

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

March 20013

Ruthin Civic Association looks at Glasdir following the Devastating December Flooding

Former chairman, Derek Jones reviews the situation

- We gather that remedial work on the Glasdir houses damaged by the floods is almost complete. Hardly unexpectedly, insurance companies are putting on pressure and, naturally, the residents affected are anxious to resume their lives after a most unwanted interruption.
- We've also heard that, despite everything, the houses are fundamentally sound. That must be good news, especially when there's going to be an uphill battle to sell those still standing empty.

- 'Uphill' is, of course, hardly a problem at Glasdir! It's on a floodplain and always was! Future plans for building on such sites must be scrutinised with the utmost rigour. And after the estates have been built, checking that the culverts are clear must become a regular routine.



- And perhaps it must become a 'regular routine' for the Civic Association to consider not just the 'look' of new houses, and how they fit with their surroundings – important though these questions must always be - but also at the more practical questions raised above. Otherwise we run the risk of thinking in one dimension only – not a good idea for an organisation which has 'civic' in its title.
- And, to judge by government pronouncements, and those by other major political parties, there are likely to be many new estates constructed in the next 20 years – not just here but all over the country. Civic Societies everywhere are going to be busy!

Association Secretary Required

The Ruthin and District Civic Association is urgently looking for someone to help them by providing secretarial services. If you would like to assist the committee in carrying out their valuable work and have access to internet and emailing facilities they would be very pleased to hear from you. Please contact our chairman, Betty Downs on 01824 702185 for further information

Fascinating developments are under way behind Nantclwyd y Dre

Wendy Williams tells us all about it

Hidden behind Nantclwyd y Dre, the oldest known timber framed townhouse in Wales, is a well kept secret. 'The Lord's Garden' was established after 1282 at the time of the Edwardian castle building in North Wales. References to the garden as the 'Lord's Acre' can be found in the 14th century Ruthin court rolls. The penalties of stealing from the garden were high. Gronw ap Iorwerth Bolle was issued a fine of two pounds for stealing a swarm of bees, whilst two men were imprisoned in the Gaol at Ruthin Castle for trespass and theft of apples.

Edward Roberts of Nantclwyd y Dre first leased the garden in 1570. It was later bought by Eubule Thelwall, an esteemed lawyer, politician and keen horticulturalist shortly after his house in London was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.

The Lord's Garden, unlike many gardens of its era has escaped development and has remained a garden. Although features of the garden have changed and been added to through the years, the garden has a wonderful charm and tells a story.

It is enclosed, with one exception in the south east corner, where a low wall reveals fabulous views of the Cuning Green, the Castle's old rabbit warren and a unique view of the original Edwardian castle walls and postern gate.

To the south it is possible to see the Old Gaol and further to stunning views of the Vale of Clwyd.

Today the garden is a haven for wildlife. A resident hedgehog can occasionally be seen snuffling about the under growth. The garden supports a wide variety of birds including siskins, gold crests, tree creepers and a greater spotted woodpecker. The large old trees provide perfect roosting habitat for bats.



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The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a First round pass and funding to Denbighshire Heritage Services to develop plans to restore the garden. The aim for the gardens restoration is to create a welcoming, usable, safe space for visitors, schools and the local community to enjoy and learn about the garden's heritage.

A period of public consultation began in December and culminated following an event held at Nantclwyd y Dre on the 26th of January. Over seventy

people came on the day to see the garden and to share their thoughts on how it could be restored.

During mid February an archaeological excavation was carried out to identify features within the garden. Two trenches were dug which unearthed various items including pottery from different ages, beautiful post medieval roofing tiles and a small flint tool which could be as old as 8000 years. Year five pupils

from Ysgol Borthyn and Ysgol Penbarras were able to come and see the excavation in progress.

The next steps will involve working with experts in garden history and design, biodiversity and silviculture. We will then draw up a plan for the restoration and for the future management of the garden. Members of the public will have

an opportunity come and see the plans in April and to comment before they are submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for second round approval.

