

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

September 2014

Expect a busy weekend for Ruthin's Open Doors

Book early, advises organiser, Shelly Barratt



Image by Dewi Tannatt Lloyd

Ruthin has been a prime mover in leading the County of Denbighshire's participation in the annual celebration of the Open Doors Heritage event, and is justly proud of its success. Over the month of September archaeologists, story tellers, historians have been asked to lead walks and talks every weekend throughout September in seven towns in Denbighshire organised by Ruthin, Denbigh and Llangollen Civic Societies. The Ruthin weekend, 27th and 28th of September will be a case, its Civic Association claims, is leaving the best until the end!

St. Elidan's Church, in Lleidan village is taking Open Doors to a different level this year by taking the opportunity to exhibit their strong medieval links, with a full on medieval festival, they will be joined by King Richards 111 and his Red Rose and the White's eclectic music from that era.

At Ruthin Castle there are, for example, a variety of talks, tours and workshops exploring history, art and music. Still in Ruthin visit Nantclwyd y Dre to join with Simeon Jones to explore the delicacies of bookbinding.

The Llangollen Steam Railway Works invite you to an exclusive tour sharing historic stories and refined Steam Work knowledge.

In more rural setting Dolbeldyr house is open a 16th Century Gentry restoration and it is here that the first copy of the Bible was translated into Welsh.

"Denbighshire is renowned for having the rarest and most historically important properties in the UK, and to be able to have a good nose around and hear the wonderful stories that will unveil the heritage enclosed within, is just marvellous." said Ray Chairman of the Denbigh Civic Society.

These Fascinating heritage weekends are part of a European Wide programme, brought to you by Ruthin, Denbigh and Llangollen Civic Societies and Denbighshire Country Council, Ruthin and Denbigh Town Council and CADW. Full listings and events can be found in the Open Doors Booklets, stocked at Ruthin and Denbigh Library and Llangollen Tourist Information Centre and the website. To download the booklet visit Web www.opendoorsdenbighshire.org.uk.

Ruthin's Livestock Market to be Redeveloped

Emyr Lloyd looks forward to splendid new premises

When the Ruthin Farmers Auction moved the Livestock market from the Ruthin town centre in 1992 to their present location at Parc Glasdir, little did anyone realise the implication that it would have on livestock marketing within the Vale of Clwyd and beyond.

The market has progressed so much that the time has come to safeguard the future

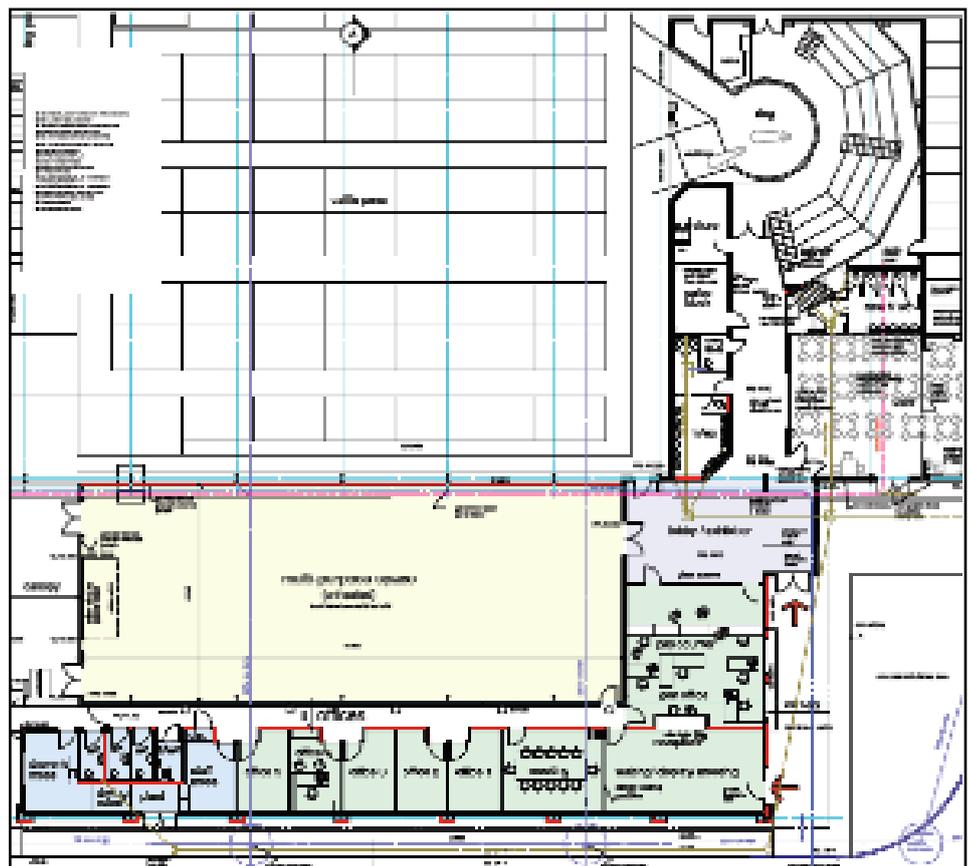
Ruthin Livestock Market has now become one of the leading marketing centres in the country, with vendors and purchasers coming from far and wide to sell their livestock and machinery at our venue.



The market has progressed so much that the time has come to safeguard the future and the Directors and Managers of the Company have decided that an extension to their existing building was needed.

