

Corwen Central News



As the days shorten towards putting the clocks back an hour, the Welsh Government has announced another national lock down for at least 2 weeks, taking us into early November. All this came as an added shock to businesses in the Dee Valley, including the Llangollen Railway, who were just coming to terms with the earlier imposed restrictions across North Wales, having had some welcome return to trading over the last summer.



Looking north from Corwen to Caer Drewyn Photo : PR

In compliance with the new regulations, all volunteers and paid staff working on the railway had to cease operations at 1700hrs on Friday 23rd October. Once again the Corwen Project has had to go on hold after a great burst of creative activity following the previous UK wide lock down. Literally the crowning achievement has been the installation of the

platform drains and the beautifully crafted block paving.



Teasels (*dipsacus fullonum*) – await the seed eaters !!

Photo : PR

The Project Team were much relieved and encouraged to hear from the newly installed Board of Directors that they could proceed with the building of the on-platform facilities in the hope of delivering a working station for the 2021 season. Other works include the fitting of the windows to the signal box and the continued installation of the ground frame and associated point rodding.

Signalling Progress

On the final working day before the new lockdown restrictions applied, the Project Team

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managed to get the last of the refurbished, original sliding windows into place on the Operating Floor of the ex-Weston Rhyn signal box at Corwen.



Windows being lifted into place on the signal box Photo : PN

This is the culmination of several years of painstaking work carried out by members of the team, led by Project carpenter Ron Stansbie. The side windows are yet to be fitted. The porch has also been underpinned with steelwork, once again



Now starting to look the part! Front windows complete - now awaiting the ones for the sides Photo : PN

a product of local firm, Barnett Engineering to prevent the cantilevered wooden floor beams from giving way and the external wooden cladding to

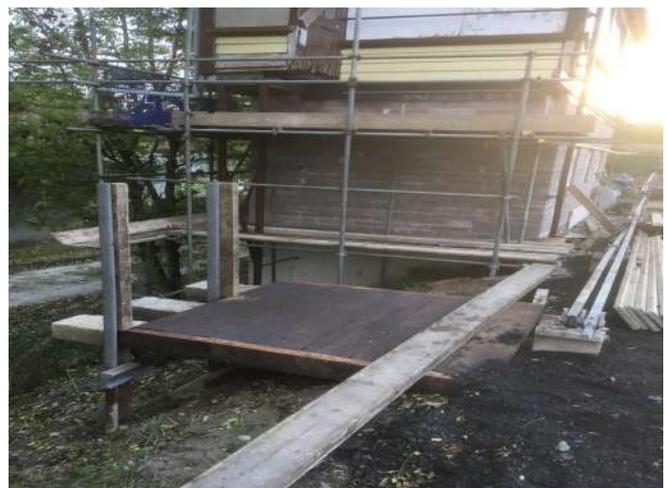
cover the concrete block work has also been delivered to site.



Steel "H" frame supporting the signal box veranda

Photo : RDG

The base of the signal box stairs has also been built and this can be seen in the photo. The stairs themselves are currently a “kit of parts” awaiting assembly.



Base for the stairs down from the SB veranda Photo : RDG

As part of their community/charity support days, some Network Rail colleagues of Andy Maxwell came to Corwen to help with the installation of the point rodding, compensator (crank which

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makes the linear motion of point levers change direction to push and pull points) and facing point crank bases.



Newly installed crank base

Photo : PR

and Sue Ronneback, station master and assistant station master and Phil Coles, LR deputy chairman. For once the sun shone making for a pleasant but dignified occasion.

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 **56***

In Memoriam – Malcolm Turner



Angela Turner tries out the newly installed memorial seat, watched by Corwen Station Master, Wayne Ronnebeck

Photo : RDG

The family of the late Malcolm Turner, the railway's Travelling Ticket Inspector, trainer and Head of Department, who passed away last year, came to Corwen to present a plaque attached to a station bench dedicated to Malcolm's memory. On hand to welcome the Turner family were Wayne

This month's Lucky Number is **number 56** belonging to Terry (Tez) Pickthall a member of the Llangollen Diesel Group and a trustee of the Llangollen Railway Trust. Congratulations go to Tez on his win and many thanks for his support of the Corwen Project.