It is anticipated that restoration work in the garden will begin in the autumn of 2013. If you would like more information or if you would like to get involved visit <http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk> or contact Wendy Williams on wendy.a.williams@denbighshire.gov.uk or 01824 708232

The December Debate

Miles Anderson reports on the first Open Forum meeting

A Monday evening in early December, the 10th to be precise, is not the best time to expect people to turn out, but the response to our invitation on this occasion was very impressive. The small but warm and architecturally very interesting committee rooms of St Peter's where we met, was well filled by the 25 members who were able to attend, some were unable to make it on the evening and many more would have liked to participate but find winter evenings a time not to venture out – perhaps this reflects on the 'less-than-youthful' general membership of the association.



Chairman, Betty Downs opened the evening and introduced first Derek Jones to propose the motion that "A Civic Society should be 'Jack of all trades'". Civic Societies, he informed us date back to 1957. He argued that their concerns should not principally be with the built environment, but at its heart should be the people who make up the community – civic pride and heritage, yes, certainly, but it has to be more than inward looking in its approach. Here in Ruthin and its environs, the Association reflects that

openness, in particular with the Quayle Award and Open Doors. A town should not be a museum. A civic association should be concerned with all aspects of a town, its people and their welfare. At present it should be involved in the disastrous situation at Glasdir. Politics, in its original sense relating the Polis, the city state of ancient Greece, has the people and the agora with its democratic ideals at its heart.

Robin Wolley, a conversation architect, was introduced by the chairman to oppose the motion and argued that being 'Jack of all trades' the civic society would end up as a rather, as he put it, 'fluffy' master of none. Rather he argued it should have at its heart building regeneration. Buildings that are in the public sphere frequently need regeneration to survive. As society changes and develops, he argued, buildings have to find new uses. Such development should keep these important

buildings, which are part of the essential fabric of our living environment, open and purposefully used. Good examples Robin quoted here in Ruthin were the Manorhaus, the Conservative Club, Fineline and Crown House. He regretted that Nantclwyd House, as he argued it should be called, has been turned into a museum and that the Wynnstay is now a private home. In response to the suggestion that funding was not available, he countered by suggesting that overwhelming public pressure can bring forth the necessary finance.

There followed a lively discussion from the floor of the meeting. It was first suggested that a civic society has less power to influence decisions than a practising architect might, to which Robin replied that it should motivate public pressure. There was a suggestion that market forces determine the use of buildings and that there are political reasons for urban decline. Again Robin countered that power, though possibly latent, lies with the people. Perhaps, it was suggested a progressive way forward for an association would be to take up a particular project such as the accessibility of Nantclwyd House. There were concerns for some members at the Associations over involvement with the historic centre of the town rather than the environs. However others pointed out counter examples, such as the Quayle Award to the development of Bwlch Penbarras.



The motion was eventually carried by 15 votes to 3 with a number of abstentions.

It had, all in all, been a most worthwhile and engaging evening and should not be allowed to be an isolated occasion for the Association to engage with its members. We look forward to more such events in the future.

Proposals for Ruthin's Food Bank

Ruth Bacon brings us up to date on developments

Choice is a word we hear frequently these days. We expect to be able to choose where we live and how we live. We regard choice as fundamental to our lifestyle. But for many people nowadays lifestyle choices come down to such basics as whether to pay their bills, heat their home or eat. Reasons such as job loss, low wages, illness, or delay in benefit payments can place people in this position.

example by local churches, chapels, schools, places of work and some supermarket chains. Volunteers sort the food when it arrives checking sell-by dates and weighing everything in.

To be able to get food a client must have a voucher from one of a number of participating agencies such as doctor's surgeries, schools, district nurses, housing associations, Citizens Advice Bureau and others. Each voucher is

weighed out and the weight is recorded.

Under the auspices of the Trussell Trust a food bank was opened in Capel Mawr, Denbigh last October. Although not convinced about the need for one initially the minister, Wayne Roberts, went ahead and by mid-January it was feeding 80-100 people a week.

