

Ruthin Town and Around O Gwmpas y Dre



Local news, comment and features, published quarterly by Ruthin and District Civic Association, Cymdeithas Ddinesig Rhuthun a'r Cylch

December 2013

Glasdir revisited one year on Miles Anderson listens to the voices from both sides

Denbighshire County Council recently issued the following statement on the situation regarding the flooding of the Glasdir estate last year:

“Unfortunately, as claims against the Council have been intimated on behalf of a number of residents, we are unable to enter into further dialogue on the points that residents at Glasdir are now seeking to pursue.

We empathise fully with residents at Glasdir who were affected by last November’s flood. It was a traumatic experience for them, as it was for many other households across Denbighshire that day.

As well as commissioning and publishing an independent review into the flooding event at Glasdir last November, we have provided as much as factual

information as we have available to residents and also encouraged them to take up the opportunity that any member of the public has to view the planning file for the Glasdir development.

Throughout, Denbighshire County Council has worked hard to support residents from Glasdir affected by the flooding. Both in terms of our immediate emergency response and practical assistance after the flood but also the much longer recovery phase. A Community Recovery Group continues to meet and pick up ongoing welfare issues as and when they arise.

As well as helping with practical matters, we recognised that it was also important that we got to the bottom of why the flooding happened and crucially whether any improvements were needed to minimise the risk of it happening again. We commissioned a panel of experts led by Dr Jean Venables and recommended to us by the Institute of Civil Engineering to undertake an independent review of the flood event. They concluded their investigations in August and we published their report in early September.

The report concluded that improvements could be made to the flood defences at Glasdir to minimise the risk of future flooding and we are currently in the process of implementing the Panel’s recommendations. The works - raising the height of the flood defence bund around the estate - are at the design stage and we aim to be on site before Christmas with the heightened bund completed by March 2014.

The Council has made a public commitment to fund one third of the costs of these works, matching a commitment made by the developer, Taylor Wimpey. We are currently discussing the potential for a similar contribution from Welsh Government. We have always maintained that people must come first and believe our actions support this. We are determined not to let discussions about who pays for this work get in the way of improving the defences.”



Floods of November 2012

The Residents of Glasdir, on the other hand, who suffered in the devastating flooding, are not happy with Denbighshire's response to their plight. They feel that whilst the Council state that they "empathise fully with the residents of Glasdir", they criticise them for "failing to provide us with answers to the questions we have asked." As Arwyn Jones, joint chairman with Aled Jones of the residents committee, said when I met him recently, "At the public meeting on the 10th September, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, gave us their personal assurances that answers would be provided."

One of the principal concerns of Glasdir's residents is that the Council "has been advised that it is now unable to enter into further dialogue with residents on issues they are raising as to do so would prejudice the Council's position in relation to legal claims now received from Glasdir's residents and their representatives".

In this day of aspirations to openness by people's institutions, governments, assemblies and local councils, the people here concerned, the home owners who suffered as a result of the flooding, find the council's communication, or lack of communication with them most disappointing, to put it mildly!

In particular, there is the question of the built floor levels of the estate homes; if the approved planned levels had been observed, the residents maintain, and the building regulations in relation to them complied with, would they perhaps not have suffered this water ingress? This is the question posed in the residents' written submission.

Local assembly member, Llyr Gruffydd has taken up the residents' concerns, in particular as to the "whether all the homes were built up to the correct height." He continues to assert, "Responsibility for ensuring that happened would lie with the developer but also with building control in the council" and urges the council "to fully engage with residents to solve any outstanding issues and provide reassurances for the coming winter months."

Another unanswered concern that Aled Jones raised with me was the quality of the grills protecting the culverts, and the apparent lack of record keeping of their inspections. As Aled stated, "When we bought our properties it was on the basis that flood defences were adequate and in place and would protect the whole estate from a 1 in 1000 event. We were given documentation stating / guaranteeing this. Obviously if we had been aware of any issues with regards to flood protection we would not have purchased our properties."

It seems clear that some meaningful dialogue should be instituted between the council and the representatives of the residents to defuse the tension of this situation. What would be the worst outcome in the long term would be for the degradation of the Glasdir estate. It is a building development that has in the past, received well deserved praise for the quality of the housing and the care taken in the development to ensure that the beauty of the area and its setting in the rural landscape is preserved. It now seems that the estate's maintenance is being neglected and there are some areas are needing attention.