Whilst the Corwen Project Funds are in a robust state, thanks to the enduring work of the Project's treasurer, Paul Bailey and the continued support from the Project's many friends. Other sections of the railway are also in need of some repair and improvement. Readers may not be aware but Paul has now transferred some of his undoubted fund raising skills and experience to the Llangollen Railway Trust, where he now holds the position as Director/Trustee with responsibility for revenue and fund raising. It is from this position that he writes : "We are looking for sponsors for 4 Lanterns for the Lampposts on platform 2 at Llangollen Station. The Lampposts have been

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bereft of lanterns for several years!! Now is the time to “cap” those posts!! They will be the same as the ones recently installed at Corwen and will cost £200 each. Anyone wishing to sponsor a lantern please contact me at the address below.



An example of the style of lamppost and lantern which will be installed on Platform 2 at Llangollen Station.

The photograph on the left shows one on the newly paved platform at Corwen.

Photo : PR

I am also planning to run the Corwen Raffle again next year to raise monies for the Canopy at Corwen Station. As existing subscribers know the monthly cost for a raffle number is £3 payable either £36 Annually, £18 half yearly or £9 quarterly. The monthly prize is £50. I hope most of you will rejoin again for 2021. Again my contact details are shown below along with payment methods.

Please either send a cheque payable to CCRD, cash to either myself or Richard Dixon-Gough at the Corwen work site, or contact me if you wish to pay directly into the Corwen Bank Account. Anyone wishing to join the raffle for the first time should contact me to find which numbers are available.

Finally and more pressingly, the bridge deck timbers on the Dee Bridge, which carry the railway over the river at Pentre Felin and then up to Berwyn, were inspected and were seen to be in quite a state of decay, not sufficiently to stop traffic immediately, but enough to say that if we wish to run trains safely in the New Year 2021 and into subsequent years then they will need to be replaced. The timbers are long and heavy and carry the running rails in one continuous sweep across the bridge. They add to the smooth running of the trains but also absorb the vibration and help protect the bridge structure from the shock of having heavy trains descending on it. The job has been assessed by Andy Maxwell, the Plc/Trust's Engineering Director at £15,000, and includes all associated costs such as the precision drilling and aligning of the timbers.

I would like to launch an Appeal for Funds - £15,000 - for this essential work, which we hope will be carried out after the Santa/Mince Pie Special season has ended.

Donations can be made payable to the “Llangollen Railway Trust Ltd” and sent to me at the address below.

I attach my usual range of funding incentives :

Anyone donating £50 will receive 1 return ticket to travel the line with us in 2021 on normal timetabled services, donating £100 will receive 2 return tickets similarly. Anyone donating £200 will receive the above plus a footplate pass on one of our steam locos in 2021 or a cab ride in either one of our Diesels or DMU's. Alternatively anyone donating £200 can have a family ticket (2 plus 2) to a Thomas Event instead.”

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

For donations to the Dee Bridge Appeal - Please make cheques payable to The Llangollen Railway Trust Ltd

All cheques and enquiries to Paul Bailey at the following address

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

End Piece

The latest CoVid lock down in Wales, and for that matter in other parts of the UK coincided with Halloween. Unfortunately many of the traditional activities – “trick or treating” or “guising” (Celtic) will have to be curtailed this year, settling for a more cautious approach within the family group.

Historian Nicholas Rogers, exploring the origins of Halloween, notes that while "some folklorists have detected its origins in the Roman feast of Pomona, the goddess of fruits and seeds, or in the festival of the dead called Parentalia, it is more typically linked to the Celtic festival of Samhain, which comes from the Old Irish for 'summer's end'."

Samhain (shewin) was the first and most

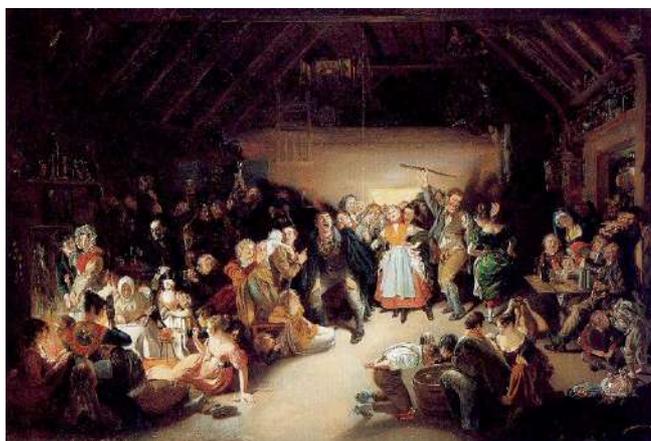


Traditional Halloween Mask - early 20th century

Photo : Museum of Country Life , Ireland

important of the four quarter days in the medieval Gaelic calendar and was celebrated on 31 October – 1 November in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. A kindred festival was held at the same time of year by the Brittonic Celts, called *Calan Gaeaf* in Wales, *Kalan Gwav* in Cornwall and *Kalan Goañv* in Brittany; a name meaning "first day of winter". For the Celts, the day ended and began at sunset; thus the festival began on the evening before 7th November by modern reckoning (the half point between equinox and solstice).

