

Newtown to Llanidloes Railway

Short account

A surge in railway building in England in the mid-1840s did not extend into mid-Wales. The canal was available as far as Newtown but beyond that, transport was difficult, the first mail coach to reach Caersws ran in 1852. Various proposals at the time for railway lines through to the coast at Aberystwyth, and a line to link Manchester to Milford Haven, were considered, but did not progress.

However, the Llanidloes to Newtown Railway was approved by Parliament in August 1853, with hopes of connecting it either to Shrewsbury or to another route under consideration –from Oswestry to Newtown to the east, and beyond into other parts of Wales to the west. These plans were separate from the two large railway companies the Great Western (GWR) and the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) and the local Railway company had great difficulty raising the necessary subscriptions for the construction.

In September 1855 tenders were sought for building the line, and David Davies of Llandinam put in the lowest bid of the seven contractors who expressed an interest. In October, the ceremony of turning the first sod took place in a carnival atmosphere in Llanidloes. Locals and dignitaries from all around came to march through the town behind banners – *Success to Llanidloes and Newtown Railway* was one, now on the wall in the Textile Museum. (donated to the Museum by the great-grandchildren of David Davies).

There were difficulties, not least the opposition of local landowners, and the challenge of bringing in supplies along the Shropshire Union Canal to Newtown. Work started at the Llanidloes end, but the directors made a deliberate decision to slow the progress in the hope that the link on to Oswestry would eventuate. Up to 600 navvies worked on the line but with money in short supply work stopped at Penstrowed in 1858. In order to reach Newtown, David Davies offered to lease the line from the company to provide the necessary capital, and construction was resumed. Goods trains started running on 30 April 1859, and passenger train operations started on 31 August that year. Special trains ran both ways, with a fare of one shilling and sixpence.



The line between Newtown and Llanidloes was isolated until June 1861 when it connected through to Oswestry, and then in January 1863 the line, also built by David Davies, opened from Newtown to Machynlleth. In 1864 these lines were amalgamated into the Cambrian Railways.

The original timetable was for four trains each way, and by 1910 the timetable showed a service of nine trains a day. This continued until passenger services stopped to Llanidloes in 1962, with the goods service withdrawn in October 1967.





The line marked in red was the first railway to be completed in Montgomeryshire.