The residents of Glasdir are determined to continue their fight and not be forgotten. In a show of solidarity they are staging a "Light Up Glasdir" on the 27th November to show that they are not beaten. From 6.30 that evening all the house lights will be switched on and special light effects on display. Aled and Arwyn want, on behalf of all the affected residents, to express their thanks to the people of Ruthin and the surrounding villages for all the help and support they received after last year's disastrous floods.



December 2013 and the sandbags are still in place

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Dedication of Ystafell Hafina

Gareth Evans pays warm tribute to a much loved, writer, journalist, politician, Welsh woman.....to Hafina



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Hafina Clwyd, or Hafina Coppack to give her married name, but Hafina to so many of us was an immensely popular and hard working member of many organisations in Ruthin to which she gave freely of her time and talents thereby greatly enriching the cultural and social life of our town. Local history and family history, literature, conservation, politics and of course the Welsh language were all issues which engaged her and she threw herself wholeheartedly into many Ruthin societies. Hafina was never a quiet and dormant member of any society. If Hafina belonged to a society then suddenly things got done and the society was immeasurably benefitted by her presence. Hafina was also well known of course beyond Ruthin as a writer and broadcaster and many other things.

Our own society, the Ruthin and District Civic Association, benefitted from Hafina's commitment and like many others elected her to our chair. We determined to commemorate Hafina and, as the written word meant much to her, – she called herself a scribbler – and with the co-operation of Ruthin library we decided to dedicate the meeting room at the library to her. This was where she spent much of her time immersed in books or attending meetings

So a great number of people from a wide range of groups gathered in the library on Saturday afternoon 26th October to celebrate Hafina's life and dedicate Ystafell Hafina. Robat Arwyn on behalf of Denbighshire's library service welcomed everyone and Menna Jones, like Hafina a past mayor, elegantly chaired the afternoon. Hafina's family mingled with dozens of Hafina's friends exchanging reminiscences. Phillip Hughes from Ruthin Craft Centre spoke of the way Hafina animated Craft Centre events while providing first class translation to the many international exhibitions at the centre. In a short time she had become a friend and an indispensable part of the craft centre team. Luned Meredith spoke of Hafina's period as editor of Y Faner when they were both at the forefront of Welsh journalism. Hafina worked fast and accurately and her organising of complex tasks to meet difficult deadlines was formidable. This was a sentiment which many who encountered Hafina would endorse.



A pleasant and sociable afternoon was rounded off by the chair of our society, Liz Williams. This was entirely appropriate as Hafina had been chair herself. Ruthin and its neighbourhood had meant the world to Hafina and she had written extensively about the area and its people. Liz said that Ystafell Hafina would provide a way of remembering a local girl who had gone out into the world and chosen to return home where she proceeded to give so much to Ruthin and its community.

Seen in Passing...

- Christmas is definitely coming and we are sure that the geese are getting fat! Here in Ruthin it will start officially on Saturday, November 30th with a Christmas Market on St Peter's Square from 9.30 to 4. Father Christmas will be in his grotto in St Peter's Church 12-3 and back again from 6-7.30, with St Peter's Christmas Fair taking place in the afternoon. The roads to the town centre will close at 4pm and there will be entertainment with medieval singers, choirs and live bands performing. The Lantern parade will leave the Old Gaol at 6pm and the lights officially switched on at 6.30. Of course all this is weather permitting! Sadly it is unlikely that this edition will be published before that date.
- However we are in plenty of time to advise readers that Father Christmas is also booked for a return visit to Ruthin when he will pause awhile at Nantclwyd y Dre. Once there he will be ensconced in their Victorian Grotto from 3 in the afternoon of 14th December ready for young visitors. Later that same evening starting about 6.30 there will be continuing festivities with carols and mince pies.
- On the high street there have been some changes since our last edition – comings and goings, but more interesting is the number of no changes. No change isn't usually something that is news, but when in so many other towns, the centres are punctuated by boarded up and abandoned public houses, that is something that is not happening here. Town and Around does not shirk its responsibility to comment and report on bad news, highlighting the positive gives us pleasure. Amongst our pubs that have changed hands without becoming a blight on the high street are, the Feathers – see Bobby Feeley's report elsewhere – which now the scaffolding is down is looking spankily refreshed, Park Place, The Morning Star and though the change was less recent, the Wine Vaults with the Corporation Arms next door looking bright and cheerful. There seems to be something about Ruthin that inspires in entrepreneurial retailers an aspiration that here is a town where they can succeed.
- Still on the subject of our high street's resilience, it is good to see that the prominent and much admired shop building that was recently Lynch's on Clwyd Street now has a new occupant – Compass Financial. They have made the move from former premises in St Asaph – a move we commend – although we may be biased!
- The little path through a narrow strip of what must be called 'Parkland' alongside Railway terrace, is an attractive aspect of the town centre. At present, owing to its muddy condition, it no serves as a footpath no longer – it is too muddy to be a pleasure to walk along.
- On the other hand, disappointing to see Crown House, originally opened as an 'Internet Café', closed down. Some blame the closure on the arrival of Costa Coffee in the Elle Louise premises on Market Street. The top end of Market Street did need these large premises to find a new tenant and we need to be grateful for Costa Coffee for taking it on. It is surprising how spacious the premises are and judging by its occupancy is proving popular. It seems to be an established fact of modern living that our town centres are increasingly being given over to pubs, cafes, restaurants, computer shops and estate agents. But here in Ruthin we do still have many longstanding family business continuing, only one bookmaker and no money shops at all, as are seen so often elsewhere.
- Already at the time of writing the proliferation of the Art Trail artefacts are beginning to appear and it is due to be completed by the year end. We feel that the criticism of the new benches as 'being out of place' are themselves out of place. These are specially designed to be distinctive, eye-catching as well as functional. They are certainly eye-catching and much more comfortable than the old ones. Incidentally the old ones are being restored and put back to good and proper use – no throw-away culture here!