On April 4th a Ruthin branch will open in Awelon Community Centre. It will be a satellite of the Denbigh food bank, and rent of premises together with setting up and administration and running costs are being funded for the first two years by Ruthin Rotary Club. Two meetings held in St Peter's Church Parish Rooms and chaired by Rev Stuart Evans were well attended and most who came have volunteered to help in whatever way they can. As well as helpers on food bank opening days, volunteers are also needed for delivering or collecting food, computer input or to assist on supermarket collection days. Bob Ellis of Rotary has agreed to be team leader and co-ordinator and can be contacted at r.owen-ellis@talktalk.net

At the first meeting the question was raised whether there was a need for a food bank in Ruthin. Nick Snape of Rotary stated that their members believe there is. The size of the need remains to be seen.



The Trussell Trust is a Christian organisation which set out to help such people. It was originally set up to help Bulgarian children, and this is still a major part of its work. Research in Salisbury in 2000 by its founder, Paddy Henderson, revealed much deprivation and hunger locally. So the idea of a food bank that people in need could utilise was born. He set up the first in his garden shed. The idea caught on and in 2004 the UK food bank network was launched teaching churches and communities nationwide how to start their own food bank. Today there are over 300 food banks nationwide run by volunteers and stocked with non-perishable, nourishing food products donated for

individually numbered and the details are kept on a data-base. Clients present the voucher at the food bank where they are greeted by a volunteer and offered tea or coffee while they wait for their food to be sorted and packed. Clients receive three days worth of food in return for their voucher. Three vouchers can be issued to a client in all, although if need persists this can be extended.

Trussell Trust has devised "shopping lists" which takes into account need – for example, a family of four will receive a larger amount than a single person. Clients are asked whether they have food allergies, the ages of children, their cooking facilities and whether they are vegetarian. The food allocated is then

RUTHIN HOSPITAL –

Bobby Feeley reports on proposed changes and continuations

When Editor, Miles, asked if I would write an update on Ruthin Community Hospital, I thought it would be a good opportunity to get to the truth of what's actually happening to



our much loved Community Hospital.

Ruthin Hospital was built in 1914 and in the First World War it was used as a convalescent home for wounded soldiers. It flourished and soon became a busy and indispensable hospital with operations being carried out by physicians travelling from Liverpool, Chester and Wrexham. It was a General Hospital, carrying out major and minor operations in the small, but well equipped, theatre. When the NHS came into being in 1948, Ruthin Hospital became what was known as a General Practitioner Hospital and by the 1980s it evolved into a Community Hospital. That was then; what about now?

Currently Ruthin hospital has 22 inpatient beds and 22 full-time equivalent nursing staff, it has an active, enthusiastic League of Friends which has

funded many improvements and additional equipment and facilities. I went to the hospital to talk with the Locality Matron, Francis Millar, I wanted to find out at firsthand

what the plans are for the future, so many rumours have flown around Ruthin recently people hardly know what to believe. I should start by confirming the hospital is certainly not going to close, far from it, Francis spoke enthusiastically about the developments in the pipeline:

Ruthin Community Hospital is going to be the 'Hub' for the new Enhanced Care Service, about to be implemented in the South of Denbighshire. This service and its specialised staff, along with clinical staff working closely with G.P.s, will be based at the hospital. In addition, the administrative team will also be based at the Hospital, to ensure the communication of referrals and co-ordination of complex care needs, run seamlessly across health, social care and voluntary agencies. This will enable patients to stay safely within their own homes or the community hospital. The majority of the nursing staff are from the locality and have carried out highly specialised training at all levels and they will be able to provide local knowledge as well as clinical skills. Day services are to be

redesigned and developed to serve the wider population within the South Denbighshire locality, the re-vamped day services will now be used for many more services including:

- Promoting Early Memory Clinics
- Wales Abdominal Aortic Aneurism Screening Programme
- Pulmonary Rehabilitation
- An innovative 'Falls Prevention Programme' is in the planning stages

Some are disappointed that the Day Service will not be as it used to be and other ways of providing the care and important social interaction, that used to take place, are being explored with users and the voluntary sector. Minor Injuries Unit and X-Ray will now be provided at Denbigh Infirmary, but many existing clinics will continue such as: phlebotomy, dressings, ECGs, dopplers, leg ulcer clinics alongside many more outpatient clinics: Diabetic Retinopathy, ENT, Renal, Podiatry, Pain, Continence, Obstetrics, Ophthalmics, Elderly Mental Health Psychology, School Nurse etc.

