Tall trees filter the sound of traffic and the river plays its own muted accompaniment to the enjoyment of visitors.

On the near side of the river the Horseshoe Pass is half a mile away, but the private road to the pass is a rock shelf above the river which used to be a towpath for horses on the Shropshire Union Canal. The hotel occupies a widened plateau between the canal and river with water on either side.

But what a difference between the two waterways

At the rear the canal's mirror like waters reflect the rock walls where pied wagtails dip and curtsy among the ferns. In front the green-brown torrent of the Dee rolls majestically through the gorge torn to white foam over the rocky outcrops on its way to Llangollen and the sea. The hotel is centrally heated and the immense dining room overlooking the river has underfloor heating so that the ceiling-to-floor glass walls will not have their river marred by radiators or pipes.

The Tudor Bar in the old part of the hotel has the same panoramic prospect of the river through the River Lounge which is furnished in Spanish patio style with mosaic tiled floor heated from beneath.

Above the extensions to the original black and white traditional building are the seventeen new bedrooms of which six have balconies overhanging the river and the same view of the mellow old stone-arched King's Bridge with the tumbling lace of waterfalls embroidering the far bank.

Just upstream of the old building and the new extensions the builders are creating a heated swimming pool overlooking the river which will be converted into a ballroom in the winter. Overhead rolling glass canopies will slide into position over a maple floor on top of the pool.

It is expected that the pool and ballroom will be in use later this season although the season for the Chain Bridge Hotel is going to be the full twelve months.

Bookings are already coming in from tourists from all over Britain who want the finest of modern amenities in the midst of an unchanged atmosphere of deep country peace.

The sprinkling of overseas bookings already received through a small group of agents promises to introduce the Chain Bridge to American and Dominion visitors.

But in terms of modern hotel accommodation is limited. Although there is space for 120 covers giving every table a view of the river, that is not a lot when set against the demand, seventeen bedrooms is a tiny number but Mr and Mrs Charlett had to decide at the outset whether to cater for a mass market with a sprawling hotel overwhelming its setting or whether to achieve no more than the expansion of the site would allow without losing any character and charm.

They had no hesitation in the light of their long experience in the catering and hotel business in keeping the atmosphere and scaling down the size of the building to what was acceptable in the setting.

One aspect only has seen the most generous provision in sheer size. That is car parking, for Mr Chatrett appreciates that his clientele will come in two's three's and four by car

Space for 100 cars

It would be quit impossible to park a couple of hundred cars in the grounds of the hotel on the rocky eminence between the canal and the river but there is space for nearly a hundred in a single line along the approach road lit by the mellow glow at evening of a score of old carriage lamps and street gas lights converted to electricity.

On the bluff above the hotel is space for another fifty with a further fifty at the approach from the main road. Latecomers may have to walk a couple of hundred yards but no one who has ever seen the site will quarrel with the decision not to ruin it with an ass of motor cars.

The best English, Welsh and Continental dishes will be produced by the staff under the direction of the manager Mt James Monks and the chef Mr Stanley Tudhope.

Many of them will be to the special requisition of Mrs Olwen Caradoc Evans of Conway a cordon bleu cook who is an authority on Welsh affairs and cuisine, The bar manager is Mr Geoffrey Videgrain and head waiter Mr Tonu de Mario.

Unfortunately, just three years later the company which bought the Chainbridge were declared insolvent to pay off debts.

Liverpool Daily Post 16th May 1967

Credit squeeze is blamed for hotel's plight

The directors of a Welsh beauty spot hotel against which a compulsory winding-up order had been made did not agree that the company was insolvent and blamed their difficulties on the credit squeeze, said Mr R W F Pagan, Official Receiver, at a meeting of creditors in Liverpool yesterday

Following the compulsory winding-up order, made in Liverpool Chancery Court last April, the creditors decided to apply for Mr Ben Collins, a Manchester chartered accountant to be appointed liquidator with a committee of inspection.