Graigfechan Growers Group – “3G’s”

Ruth Bacon gets a flavour of it all



... this group aims to supply locally produced food to the community and surrounding areas

Food, its cost and its production are topics that frequently occur in discussions on television, radio and in the local pub! Food miles clocked up by Supermarkets with their vast distribution areas and the produce they fly in from all over the globe; concern for animal welfare and loss of rare breeds; the increasing amount of chemicals needed for intensive farming; suspicion regarding GM foods and a gradual loss of understanding by the public about food production in general are all debated.

Chairman of the non-profit making Graigfechan Growers Group Eryl Jones told me such discussions in the Three Pigeons Pub in Graigfechan, led to the formation of this group which aims to supply locally produced food to the community and surrounding areas. Following a very positive initial community survey conducted in August 2012 the group was registered as a Community Interest Company in September 2012 and in December received a £5000 “Awards for all” Lottery grant. This has made it possible for them to acquire a hen shed, a poly tunnel, a general purpose shed and a tractor built from a kit!

The first year has been successful, and there are now 100 individuals at least involved in the local community. Fresh, local, value for money food has been made available - twenty four types of vegetables and soft fruits, eggs, pork, and lamb were produced this first season. Five items of whatever vegetables or soft fruit was available for £4 last season (price negotiable for smaller quantities) and could be ordered on line on Wednesdays and picked up in Graigfechan on Thursdays. It is hoped that next year winter vegetables will also be available.

An orchard is being planted in conjunction with the North Wales Wildlife Trust regeneration scheme. Heritage varieties will be grown. Eryl is a member of The Rare Breed Survival Trust so the animals the group have chosen are Gloucestershire Old Spots and Saddleback pigs and Dorset Down sheep and they will be slaughtered and butchered in Denbigh. The hens, both for egg production and Moran for the table, are free range. Bee hives are planned

Under-used land has been made available by some members making the whole enterprise feasible. Other members of the group contribute in different ways. A number contribute financially and, crucially, others with their labour for jobs such as managing the vegetable beds, the polytunnel and general purpose shed; watering; marketing produce; keeping records; egg production; livestock management and preserving fruit and vegetables. Regular group meetings are held so everyone is kept up to date.

3G members are all ages and bring different skills to the group. Families, couples or single people can join, and you do not need to be a Graigfechan resident.

3G members are all ages and bring different skills to the group. Families, couples or single people can join, and you do not need to be a Graigfechan resident. Anyone interested in becoming a member can find information on the website – just enter Graigfechan Growers into Google. A member is one who has contributed a minimum of £5. New members are welcome, especially those who are prepared to offer the practical help so necessary to keep the produce coming. So if you have time on your hands, want to eat locally produced fresh food you can trust at a fair price, get or keep fit, learn new skills, and meet new people join the 3Gs!

And as a bonus bring back some flavour and taste to your diet.....!