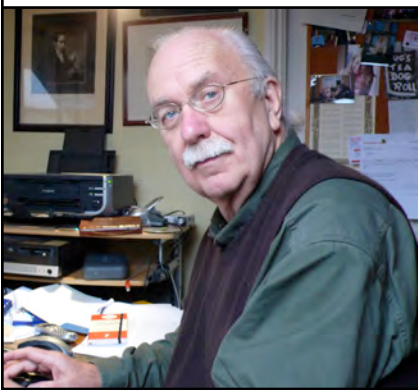
Since its inception, almost 100 years ago Ruthin hospital has changed and evolved and it seems to be entering another new chapter, services are changing but they are expanding into new territory. The plans for the future sound positive, undeniably there are to be losses but, hopefully, there will be even more gains.

NB. This information was subsequently confirmed by the Board

Professor John Barrell talks of Ruthin's 18th C painter, Edward Pugh, and his place in the town's history

**A conversation with Derek Jones celebrates the Well Street born
artist's bicentenary.**

Let's talk about John Barrell before we talk about Edward Pugh! You have written extensively about Welsh and English social history, literature and painting in the 18th and early 19th century. What



interests you about this period?

Until I wrote on Pugh I hadn't paid much attention to Welsh history and culture. I had written about the Carmarthenshire poet and painter John Dyer, whose poem *The Fleece* I think is one of the greatest of eighteenth-century poems, but he didn't make a great deal of his Welshness in that poem, and nor did I. So let me answer about my interest in English culture and history and talk a bit later about how I came to be involved with Pugh and Wales.

My interest in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries began as an interest in landscape, and in how landscape painting and poetry were changing in response to the modernisation of the economy of the country – the way for example that the development of roads, and the

enclosure movement, were obliging people to feel they belonged more and more to the wider nation, less and less to their own local region. From there I became interested in ideas about the organisation of society, and the great eighteenth-century question of how people might be taught to identify with the interests of the nation as a whole rather than with their own personal interest, or the interests of their own trades or occupations. In recent years I've been focusing mainly on the movement for universal suffrage, and the attempts of government in the period of the French revolution to suppress it. I suppose what these things have in common is they are all instances of how English culture and society changed as part of a process of modernisation which eventually got us to where we are now.

You have written previously about some of our best known landscape painters – Turner, Constable and Gainsborough, and so on. Edward Pugh is nowhere near so well known, even to those who live in his home town. How did you come across him and what made you want to write Edward Pugh of Ruthin?

Sometime in the late 1990s my wife and I bought an anonymous landscape watercolour in a picture gallery in Leominster, and a few years after that we set out to find the

view it depicted, between Mold and Ruthin. Then, in 2008, a friend in Cardiff asked me to contribute to a conference on eighteenth-century Welsh culture. She invited me, I think, because I knew so little about Wales, and I accepted for the same reason. I started to put together a talk by researching our watercolour, and had pretty well finished it before I found out who the artist was. When I did, I started looking at Pugh's other works, and soon found myself wanting to write a book about him. I saw in him the same local attachment that had fascinated me in the poet John Clare, the subject of my very first book. His work was quite unlike the pictures of North Wales made by English tourists: they were looking at landscapes, at examples of sublime or beautiful views that could have been anywhere but happened to be in North Wales. Pugh was looking at places that he knew well: he depicted people and activities as involved in local issues and conflicts, whereas the people in tourist landscapes mostly just stood or sat around doing nothing, as if added as an afterthought. It was the contrast between what Pugh was doing, and what English artists were doing, that intrigued me: many of those English artists, like Paul Sandby, or John Warwick Smith, were much more talented than Pugh, but he had a take on the landscapes of Wales, and especially of Denbighshire, that they could never have.

Pugh travelled far and wide in Wales. How much of his output was devoted to Ruthin? Do you have a favourite 'local' picture and how well does it confirm your views about 'the dark side of the landscape'?

