

Corwen Central News



As the summer season moves into July, much of the Dee Valley has been basking in sunshine and high temperatures as the air flow across Wales has been mostly South to North drawing in hot air from North Africa.

rapid integration of society. The Welsh Government is right in its caution as there have been severe outbreaks of disease in Wrexham and on Yns Môn.



Above Carrog Station looking south Photo: RM



Great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) probing for grubs near Glyndyfrdwy

Photo : Ran Matthews

In its wake, have been in the inevitable rolls of thunder and sharp down pours enriching plant life and stimulating growth. As this edition of CCNL is prepared for publication, Covid19 still dominates the news stories, but with different emphases depending on which side the Anglo-Welsh border you are on. The Welsh Government is maintaining a cautious approach, with measured “unlocking” for families and businesses, whilst the UK/English Government seems to be encouraging a more

With campsites and caravan parks likely to be given permission to reopen during July, this will come as good news (and possibly good fortune) for many of the small businesses dotted around the Dee Valley – chief amongst them being the Llangollen Railway. As readers will be aware the railway, along with the rest of the railway heritage industry has been shut since the middle of March, with no means of earning its keep. It has received

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generous support from its business partners, shareholders, trust members, anonymous donors and the Welsh Government through its Business Resilience Fund. So it was with grateful relief that the LR's General Manager, Liz McGuinness was able to announce that the railway would reopen on July 6th. This will be a return to work by some employees and volunteers without any public involvement.

There is much to do in terms of preparing the infrastructure and rolling stock for service, let alone making sure train crews, signallers and guards remain qualified/re-qualified to operate the railway safely.

*On the Main Line and the Goods Siding
The grass grows high
At Garth y Dŵr, Corwen Station
And Deeside Halt*

(Apologies to Flanders and Swann "The Slow Train")



Valerian (Valeriana officinalis) grows in ballast at Carrog
Photo : RM

Previous editions of CCNL have drawn attention to the way in which nature has reclaimed much of the railway's country route, so one of the first movements along the line will be an RRV carrying weed killing apparatus. This is planned to take place on July 6th when the whole length of the line – Llangollen Station to the buffer stops at Corwen, including sidings – will be sprayed with a “systemic” weed killer. This has the effect of removing the weeds right down to their roots, with little prospect of a return, at least until next Spring. The track has become a happy nursery ground for ash and sycamore seedlings, who tend to like well drained ballast, easy to root into and being left alone for 4 months!!



Trailing Rose (Rosa arvensis) staking a claim at Carrog
Photo : RM

Once the weeds and brash have been removed work, will able to re-start at the Corwen Station Site, especially the paving for the platform and top ballast for the track. Volunteers are anxious to return to work (safely) and to take advantage of the good weather to move the project forward.

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Getting Closer

The last edition of CCNL drew attention to the sheer volume of administrative work that was required before the granting of the Transport and Works Order (2010). This article reminded the then chairman of the trust, Neil Evans to write :

“Amazing that it has been 10 years since the granting of the T(ransport) W(orks) O(rder).!

One of the fond memories of the process was the good offices of Welsh Development Agency (WDA) without whom we could not have progressed both legally or practically.



Members of a guided track walk look at the ivy laden masonry of Bridge 28A in January 2010 Photo : GJ

WDA provided many essential grants along the line for all aspects of the process and we were always going cap in hand to them for one thing or other! In the end we had the TWO, (or the bit of paper as I called it).

We had a last meeting with Wyn Roberts from the WDA who was a top man all along. As the process had gone on so long due to objections etc, we missed lots of final grant deadlines- and by the

time of our last meeting with Wyn Roberts there were no applicable monies left in the pot! The meeting finished and Wyn closed his brief case and headed for the door when we asked if getting to Corwen in the form of a temporary platform was acceptable after all it ticked the Corwen box, (the whole of the process was based on the betterment of Corwen).



Bridge 28A restored and free of ivy with newly laid track beneath Photo : GJ

He opened his bag again and asked how much the extension plus platform would be and we muttered £0.5m or words to that effect to which he agreed!! We got the green light for spending and without it we would still be at a buffer stop at Carrog - no doubt the rest is history??!!”
(Sincerely hope so – Ed.)

With the Works Order safely granted track laying got underway, with 2.5 miles of scrub and tree clearance ahead of the team. Nigh on 50 years of abandonment had taken its toll of the track bed, especially where the railway ran between the embankment of the A5 and the drop to the south bank of the River Dee. In more open areas west of Bonwm, ballast was still in place and the walking

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quite easy going. Much of the bridge work and culverting were in pretty poor condition, all needing clearance and renovation before being able to carry anything substantial.



Ballast train on the Bonwm straight In March 2014

Photo : GJ

The Corwen Station site was very “jungle” like with dense undergrowth and overgrowth criss crossed by a couple of impromptu paths leading down to the river.



The approach to the Corwen station site obscured by trees. A fogman's hut left after the railway closed 50 years ago guards the way

Photo : GJ

However, one of the major problems was the road way driven through the formation to allow Welsh Water to gain access to its pumping station. This had the effect of dividing the planned main line reinstatement from its western terminus!!

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 4

This month's winner of Lucky Numbers is **Mike Hunter with number 4**. Mike is a long standing Llangollen supporter and has donated to many of the Corwen Project Appeals. Congratulations go to him on his win.

Project treasurer Paul Bailey writes “ The Corwen Project's finances remain in good “heart”, but clearly lockdown has reduced both income and out goings.