Cae Ddol Park Update

Bobby Feeley reports back

As many will have noticed, over the last few years there have been considerable improvements to Cae Ddol Park. During that time a 'friends' group has been formed and we have set about successfully reinvigorating and breathing new life into the park. A number of projects have been completed, including renovation of the lake and island, improved fencing and paths, trimmed back shrubs and trees, planted bulbs, flowers and saplings, improved the look of the skate park, installed new play equipment and improved the entrance. Suffice to say this beautiful park is well and truly on the way to being the 'jewel in the crown' of Ruthin, a place the community can be really proud of.



The 'Friends' Group still have one major project to tackle and that is to replace or renovate the second bridge, which is in poor condition and unattractive to look at. With grant funding from Cadwyn Clwyd the Group undertook a comprehensive feasibility study, with the community. Since then we have been exploring, so far unsuccessfully, ways of attracting substantial grant funding, possibly in the region of £25,000, to replace the bridge. We have identified some small funding pots but not yet enough, we will keep trying.

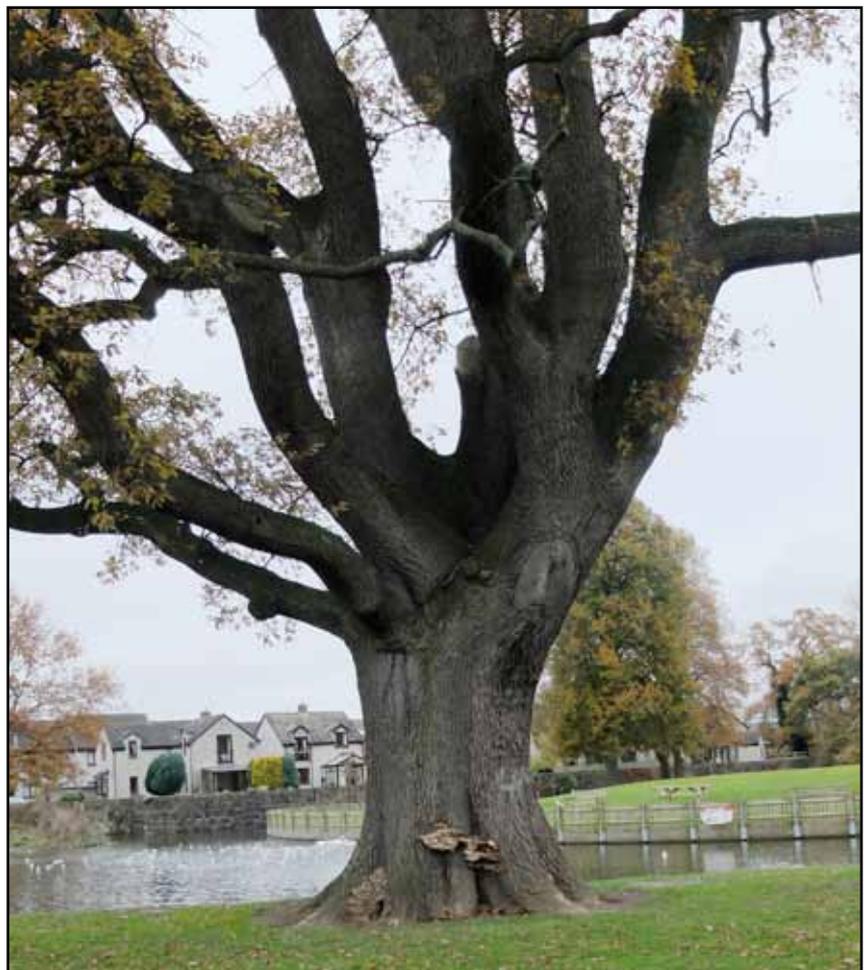
... this beautiful park is well and truly on the way to being the 'jewel in the crown' of Ruthin

... a large oak tree was found to have an abnormal fungal growth. . . He therefore recommends it should be felled and replaced with new trees.

Stop press

Whilst a Denbighshire officer was carrying out a routine inspection in the park, a large oak tree was found to have an abnormal fungal growth. Although otherwise the tree appears healthy, with full canopy, the fungus is a known root/butt rotter. Denbighshire parks officer immediately commissioned a full report from a local Arborist, and it seems there is a 30% fungal infestation in the trunk, mainly on one side. The report is detailed and lengthy but the officer responsible feels that, based on the evidence contained within the report, the tree could fall, which 'could involve serious personal injury or death.' He therefore recommends it should be felled and replaced with new trees.