Pugh writes about Ruthin, and especially about the views out from Ruthin, in his wonderful

landscape'. It shows a tragic, perhaps destitute woman, widowed by the war with republican France, clutching her baby. She stands silhouetted in shadow where we cannot read her expression, but we register her deep sadness in the faces of a sympathetic farmer and his wife, looking at her from the sunlit side of the picture.

In the near future I'll be visiting Wales every day, but only because we will be moving to Herefordshire, and every morning to work off breakfast I'll be walking the mile uphill to Powis. But it's probably harder to get to Ruthin from there than it is from York, where I live now, so I'll have to think up some good reasons to drive up. It will depend I expect on whether interest here in Pugh does survive past 2013, the bicentenary of his death. Your annual festival I know is mostly about music, but if there's space in the programme to celebrate the history of Ruthin, that would be a place to remember him, both as artist and writer. A plaque in Well Street where he lived would keep him alive in local memory. *Cambria Depicta* should be on sale from whoever will carry it. I think too there's a place for memorabilia: frameable prints, postcards, fridge magnets, even place mats, of his local views, on sale perhaps in the Gaol and the Craft Centre. The mats might even come to be used in local restaurants. Memorabilia like that could embed him in the visual memory of Ruthinians, and the town would benefit



book, *Cambria Depicta*, an illustrated tour of North Wales, which I'm delighted is now in print again, after 200 years. He only made one picture of Ruthin, a view from the banks of the Clwyd looking up to St Peter's, but he made a fascinating picture of Llanfwrog, looking past St Mwrog's over to Foel Fenlli; and another of Coedmarchan, from near the golf course, looking down on Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd and across to the Clwydian range. My favourites are the Llanfwrog picture and one of the boundary stone between Llanferres and Mold, uphill from the Loggerheads Inn. The first is a fascinating example of what I've called 'the dark side of the

You yourself have visited Ruthin several times during the past five years. I assume you like the place! Many will hope that you will not sever all connections with Edward Pugh's town. Pugh celebrations this year apart, how would you like us to keep his name warm?

I love Ruthin. The view of St Peter's Square from the corner of Castle Street is just about my favourite small-town vista: I've collected about 50 different postcard views of it.



from being permanently associated with a fascinating artist and an immensely gifted writer who was born, lived and died here.

RUTHIN'S FIRST DEFENCES

Gareth Evans searches for Ruthin's Edwardian Walls

Ruthin's marvellous square, today called St Peter's but for most of its existence known as Market Place, has seen many changes. Buildings and functions have come and gone and today it is perhaps quieter than at any time since it was first created. Our historical image is of a busy market area with people from all around selling their produce with town traders doing a brisk business in cloth and haberdashery and ale-houses and taverns slaking the thirst of market goers eager for gossip.

However there was a time when the square was the centre of a tiny besieged community scared of its own shadows and especially wary of everyone from outside the small town. The earliest English settlers who arrived in Ruthin late in 1282 soon found that the Welsh community in the town shared their commercial interests but there were more than enough grievances throughout the Vale of Clwyd to make the English wary.

From the word go there had to be some form of protection for the fledgling community. After all, it would be difficult to believe that the Welsh would be so uncommonly welcoming as to befriend a new group of migrants who were intent on creaming off the profits of the local market! The settlers would only survive behind robust defensive structures guarded by watchmen from the community assisted by the lord's soldiers.

To find these long gone and lost defences seemed an immense challenge but the answer has a breathtaking simplicity about it. Defences tend to be in long

coherent lines which frustrate development. They can become property boundaries or streets. Boundaries with different ages of development on either side would be especially welcome and any physical remains would be like hitting the jackpot, and Ruthin seems to have all three.

On the founding of the borough in 1282 there were in existence at the top of Ruthin hill a castle under construction and the Welsh maerdref of Ruthin, the administrative centre of the cantref of Dyffryn Clwyd before the conquest. To these would be added a new English settlement. Post conquest records show the maerdref occupied the top of today's Well Street and the first planned English development occurred on today's Castle Street.

There are property boundaries around the medieval heart of Ruthin forming two distinct rectangles; one creates a small enclave around Castle Street in the lee of the castle and the other encloses the hilltop of Ruthin from the church almost to the castle. Developments on the outer side of all these boundaries are much younger than on the inside and parts of the boundaries seem to be man-made height variations between inner and outer areas.