Mr Pagan said that the company, the Chain Bridge Hotel Co Ltd, owners of the Chain Bridge Hotel, Llangollen, had been incorporated in December 1961 with an issued share capital of £9,00 in £1 shares. Thirty proofs of debt had now been lodged against the company, the largest being for "17,500 lodged by the Midland Bank, said Mr Pagan.

He added that the directors of the company were Mr CC Charlett, who had since resigned, Mrs Hannah Charlett, who was also stated to have resigned. Mr John Eric Fischer, appointed in 1961, and Mr Stanley Charles Roberts appointed in 1965.

9th May 1969 Cheshire Observer

CHAIN BRIDGE SOLD

Messrs Jackson-Stops and Staff have recently completed negotiations for the sale of the Chain Bridge Hotel, Llangollen, which enjoys a magnificent situation cantilevered out over the banks of the River Dee, a short distance from Llangollen. The hotel takes its name from the nearby Chain Bridge which spans the river, where for centuries monks crossed from the nearby Valle Crucis Abbey to the old Holyhead road, During the 1970's the hotel was run by Victor Norman Baker, who also ran a night club in Liverpool 1970's among other thing he introduced an annual Miss Chainbridge competition.

On June 17 inadequate safety measures on a sewage tank led to the tragic death of four-year-old, Phillip Breen:

Liverpool Daily Post 8 Aug 1972

Hotel blames for sewage tank tragedy

Safety measures for a new sewage treatment tank, installed at the Chain Bridge Hotel, near Llangollen, by the owners, had not been carried out when a small boy was drowned, a Wrexham inquest was told yesterday.

Mr Edmund Pickles the East Denbighshire coroner, recorded an accident verdict on four-year-old Philip Breen of Connaught Road, Edge Hill Liverpool, who died on June 17.

He said: "I am a little surprised that this tank was placed in the lawn which is leased by the hotel owner, without any fencing and without any screening or without any apparent effort to make it safe.

Mr Edward Breen, the boy's father said he and his wife and four children were camping. Two daughters went to take chips to the eldest boy who was fishing in the canal near the hotel. Philip ran after them and was not seen again.

Constable John Francis said the plant was screened from the path by a fence with a door secured by a latch. Access could also be gained to the lawn from below the bridge.

Mr Edward Turner, chief assistant drainage engineer in Wrexham Rural Council, said that, in the consideration of planning applications, he had pointed out to the hotel owner and his professional advisors the need to adopt adequate safety precautions.

On February 24 the council gave planning permission. The approved plan showed the tank encircled by a wooden fence but did not show any cover on top.

A condition was attached to the consent requiring the tank to be screened from above within three months of it being brought into use.

On June 16 he saw the plant had been completed. It was not fenced nor were there any protective covers. These precautions had been agreed by the developers.

In reply to the coroner Mr Turner said that at one stage the tank had been erected above ground level. Planning permission had not been given.

The council then asked the owners and their advisers to put it below ground. He agreed it was safer above than below.

In answer to Mr Trevor Williams, the council clerk, he said amenity was the reason for having the tank below ground. This was a beauty spot. It was because of the change that he insisted upon covering and screening.

Replying to the coroner, Mr Maldwyn Parry, appearing for Mr Victor Baker, the hotel owner said he did not wish to give evidence.

In his reference to the absence of fencing the coroner said "How long that state of affairs had been in existence one does not know. Planning permission was given on February 24 and this incident happened on June 17.

"But there has been no shred of evidence to indicate or to help me as to the period that the tank was in this state.

In 1975 the Chainbridge is the scene of a heist:

19th August 1975 Liverpool Daily Post

Hotel raiders grab £4,000: Owner offers £1,000 reward

By Cliff Moss

Nearly £4,000 has been stolen from the safe of a North Wales hotel. And yesterday the hotel's owner offered a £1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the thieves.