The Arborist on the other hand, suggests the oak should be pruned to reduce its size and weight, and the soil beneath be de-compacted and natural products applied, which would improve the soil condition, stimulate root growth and give the tree a good chance of survival. He further suggests installing railings to dissuade anyone from walking beneath to minimise risk and prevent the soil compacting again. We have a meeting on site to discuss. I will report on the outcome at a future date. Anyone wishing to know more please feel free to ring me on 705040



The Bridge to Nowhere

Miles Anderson takes a walk along the Clwyd



The Clwyd generally winds gently through the meadows here. And then in the distance my eye was caught by that charming little arched bridge that is apparent from Lon Fawr, and that seems to have no purpose and go nowhere.



If you climb up a fairly steep, sheep-grazed pasture to your left, in the direction of the castle, you come across a wonderful circle of stones that look as though they might have stood there since the time of the Celts.

I had an hour to pass whilst my car was in the garage. A good opportunity, I thought, to see how Cae Ddol is getting on these days, and perhaps walk a little further. Turning into the car park at the bottom of Clwyd Street, as you approach Cae Ddol there is already much evidence of improvements. New parking bays and restricted areas have given a more human dimension to the area. These have also diminished the likelihood of disturbances to local residents from 'joy riders' night time activities that had been a concern expressed at time of the consultation on Ruthin's traffic flow back in 2010.

The earlier somewhat desolate appearance had also been softened by the planting of trees along the riverside of the car park – a recommendation from the ideas expressed in the 'Ruthin, Market Town of the Future' project. Just beside the Café, that now has space for outside benches to accommodate alfresco consumption of teas and ice creams for families after a play in the park, there are two amusing bicycling parking bays. I am sure they are not part of the Ruthin art trail, but with their incorporation of a cycle motif in their construction, they very well could be. Do stop whilst passing and admire them! All in all the approach was much improved.

Once in Cae Ddol, all looked well, and I took the footpath that runs along the foot of the castle escarpment. It is an attractive path and I passed walkers enjoying an afternoon stroll. The Clwyd generally winds gently through the meadows here. And then in the distance my eye was caught by that charming little arched bridge that is apparent from Lon Fawr, and that seems to have no purpose and go nowhere.

It is most picturesque and in former days I imagine carried horse driven carriages up to Ruthin Castle. Approaching it from the town's direction there is no access, but through a dank, narrow tunnel there are steps up to the top on the far side. There is no apparent vehicular access from either side, nor does it nowadays serve any obvious pedestrian purpose. It does not seem to go anywhere, but it is nevertheless a lovely feature in the landscape.

And that is not the only neglected, perhaps forgotten feature of this particular part of Ruthin. If you climb up a fairly steep, sheep-grazed pasture to your left, in the direction of the castle, you come across a wonderful circle of stones that look as though they might have stood there since the time of the Celts. I gather they are from the 1973 National Eisteddfod, when contemplating the space available in this location, the great cultural event must then have been on a smaller scale than that held at Denbigh this year.

The setting on the grassy hillside, populated as it was on that day with sheep, is particularly pleasing and the views from here are stunning. There is a little iron swing gate that leads from the top of the meadow into the back gardens of the castle. This is a little piece of Ruthin landscape that has the air of being passed by. It is very beautiful and, in this busy world, has an air of great tranquillity about it.



Llanarmon yn Ial's Community Pub

Miles Anderson traces its history

Llanarmon yn Ial has quite a small village centre. There is a long low church standing in a neatly mown green churchyard and opposite it is the village pub - The Raven Inn. There are a scattering of houses around, some old, some more modern. It is perhaps not surprising that the two central institutions of an old, rural village should be those that nourish firstly the spirit and secondly the body. My interest, on this occasion was with the purveyor of the corporeal nourishment, the pub.

It was a cold dank November day when I met one of the members of the committee that have charge of this community pub. David Willis was one of the hundred or more who crowded a Community Council meeting back in 2009 that was called to consider the future of the Raven that by that time was closed.



The building dates back to the late 16th Century and has always been a hostelry serving what in those days would have been an even smaller community. However, rather as today, the surrounding area outside the village centre, is quite well populated, and those country residents look to the village to supply their needs, as Llanarmon yn Ial is one of the more remote villages in Denbighshire. And so the Raven continued until about eight years ago when it was bought for development. The idea was, as David Willis described it, "to build four 'nice' houses there!" I thought I detected a note of disgust in his voice!

By the end of the evening there had been a vote in favour of the community taking over the pub to run it as a community venture. When the first of the stalwarts who were to take on the actual restoration ventured into the building they described it as being like the Marie Celeste with dirty glasses standing in grime where they had been left, and there was a sour stench of beer throughout the building.