5532 at Plymouth North Road during August 1959. Photo : Keith Jones

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We all await the re-opening of the work site. In the meantime many of you will have seen that I have been running a football card raffle fortnightly for the Llangollen Railway Great Western Locomotive Group to raise monies for Small Prairie 5532's Boiler Appeal. The Group who have a sales Coach at Carrog have been unable to open whilst the Railway is closed so the monies raised from this raffle are most welcome. 40 Teams on the card. £2.50 per Team. Winner gets £50. If readers can support this raffle whilst we're in lockdown then it will be a great help to the Group.

Additionally shares in the LRGWLG can be purchased from £25. A new 5532 Club has been launched for supporters willing to pay £10 per month and Boiler Tubes can be sponsored for £100."

For further information about any of these fundraising schemes please contact Paul Bailey at the address below.

For donations to the Corwen Project - 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 or e-mail him at paulbaileywincham@yahoo.co.uk if you wish to discuss any other fund raising matter or 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

End Piece

"Well that's a bit of bodge-up, surprised that anything's been done, especially as you're such a skiver!!"..... so the charge sheet has been opened. It is interesting that two extremely skilled crafts seem to be doing the "heavy lifting" for poor workmanship and the avoiding of any work at all!!



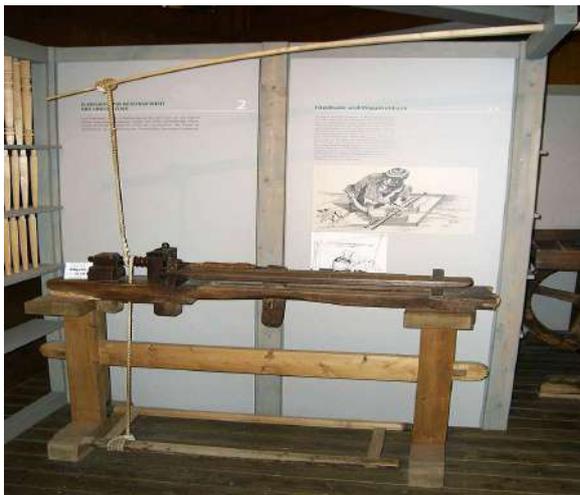
A Shave Horse being used to produce a backsplat

Photo : Ruizo

The word "*botch or bodge*" seems have been used in Australia some time during the latter part of the 19th century. There appears to have been some relationship with the medieval word "*boccen*" meaning to patch or mend. , whereas Holinshed (*Chronicles 1577*) describes a "*bodger*" as a travelling merchant, may be a peddler? Samuel Pepys noted in his diary (1663) that he had had his coat "*botched*" - patched - on a Sunday!! The "*bodge*" tended towards some sort of rapid repair, probably done by a skilled person just to keep the job going when a proper repair could be carried out, whereas a "*botch*" leant towards the unskilled, rather shoddy put together with no skill at all!! How the term "*bodge*" or "*bodger*" came to be linked to wood craft and especially to the

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turning of chair legs and backs is still unknown. Maybe the cabinet and furniture makers of High Wycombe looked down on the lesser craft of wood turning and called them “*bodgers*” - being not quite at the high end of “craftsmen”.



Bodger's Pole Lathe - Seiffen Museum, Germany
 Photo : Stefan Kuhn

However, “*bodging*” (full name Chair-Bodgering) is a traditional wood turning craft, using green (unseasoned) wood to make chair legs and other cylindrical parts of chairs. The work was done close to where a tree was felled. The itinerant craftsman who made the chair legs was known as a “*bodger*” or “*chair-bodger*”. The term was always confined to High Wycombe until the recent (post 1980) revival of pole lathe turning with many chair makers around the country now calling themselves “*bodgers*”.

Chairs were made and parts turned in all parts of the UK before the semi industrialised production of High Wycombe.

Bodgers also sold their waste product as kindling, or as exceptionally durable woven-baskets.

Chair bodgers were one of three types of craftsmen associated with the making of the traditional country “*Windsor Chairs*” .



Comb back Windsor Chair made by Charles Mower
 Photo: CM

Of the other craftsmen involved in the construction of a Windsor chair, one was the “*benchman*” who worked in a small town or village workshop and would produce the seats, “*backsplats*” and other sawn parts. The final craftsman involved was the *framer*. The framer would take the components produced by the “*bodger*” and the “*benchman*” and would assemble and finish the chair.

Could chair bodgers be “*skivers (Scivers)*”?? Strangely both have something in common in that the “*bodger*” would take small cuts from a rotating piece of wood to produce a smooth round chair leg, whilst the *skiver* would be taking small cuts from the edge of leather to thin it down in order to make it easier to join two or more pieces together. Although all leather work can require skiving, the activity was most commonly applied to the boot and shoe industry, where *skivers* would be employed to thin the edges of “*clicked*” uppers

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so that other parts of the shoe could be stitched together. The “skiver” would take each leather shoe component and chamfer the edges using a range of sharp knives on a marble top.



Skiving on a leather belt – making it thin where a buckle will be stitched in the turn over

This would prevent unnecessary scratches from building up on the finished side of the leather. Deriving from the thinning of leather edges,



Loop for the buckle - now easier to stitch after skiving

“skive or skives” was a term applied to thin leather foot shaped socks or insoles put over the stitching inside the shoe to help with comfort for the wearer.



Round knife being used on the skiving marble – 2mm calf skin

This *skive* then had a felt sock (process called socking) placed on the top to complete the inside of the shoe.

As for the origins of the word – like so many, those are somewhat obscure but it has been suggested *skive* is based on Old Norse or Old English – “*scuum*” - to slice or chip or pare (leather etc) or it first appeared in print in 1919 having been used in the army derived from French soldiers use of “*esquiver*” - slink away, slowly disappear, slowly move away”



Stitching uppers - putting the skived parts together