The raid on the Chain Bridge Hotel near Llangollen has all the hall marks of a professional gang. Included in their equipment was a can of water to cool down the hot-metal as they cut through the safe.

Mr Norman Baker, the hotel owner, is also a proprietor of Russell's Club in Parr Street, Liverpool, where raiders got away with £3,000 a month ago.

Mr Baker, who has already put up £1,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the club raiders, does not rule out a link between the two robberies.

He said yesterday that neither loss was covered by insurance, but he would sleep better at night if the thieves were caught.

"I don't mind paying to find out who did it" he added. "It might help to stop this sort of crime. It might pay off. Naturally I would like my money back but I can't see that happening."

The Chain Bridge is a popular tourist hotel standing on a prominent site in the Dee valley between the river and the Welsh Canal. Most of the guest rooms were occupied at the time of Sunday night's raid but neither visitors nor staff suspected anything until cleaners opened the ground floor office yesterday morning.

The gang had used cutting gear to carve a hole in the wall mounted safe. The money included several day's takings as well as guests' deposit.

No one appears to have heard anything during the night. One theory is that the raiders may have concealed themselves on the premises before the hotel doors were locked. Police searched the area yesterday and also brought tracker dogs to look for clues.

Chief Superintendent Pery Edwards, head of Wrexham Division, has appealed to anyone who was in the vicinity of the hotel to report any activity that might have aroused their suspicions.



DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
MARRIAGE ACT, 1994
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN
 pursuant to the Marriage Act, 1994 that an application has been made by Mr VICTOR NORMAN BAKER for the premises known as The Chain Bridge Hotel, Llangollen, for grant of approval to enable civil marriages to be solemnised at these premises.

Any person having an objection to the grant of approval may give notice in writing, with reasons for the objection, within 21 days after the date of the first publication of this notice, addressed to: The Director of Central Services, Denbighshire County Council, County Offices, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin, Denbighshire LL15 1YN.

R. H. WILLIAMS,
 Director of Central Services.

In 1997 the hotel was one of the first hotels in Wales which had the approval to conduct marriages.

In the early 2000's the hotel became part of Stephanie Booth's empire.

June 2004

NEW OWNERS FOR FAMOUS CHAIN BRIDGE HOTEL.

When Stephanie and David Booth took over the Chain Bridge Hotel in Llantysilio. They realised they had a great deal of work to do to bring the hotel up to their high standards. Quality good service and good food are their criteria for the hotel. Owning several other hotels in the areas, including the prestigious Bod Idris Hall, Stephanie and David have experience of their customer's requirements and do their utmost to provide excellent facilities.

A team of award winning chefs present a varied menu, with prices from £9.95 for the daily menu.

There is a comprehensive A La Carte Menu. "Tempura

Battered Tiger Prawns with an Orange and Lychee compote" is one of several tempting starters; the main courses include "Grillet Fillet of Halibut Au Poive" and "Tender Fillet Steak" served with "Strawberry and



Restaurant interior



Stephanie Booth

"Pink Peppercorn Sauce". There are also several vegetarian dishes on the menu. Much of the food used in the kitchens is organic and some purchased locally from shops and the Rug Estate. Daily deliveries to the hotel ensure all food is fresh. In addition to serving traditional meals in the dining room, which has spectacular views across the river Dee (pictured below), the hotel is open all day for light snacks, coffee and afternoon teas.

At present the hotel is being restored to provide improved accommodation. The Booths hope to extend the bedroom capacity in the near future and create a more convenient, direct entrance from the top car park. For wedding receptions, corporate events and for private use, the Chain Bridge Hotel is ideal, it is in an idyllic setting and offers good food at reasonable prices.

In 2011 Stephanie Booth's empire went into administration.

Seamus O'Keeffe acquired the hotel in October 2012 for £500,000



Llangollen Museum
Parade Street
Llangollen
Denbighshire LL20 8PW



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