A television company, who were at that time making a series with the dubious sounding title of "Save our Boozer", had heard about Raven's situation before the meeting and were already in touch to consider if there might be the makings of a good programme here. They were anxious to offer help when new committee was formed with their seemingly daunting task of getting the Raven back to life and ready to 'take flight'. However the August Bank Holiday was rapidly approaching. This is generally acknowledged as the end of the tourist season and the programme makers were only interested if the Raven could be operational for that weekend, just three weeks in the future.

Fortunately although a comparatively small village in population, Llanarmon is big in residents skilled in the building trades and there were many others willing to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in, as they say. And even more important there was living nearby a newly retired chef willing to undertake the food preparation side of things once a serviceable kitchen was in place.

As our morning wore on, David had been joined by two other members of the team. Jim Pilkington was cashing up the takings and preparing the bar for service. And also Lorna Jones, only four years a local, having recently arrived from Scotland "but loving living here", as she said. It is Lorna who looks after the three very comfortable ensuite double bedrooms as well as arranging the pub's events and special evenings.

"So," I asked them, "How do you all get on as a committee?" "Surprisingly well," was the answer. "We make decisions, vote on them and all just work with what has been decided." It all sounded unusually agreeable. When asked about the ownership of the property, there is a company limited by guarantee set up, Ravenmad Ltd, that is as such non profit making. They have a ten year lease with the option of a further ten years, and the annual turnover

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is enough to pay the rent, pay some staff, cleaners, a chef and some serving staff and still have some available to reinvest in upgrading facilities where needed.

But they have ensure that during the summer months, when the nearby caravan and camping sites are well occupied enough revenue rolls in to cover the winter's costs. Walking is nowadays very popular and there is the mountain-bike centre at Llandegla as well as the fishing lakes nearby. All in all there is a lot to draw summer visitors to the Raven – and they all want food and drink as well as some local atmosphere. And every year they have a great birthday party on August Bank Holiday to celebrate another successful year.

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As a community pub there is not a month goes by that they are not asked for advice on setting up a community project - I expect they have been in touch with the group at Clawddnewydd who are planning to turn their pub into a community venture.

Oh, and by the way, such is the community spirit in Llanarmon yn Ial that they also have a community shop. They may call themselves Ravenmad Limited, but from what I have seen of the crew running this community pub there is nothing 'Mad' about them; they have definitely got their feet firmly on the ground!

A Leisure boost for Ruthin

Jamie Groves welcomes the leisure development's success



The major transformation of facilities at Ruthin Leisure Centre were officially celebrated at an official opening in early November. The £1.4 million development has included the creation of a full size all weather pitch and the construction of an extension to the existing leisure centre. The extension now accommodates a new 25 station fitness suite, changing areas, reception and pool side viewing area.

The new facilities opened to the public on the 25th September 2013 and the demand for use of these facilities has been tremendous with the new fitness suite attracting 500 new members in its first two months and the all weather pitch attracting new clubs from far and wide.

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Jamie Groves, Denbighshire's Head of Communication, Marketing and Communication, said: "We are truly proud of our achievement at the leisure centre. When the majority of councils are looking at closing down facilities during times of cuts, in Denbighshire we are bucking that trend and seeing the benefit of actually investing in facilities that people want and need.

"We wanted to provide residents in the Ruthin area with facilities that were fit for purpose and came up with ambitious plans to really breathe new life into the centre.

"The feedback has been extremely positive. This is indeed a local facility for the local community and the social and health benefits of investing in our leisure centre are immense. We are absolutely delighted with the end result."

Seen in Passing...