The Castle Street rectangle encloses an area of classic medieval burgage development. On the outer side the slope runs quickly away, but there are striking height variations at the north-west corner behind 7 Upper Clwyd Street and also at the south-east corner, just north of Record Street.

The northern boundary runs from behind 7 Upper Clwyd

Street to the rear of Siop Nain where the Welsh national anthem was first printed. It forms the north-east corner of the Castle Street rectangle. For some this will be a sweet irony: the forces of the Welsh resurgence of the nineteenth century confronting the conqueror's derelict walls!

The eastern boundary runs south between Siop Nain and Capel Pendref as a height variation of a metre or more until one property before Record Street where, over two metres high, it turns west at a right angle to become the southern boundary between Ingleside and Iwerddon. Once across Castle Street it continues along the south side of Plas yn Dre where the Tudor town rentals indicate the end of the town.

The western boundary is today at the rear of the Castle Street burgages from Plas yn Dre northwards until it reaches 7 Upper Clwyd Street. Here it turns a right angle at a height of 5 metres. At the west, north-west, east and south-east sides there is a sense of being above and separated from the land on the lower side. It retains to this day the whiff of elitism given it by its first inhabitants, and the exclusivity created by its defences.

If you, or a friend, is interested in becoming a member of the Association and helping with their valuable work, please contact our treasurer for more information. He is Robert Williams, at Lenton House, Mold Road, Ruthin LL15 1SL, or at heatherandrobort@btinternet.com, or 01824 704998

Seen in passing...

If you are travelling on the Denbigh Road in the near future, look out for what looks like a brilliantly embroidered cloth laid by the roadside just past the link road turn off. Ruthin Rotary have planted great swathes of brightly coloured crocus here to cheer us up after a long and dreary winter. You need to catch them at just the right moment, but they quite spectacular. Thank you Rotary



On approaching Crown House from the now one-way Wynnstay Road, and turning up the short access road, one could wonder why on earth it has double yellow lines painted along its length. Are we sure that this an adopted Road? It is wide enough to take double flow traffic. For people visiting the offices in Crown house or the excellent café there, the lack of parking in the area is just another unnecessary irritation.

We had a call from the BBC recently. They had noticed that Denbighshire County Council had won the appeal against the

enforcement notice served on 'The Purple Shop' that had gone as far as the Welsh Assembly. The designated inspector decided that the listed building enforcement notice had been correct and was upheld. An important conservation area needs to be protected and if the inspector's decision had gone the other way then a whole flood of contraventions could have followed. However, as far as the BBC were concerned since the shop was now painted white, there wasn't much of a visual news story to be followed up.

It is interesting to follow the progress of the extensive installation of protection barriers around the Bric roundabout. This is the designated main entrance to the town centre, that is, if you follow the multiplicity of traffic direction signs that proliferate around this end of Ruthin. Obviously the idea is to direct pedestrians to specific road crossing points. At the corner from Tesco to the Vet's, as it used to be, there is a 'Zebra' crossing, and traffic lights from Troed y Rhew car park to the Craft Centre. However where there is a great need of one – from Tesco to the Craft Centre - you still have to take your life in your hands. Could we have a designated crossing there too please?

We are always to pass on compliments, and there have been several on the quality and care that is taken of the town's footpaths. If we are to encourage people to leave their cars and walk in the town, that is to be welcomed. There is, however, one that needs some attention. Behind the wall on Station Road, in the strip of most attractive parkland there,

the path is at present muddy and in need of attention – could we have something done about it please?

If you care to glance up as passing through Ruthin library rather than looking at the array of computer screens or casting around for the book of your choice, you will see a pair of intriguing silk banners suspended between the columns. They were specially designed by Joy Butler of Isaf Design, near Cilcain to represent the change of use of the building from a court of law to a disseminator of the written word. Interwoven into the design are the words "*O lys y gwir i lys y gair*". The quotation is taken from Llyfr Colan, probably the last law book to be produced in independent Wales. A reminder of the ancient native laws of Wales, those of Hywel Dda, which are one of the pinnacles of medieval European culture, a literary masterpiece and a valuable part of the literary heritage of Wales. When passing next, pause and reflect on what is here represented!



