

Fireman Edward Hughes – Corwen

Edward David Hughes was born in Corwen and spent much of his working life in the area. He became a Great Western Railway (GWR) engine cleaner in 1911, aged 16.

Before preservation, Corwen was a junction between two routes; until 1928 it had its own engine shed, complete with turntable.



1901 Ordnance Survey map of Corwen; the engine shed and turntable are to the left of the map. The present station is where the two lines meet/ part towards the right of the map. Courtesy National Library of Scotland Maps.

It was here that, on 13 July 1917, Edward Hughes was injured. By now he was a fireman. He had just finished turning his locomotive when part of the turntable fell on his hand. Part of the little finger of his left hand was cut off.

Edward didn't let this stop him, however. He was back at work from 20 August 1917, and went on to become a driver in the 1920s. He worked for the GWR until his death, of natural causes, in 1947. Edward's younger brother, John, also became an engine driver.

It looks like Edward married Mary Jones in Corwen in 1923, and they had at least one child.

The Railway Work, Life & Death project: revealing ordinary people's surprising stories

This leaflet looks at some of the hundreds of ordinary people working on the Llangollen & Corwen Railway before preservation.

It was produced by the Railway Work, Life & Death project. We're a volunteer-driven social history project, researching the lives and stories of British and Irish railway workers before 1939.

We do this via the accidents they had – and the records they left behind. Often it's the only way we can find out about these people. Our amazing volunteers have created a free database of over 115,000 railway workers for you to explore.

Our project is a collaboration between the University of Portsmouth, National Railway Museum and Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick. This leaflet was funded by the University of Portsmouth's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Scan the QR code to find out more about the workers in this leaflet, at the Railway Work, Life & Death project website.

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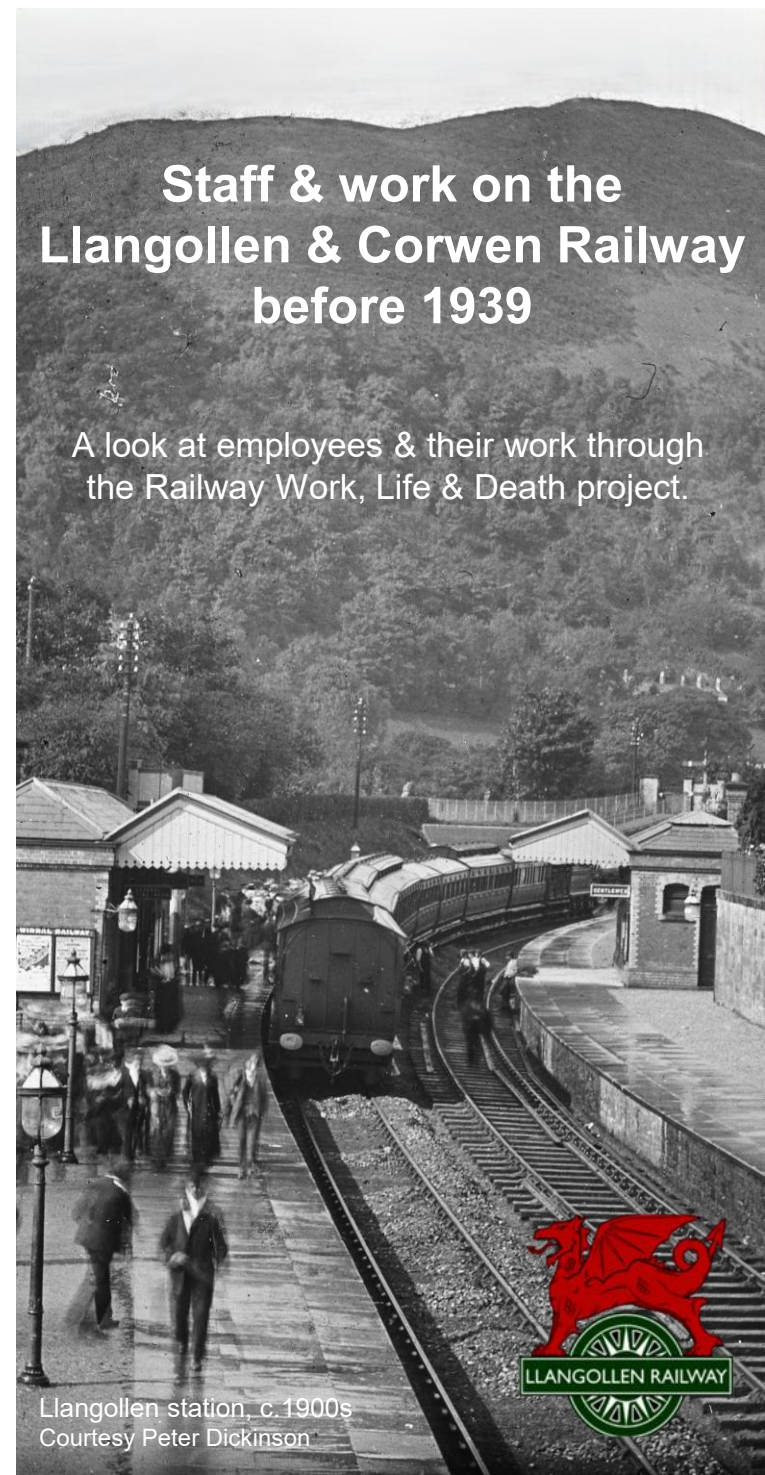
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Staff & work on the Llangollen & Corwen Railway before 1939