- Poppy Day was high profile in Ruthin this year with large poppies set up above eye level on telephone and other posts around the town. Very decorative and an apt reminder to us to contribute to this worthy event.
- Another positive signs to look up to is the change on the board on the Anchor. For so long it had said 'For Sale' – what a welcome change to have it now proclaiming 'Acquired by Ruthin School for Boarding accommodation'. Over recent weeks regular skips have been stationed there clearing out the detritus of its previous life as hotel and restaurant. However the building has a longstanding identity as "Ye Olde Anchor Inn", and it would be sad if that were lost. The Wynnstay after changing to residential use did keep its name. It would be good if this prominent building did the same. And may we make a plea for the retention of the hanging sign, though after much needed renovation, and suitable repainting. For many, this building and the corner site it occupies will always be The Anchor.
- Walking along Mwrog Street, number 10 is all smartened up and looking forward to a new role in the life of Ruthin. Llanfwrog Church PCC has developed it from a retail shop into a modern meeting space down stairs and a one bed flat upstairs. The PCC Developed the property for use by the church and community, the space can be set as a formal meeting room with conference table and chairs, as theatre setup or as an open space. The space can be used for meetings, clubs, local groups and parties. There are also facilities to make drinks and snacks. If you would like to view or hire the space call 01824 702068.
- I wonder how many of the small figures designed to create interest in looking up at our rooflines people have spotted. There is one on the Old Gaol, but you have to look carefully to find the spindly manikin! Elsewhere the round circles of coloured glass fragments in the pavements haven't really struck a chord with our residents.
- Outside Ruthin in the area covered by latter half of our title, 'Ruthin Town and Around', there are plans in the pipeline for the redevelopment of two of our larger mansions. Plans for the redevelopment of Pool Park are likely to go ahead and although some may not care for what is being proposed will ensure the preservation of the main house. At Llanbedr, on the other hand there was a recent meeting to consider the redevelopment of the whole site. The main proposal is to build a block of 12 town houses to the west of the main hall and the demolition of the existing Llanbedr Hall. No formal application has been submitted at the time of writing.
- December will see a new exhibition at the Ruthin Craft Centre – "The Centre for the Applied Arts" to give it its full name which, more probably is a better description of how it functions. From December 7th to 2nd February there will be a highly regarded retrospective exhibition of Emmanuel Cooper's work – 1938-2012. Dr Cooper was a distinguished craftsman, writer and broadcaster. A potter of international standing, his work is represented in many public collections. He was the author of nearly thirty books and a regular broadcaster on television and radio.
- There is concern at the prolonged closure of the Cuning Green. This is an important pedestrian thoroughfare, and for visitors as well as residents, a route from which to see many of the best aspects of Ruthin in its historic setting. I gather that there are outstanding insurance considerations that may ensure its closure for a further 6 months or longer.
- Now the tourist season is officially over – though in this day and age tourism is more a year round consideration – the volunteer visitor centre is closed. It is time for a reflection on how well it has performed. Certainly it was surprising that more volunteers were not found to ensure that it was always open as advertised. If it continues should it not have a telephone installed at the very least? Judging on how frequently it was visited there seems to be a strong demand that it becomes a permanent feature of Ruthin life with some opening times even in what is supposed to be the closed season for tourists.



HOPES FOR A NEW BEGINNING!

Bobby Feeley reports on new developments



This week I met with the new Chairman of BCUHB, Dr. Peter Higson, along with C.E.O, Mohammed Mehmet, The Director of Social Services and the Leader of the Council, to discuss how he intends to help turn around both the reputation and performance of the Health Board in North Wales.

It is true to say the last few years have proved to be a rocky ride and across the region there has been disquiet about reorganisation of community services, including closure of some community hospitals and downgrading of others.

Dr. Higson, a psychologist, who worked at N.W. Hospital, Denbigh for 15 years, outlined some of the difficulties encountered during the 4 years since BCUHB has been operational. North Wales is a large and diverse area to be covered by one Board, and, along with a reduction of funding, {a further 8,4%} to come, even with a small injection of cash from Welsh Government, means they are still looking at a deficit for the year ahead. With less than 700,000 people it is difficult to sustain three acute hospitals and a three year plan to ensure their viability is now being drawn up. He assured us they will take it steadily and do the job properly and build up trust again. He agreed the

general public need some guidance sooner rather than later on plans for the three acute hospital sites, if the plan is indeed to specialise on different sites, the public should be told sooner rather than later.

It is true to say the last few years have proved to be a rocky ride and across the region there has been disquiet about reorganisation of community services. . .

Here in Ruthin our MIU closed with a promise of a much better service, opening longer hours just down the road in Denbigh Infirmary. Unfortunately Denbigh is not yet fully operational and I asked Dr. Higson if he could give us a timeline for that service. Fortunately, there are no plans to close our hospital and the use will be extended shortly, as the growing focus on care at home means Ruthin will be used as the Hub for Enhanced Care at Home. Sadly this service was meant to start in June 2013 but because of various difficulties, including the recruitment of a suitable Consultant, this is not yet up and running. I asked Dr. Higson to find out when this is likely to go ahead and he has promised an answer in the next week or two. We brought up transport difficulties that may arise, particularly in rural areas, I pointed out that integration between Health and Local Authorities needs to happen, including budgetary arrangements, we've talked about a 'seamless service' for many years, it's time for that to become a reality.