‘CIVIC’ IS A GOOD WORD’

DEREK JONES has some suggestions on how it might become even more part of our stock-in-trade.

We used to be called ‘The Ruthin Association’, and, yes, I played a part, about a dozen years ago, in encouraging us to change our name to ‘The Ruthin and District Civic Association’.

There are losses and gains in every change of this kind. Though it was a bit of a mouthful, ‘Ruthin and District Association’ certainly had the advantage of emphasising our commitment to the well-being of our particular town and district. On the other hand, what did the words *mean*? Did they really express our nature and purpose?

‘Ruthin and District Civic Association’ is even more of a mouthful, (and shortened to RADCA, has a rather ugly ring to it, to my ears anyway!). Furthermore, like its predecessor, I am not sure this form of words means much to the great majority of local people who are not members.

That’s a pity, of course, because ‘*civic*’ is a good word, an adjective, which, used regularly, reminds us that we are *citizens*,

members of a community, with all the rights and responsibilities which go with the word: taking an interest in its affairs, voting in local and national elections, being eligible for jury service, and everything we mean by ‘civic pride’ (history, buildings old and new, famous sons and daughters, past and present).

The word ‘Association’ remains a problem. It is, of course, used accurately at present. We are a *membership* organisation; members pay a subscription. This is, however, a contradiction; if citizenship is built into our very name, then surely all Ruthin and district citizens should be members!

I am not saying this is an easy problem to solve...and, you will be relieved to hear that I am not suggesting yet another change of name!

I began with the proposition that we are a pressure group for citizenship. Membership is not just a hobby or an interest. We belong because we want to celebrate and improve the place we live in – not everything in

the garden is lovely, as the recent Glasdir disaster has shown.

But we are not some exclusive membership club. And we have the means – you are holding it in your hands – to share our passion for place with all local citizens. *Town and Around* is currently delivered, free, to every house in our area once a year to mark Open Doors. That is good, but that gives the impression that we are *only* interested in matters of heritage.

Perhaps we could gradually increase the number of occasions in which we aim for a wider distribution, and perhaps, over time, that might even bring about an increase in the numbers of people actually joining the Association. There is room for a genuine community newspaper here – the *Denbighshire Free Press* cannot possibly cover all the local matters which need coverage. Step forward, *Town and Around*, and become what it already is, in principle - a quarterly newspaper for citizens

A New Beginning for Ruthin Bowlers

After losing the use of the old conservative club bowling green, the Gorphwysfa bowling club looked for a plot where a new green could be constructed. After discussions with Llanfwrog Community Association it was agreed to construct a green at the community centre.

Funds were raised through grants from Cadwyn Clwyd and Sports Wales allowing construction to start with a sod cutting ceremony in August 2012. The green is now built except for the turf which was delayed due to the wet weather. It is hoped that the turf will be laid this month which will allow the green to be played on this year. In the picture, club members, Sylvia Hughes, Rhona

Edwards, and Gwyneth Carlyle anticipate a new game. The green will be open to the public; bowls can be hired from the community centre. Alternatively if you are a keen bowler, membership of Gorphwysfa Bowling club is available. For further information contact bob.blackburn@talktalk.net



Ruthin's Shops that 'Buck the Trend'

Miles Anderson investigates the High Street's thriving shops

This is the first of a series of articles for Town and Around in which I will look at and seek to explain why Ruthin has shops in its town centre that defy the recession and thrive despite the challenge of the supermarkets.

We have two butchers at opposite ends of the town, both of which fall into this category and talking to their owners it soon became clear why they are still with us proudly serving the residents of Ruthin and its environs.

I called first at John Jones. On Clwyd Street, and talked to Charlie, one of the two Jones



brothers who currently run the longstanding family business. It was great-grandfather John who first started the business selling meat to outlets such as the Gaol from the front room of their home in Mwrog Street back in the 1860s. Son Emlyn was in the business when it moved into town to take up premises in the more central Clwyd Street. And his son, Edwin, will have been a familiar face behind the counter for many long term residents.