Samhain and *Calan Gaeaf* are mentioned in some of the earliest Irish and Welsh literature. The



"Snap apple night" shows people feasting and playing divination games on Halloween in Ireland Panting : 1833 Daniel Maclise

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names have been used by historians to refer to Celtic Halloween customs up until the 19th century, and are still the Gaelic and Welsh names for Halloween.



A traditional Irish Halloween turnip (rutabaga) lantern on display in the Museum of Country Life, Ireland

Samhain/Calan Gaeaf marked the end of the harvest season and beginning of winter or the 'darker half' of the year. Like *Beltane/Calan Mai*, it was seen as a liminal time, when the boundary between this world and the Otherworld thinned. This meant the *Aos Sí* (Is shee) the 'spirits' or 'fairies', could more easily come into this world and were particularly active. The *Aos Sí* were both respected and feared, with individuals often invoking the protection of God when approaching their dwellings. At *Samhain*, it was believed that the *Aos Sí* needed to be given food and drink to ensure that the people and their livestock survived the winter. These offerings were left outside for the *Aos Sí*.

The souls of the dead were also said to revisit their homes seeking hospitality. Places were set at the

dinner table and by the fire to welcome them. The belief that the souls of the dead return home on one night of the year and must be appeased seems to have ancient origins and is found in many cultures throughout the world. In 19th century Ireland, "*candles would be lit and prayers formally offered for the souls of the dead. After this the eating, drinking, and games would begin!!*".



Some local colour - Halloween witches Photo: Anthony22

Throughout Ireland and Britain, the household festivities included rituals and games intended to foretell one's future, especially regarding death and marriage. Apples and nuts were often used in these divination rituals. They included apple bobbing, nut roasting, scrying or mirror-gazing, pouring molten lead or egg whites into water and dream interpretation. Special bonfires were lit and there were rituals involving them. Their flames, smoke and ashes were deemed to have protective and cleansing powers, and were also used for divination. In some places, torches lit from the bonfire were carried sunwise around homes and fields to protect them. It is suggested that the fires were a kind of imitative or sympathetic magic – they mimicked the Sun, helping the "powers of

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growth" and holding back the decay and darkness of winter. In Scotland, these bonfires and divination games were banned by the church elders in some parishes. In Wales, bonfires were lit to "prevent the souls of the dead from falling to earth". Later, these bonfires served to keep "away the devil".

From at least the 16th century, the festival included *mumming and guising* in Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man and Wales. This involved people going house-to-house in costume (or in disguise), usually reciting verses or songs in exchange for food. It may have originally been a tradition whereby people impersonated the *Aos Sí*, or the souls of the dead, and received offerings on their behalf, similar to the custom of *souling*. Impersonating these beings, or wearing a disguise, was also believed to protect oneself from them. It is suggested that the *mummers and guisers* "personify the old spirits of the winter, who demanded reward in exchange for good fortune".

In parts of southern Ireland, the *guisers* included a hobby horse. A man dressed as a *Láir Bhán* (white mare) led youths house-to-house reciting verses – some of which had pagan overtones – in exchange for food. If the household donated food, it could expect good fortune from the '*Muck Olla*'; not doing so would bring misfortune. In Scotland, youths went house-to-house with masked, painted or blackened faces, often threatening to do mischief if they were not welcomed. The ancient festival included people in costume representing the spirits, and that faces were marked (or blackened) with ashes taken from the sacred bonfire. In parts of Wales, men went about dressed as fearsome beings called *gwrachod*. In the late 19th and early 20th century, young people in Glamorgan and Orkney cross-dressed.

Elsewhere in Europe, mumming and hobby horses were part of other yearly festivals. However, in the Celtic-speaking regions they were "*particularly appropriate to a night upon which supernatural beings were said to be abroad and could be imitated or warded off by human wanderers*". From at least the 18th century, "*imitating malignant spirits*" led to playing pranks in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. Wearing costumes and playing pranks at Halloween spread to England in the 20th century. Traditionally, pranksters used hollowed out turnips or mangel wurzels often carved with grotesque faces as lanterns. The lanterns were variously said to represent the spirits, or were used to ward off evil spirits. They were common in parts of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands in the 19th century, as well as in Somerset. In the 20th century they spread to other parts of England and became generally known as *jack-o'-lanterns*.



Trick or Treaters in Sweden Photo : Toyah Annette