Dr. Peter. Higson is a slight, quietly spoken man but has a steely determination to enhance and improve the Health Board over the next three years

On a more general note across Denbighshire we have made progress with Enhanced Care at home in the North of the County, secured the promise of a new hospital facility in Rhyl, and a new Health Centre for Llangollen is in the pipeline, and has guaranteed funding for a Denbighshire led project for a Single Point of Access to improve communication. He promised to answer to any outstanding questions within the next week or two.

Dr. Peter. Higson is a slight, quietly spoken man but has a steely determination to enhance and improve the Health Board over the next three years, he has a difficult task ahead of him, it won't be easy, but he seems to have the will and determination to succeed.

I wish him well.

Contenders for the 2013 Quayle Award

The Committee would welcome recommendations for this award

Each year the Ruthin and District Civic Association is called upon to judge the merits of developments that have been completed during the previous twelve months to see if they can discover a worthy contender for the Quayle Award. We appeal to our members, as well as members of the public, to submit suitable nominations.

The award is designed to encourage high quality improvements to the built environment of the town of Ruthin and its surrounding environment. Contenders are required to be imaginative, in sympathy with the character of their surroundings, use appropriate materials, enhance the built environment and most importantly, to be outstanding in their field. The Association will be pleased to consider any such propositions that might be brought to their attention.

There is no necessity to make an annual award if there are no contenders considered to be worthy of the award. However if you know of any suitable contenders, please submit your suggestions to the Association's Secretary, Miles Anderson, Silver Birches, Llanfair D.C, Ruthin, LL15 2SD of by email to miles-and-jill@freeuk.com

Christmas in Ruthin 1799 and still there is 'No Room at the Inn!'

Gareth Evans tells a sad story to rival that of Dicken's Tiny Tim



As the logs crackle in the grate on Christmas Day and the world is momentarily shut off from our lives, we revel in the company of our families and look forward to feasting and entertainment. For hundreds of years this has been a special time. Has it always been like this? Has the season of goodwill always been a time for community compassion towards the poor and destitute?

Regrettably, no. For many poor visitors, Christmas in Ruthin would have been a grim experience. In the eighteenth century, increasingly effective measures were taken to identify poor strangers in the area. On discovery there would have been the short journey to the house of correction at the bottom of Clwyd Street before the longer journey back to their home parishes so that they didn't become a burden on the Ruthin parishes. There would have been no special treatment at Christmas for these unfortunates!



One journey through Denbighshire in December 1799 has been recorded. It is Christmas week in 1799 when Catherine Goff and her child, Mary, Mary Kitygaden and John her child, and Elinor Horne are to be found at Denbigh in the custody of a borough constable. He gives them two meals of meat costing 4d each – so not an expensive meal - and hires a cart and to ship them off to Ruthin. They arrive in Ruthin and are entrusted to the constable of Well Street where again they are fed for 4d each and lodged for the night. The lodging also costs 4d, which suggest that on a winter's evening they were placed in an outhouse which was probably unheated. The following morning after another fourpenny meal these cold and miserable people are conveyed on horseback to Llandegla where they get supper lodging and breakfast before being carted to Wrexham. They arrive here on Christmas Eve. Their 1799 Christmas Day was spent in a cart between Wrexham and Overton. It is probable that they would not have realised that it was Christmas but, huddled in a cart, they would most certainly have known it was winter.

A Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year to all our Readers

Your new committee members, elected at the Annual General Meeting are

Chairman – Liz Williams

Vice Chairman – Heather Williams

Treasurer – Robert Williams

Secretary – Miles Anderson

Serving Members – Kay Culhane, Menna Jones, Anne Roberts, Harold Jones



If you wish to bring to the Association's attention any matter that you feel should be of concern to them, please address them in the first place to the Secretary at Silver Birches, Llanfair DC, Ruthin, LL15 2SD or to miles-and-jill@freeuk.com

Ruthin Town and Around is published quarterly by Ruthin and District Civic Association. The views expressed by the individual writers are not necessarily those of the association.

Should you be interested in subscribing to the association or becoming a member, please contact our treasurer, Robert Williams on 01824 704998 or ruthincivic@btinternet.com

We welcome letters and contributions.

Please send them to the Editor, Miles Anderson at Silver Birches, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, LL15 2SD or miles-and-jill@freeuk.com

Contributors: Miles Anderson, Ruth Bacon, Bobby Feeley, Gareth Evans.

Guest writers: Jamie Groves

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