Charlie, in claiming to be the longest established family business in town, puts their success down to the personal service and the assurance he could give customers that the provenance of all their products

was known and principally from the Vale of Clwyd.

The addition of twice weekly fish and more recently vegetable supplies ensures that customers have a wide range of local produce here in the centre of town. "And," he said, "In the supermarkets you'll get no advice on how best to prepare a particular cut of meat as you can here. The shop is sometimes like a club with all the regulars calling in for a chat as well as doing their shopping." Certainly, a personal welcome, a guaranteed product and a wide range of fresh food keeps locals regularly coming through the door!

The other thriving butcher in Ruthin is unsurprisingly also owned and run by Jones Brothers. Down at the bottom of Well Street brothers Wyn and Glyn who have charge of 'W & G Jones' butchers and Farm shop. It was Glyn whom I met for a chat one recent afternoon. "So Farm shop?" I asked. That was to emphasise, Glyn told me, that their produce comes from local farms and does not have travelled great distances to sit on their counter. Both boys are local Ruthin born and bred and have had their butchers shop for 24 years. Although they can't compete with the 127 or so years of John Jones, 24 years in this day and age is a good pedigree for a local, retail shop and considering Glyn's comparatively youthful appearance I think he must have gone into business straight from school.

Over recent years the brothers have attended many of the local food festivals to promote their wares – all their pies and pasties and cooked meats are prepared on the premises, it is all their own produced fare, and they like to promote it as such.

Asked as to whether he supplied businesses, Glyn replied, "All our customers tend to be local residents, people we know and who trust us. Frequently we will be asked advice on how to prepare certain cuts of meat and give advice to both young and old as well as frequently preparing special orders." Like all businesses these days compliance with rules and regulations can take up a lot of time, but as Glyn said, "It is better to have the certainty that everything is safe."

Both of our local butchers I spoke to offered a selection of fresh fruit and veg as well as meat products and for each of



them it was hardly surprising in the current crisis of dubious beef products that have travelled through 6 or 7 different European countries before being offered to unsuspecting customers, that it is the freshness and the local provenance of what they sell that is of most importance to them. If meat and meat products is what you want, look no further than the streets of Ruthin!

A Busy Year ahead for the Ruthin and District Civic Association

For 2013 there is a full programme of events ahead for RADCA. Following the first Open Forum meeting, the next time the Committee will meet with their members will be at the presentation of the Quayle Award Plaque to JD Wetherspoons for the excellent way they refurbished and restored – and brought back to life - the Castle Hotel on St Peter’s Square. On this occasion following the formalities we are fortunate to have local historian, Gareth Evans to give us a talk on the history of the building since its earliest times. As we go to press the date for this event has not been arranged.



The RADCA has been very much involved in the preparations for the celebrations of the bicentenary of the death of Ruthin born artist Edward Pugh. Born in Well Street at an unknown address and buried in St Peter’s churchyard this artist, illustrator, and author of Cambria Depicta will be

celebrated with a number of planned events to take place throughout the year, in particular a Pugh Festival which will run from July 27th until September 27th.

Our third planned open meeting is hoped to be an excursion accompanied by architect Robin Wolley to visit one of his regenerated church buildings, a further one that was a model for the development and perhaps a strawberry tea to conclude the afternoon

In September there will be the dedication of the meeting room in Ruthin’s Library to our recent chairman, ex-mayor of Ruthin and renowned journalist and essayist in both Welsh and English, Hafina Clwyd. It is also planned to have an annual lecture in the newly named Ystafell Hafina in her memory

And before we know where we are it will be that time of the

year when for what it now its 11th year there will be yet another Open Doors weekend with so much of Ruthin’s history and culture both ancient and modern opening its doors and gates once again to show off its heritage and heritage in the making.

Then before we know where



we are it will be once again October and time for our Annual General Meeting which traditionally concludes with a most engaging talk. A lot of work and planning to get through with what is now a rather reduced executive committee after losing three

m e m b e r s including the secretary – please note our appeal for a replacement secretary on page one - but I am sure, all in all, it will be a good year for the Association.



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We welcome letters and contributions.

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