A look at employees & their work through the Railway Work, Life & Death project.



Llangollen station, c. 1900s
Courtesy Peter Dickinson

Lad porter Jones – Llangollen

Railway stations like Llangollen needed lots of staff to serve passengers and traders. Porters were responsible for helping move luggage and goods – at Llangollen, this included lad porter Jones.



Staff at Llangollen, c.1898.
Courtesy Peter Dickinson.

We don't know much about Jones – we're not even sure of his first name. We think he had three accidents in swift succession whilst doing his job!

Within a month of being transferred to Llangollen, on 13 October 1913 he had a finger pinched in machinery. On 4 December 1913 he slipped and sprained his ankle.

And on 2 July 1914, he hurt his foot while jumping off a platform. This kept him off work for 11 days.

These were all relatively minor incidents, but they go to show that some railway staff encountered a range of risks at work.

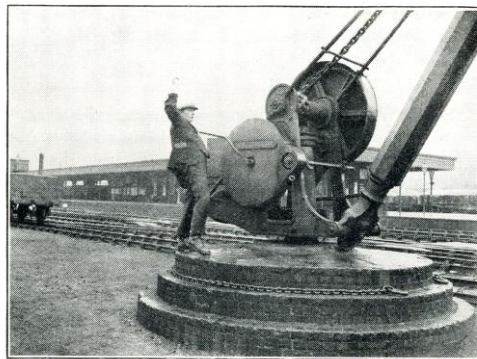
Timber loader Rogers – Glyndyfrdwy

Today Glyndyfrdwy looks very quiet – but in the late 19th century, the valley had industrial workings: quarries, slate works and timber production. A tram road fed down the valley, to the railway, which took items further on.

On 18 December 1914, timber loader Rogers was working at Glyndyfrdwy. At 11.30am his arm was injured by a crane handle. As a result he was off work for three days.

No other details have survived about his accident. With so little information it's proven impossible to find out more about Rogers.

OPERATION OF CRANES.



These photographs illustrate what may happen if you do not keep clear of crane handles when lowering weights.



Remove the crane handles before lowering weights by the brake alone.

Posed staff safety photographs about crane use, c.1932.
Courtesy Railway Work, Life & Death project.

Ganger John Edwards – Carrog

For most of its existence, the tracks between Llangollen and Corwen were maintained by hand. It was hard work, often undertaken in gangs made up of several men. Track workers were based at key stations along a line, and sometimes between stations.

This included 'ganger' (supervising track worker) John Edwards. Born in Shropshire, he joined the Great Western Railway (GWR) in 1894. By 1901 he was married, to Catherine Davies, and they were living in Llangollen. He joined the National Union of Railwaymen in 1913.



Carrog station and staff in the early 1900s.
Courtesy Peter Dickinson.

On 7 September 1914, John had an accident at Carrog. He was using a long-handled hammer to knock wooden 'keys' into place. They fit between the rail and the 'chair', the clamp that holds the rail in place. John missed the key and hit his leg!

Though painful at the time, it didn't have a lasting effect. John spent the rest of his working life on the GWR, retiring by 1939.