The plan for an extension consists of an office block built within a large building of 820 sq.m consisting of a 371 sq.m of exhibition hall / multi-purpose building. Also within the build there will be a 38sq.m meeting room suitable for anyone to use from within the area. There is also planned to be a redesign and refurbishing of the main office and foyer area. This is needed to accommodate the many other functions take place on the current site such as the Ruthin Show, YFC Wales Open Days, Threshing Days, Rally Servicing Points, Horse Shows for example. The Company now hope that many other events will be able to take place with the new building as a centrepiece, particularly since many of these events collect for local charities.

Building work is scheduled to start in early November and hopefully all the work should be completed within eight months. The project will be managed by Dafydd Evans of 'KARTRE'.



Pwllglas - a Village of Two Halves

Miles Anderson explores its history



Pwllglas is in reality two villages, Y Rhiw nearer to Ruthin and Pwllglas at the Corwen end.

So many of our villages are dominated by busy roads, Llanfair D.C., for example is split in two by the A542, whereas Llanrhaeadr is bypassed leaving it united in tranquillity. Pwllglas has the busy Birkenhead to Dolgellau road skirting the main centre where the 40pmh signs ensure a fast flow of traffic, yet it seems to bring the two original villages together as one.

It is not only the road that borders the village, but beyond it lies the track of the once bustling Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen railway line, now transformed into a pleasant footpath. And this just above the chasm in which the river Clwyd flows – road, old rail track and river, all run alongside the village.

The road was not always so wide. At one time a stream ran down what is now the centre of the road to feed the old mill, Felin Einion that served the village from 1668 until comparatively recently.

Being originally two villages they both had their chapel. Now there is only Capel Y Rhiw with its picturesque graveyard rising up the hill behind. But this Victorian building is a comparative newcomer. At the Pwllglas end there used to be Capel Salem, now converted to a private building, which dates back to 1752. And the whole village lies within the parish of the very pretty St Michael and All Angels, Efenectyd.

The Pwllglas end is the older part of the village and although it has lost its chapel it still has the Fox and Hounds to minister corporally rather than spiritually to its residents – the Thursday, Friday and Saturday fish and chips are widely renowned!

Back to the Ruthin end, this is where the village shop used to be. Following the end of the 2nd World War the Village Hall was built with volunteer helpers and assistance from the 'Welcome Home' fund. Now, through very active local support, a thriving community shop has been opened within the building. The generous and very accessible car park has helped both shop and Village Hall keep busy. Since 1966 there has been an annual Eisteddfod in the Village Hall and it is still the home of Pwllglas WI with a buoyant membership when many others have dwindled away.

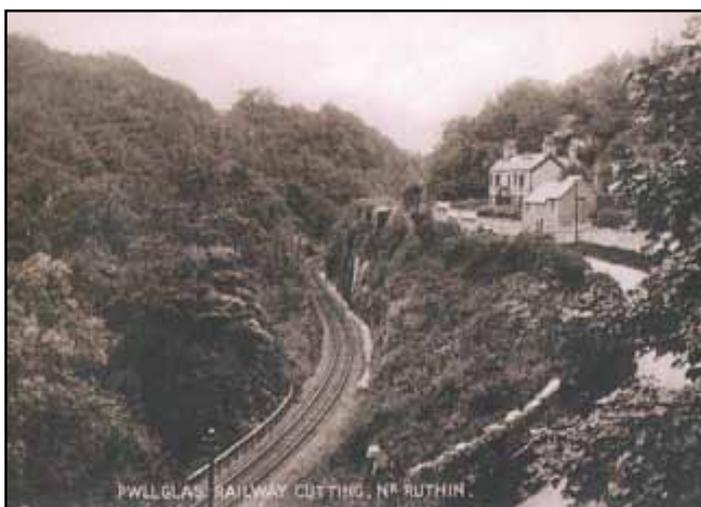
It was in the 1980s that a substantial development, including Tan y Bryn, almost doubled the population of the village. And this new housing between the two villages also helped to cement their union.

Up above the village is situated the Pwllglas Golf Course, one of the most attractive courses in North Wales. The club itself dated from 1905, but moved to its current location in the 1920s. Its elevated setting ensures spectacular views over the Vale of Clwyd and the Clwydian range.

There must have been an eerie quietness settle over the village when the railway was closed in 1963 at the behest of the infamous Dr Beeching. There was no station here, the nearest being at Eyarth, but the sound of trains passing by so closely throughout the day must have been a significant part of the local atmosphere.

Now, through very active local support, a thriving community shop has been opened within the building

... one cannot but be taken by the series of striking villas built in decorative yellow and red brick that stand slightly raised above the road.



On leaving Pwllglas, or arriving from the direction of Ruthin, one cannot but be taken by the series of striking villas built in decorative yellow and red brick that stand slightly raised above the road. They have the evocative appearance of seaside guest accommodation from where one should look out over the promenade towards a well populated beach. But here, beyond the road, old rail track and river, the view is up to Eyarth Rocks and the renowned Butterfly sanctuary there. They are quite unlike any other buildings around Ruthin. In all probability, they were built following the arrival of the railway that brought with it an expectation of greater prosperity and easy access to the multicoloured bricks from Ruabon and elsewhere. They certainly make an impression and add to the distinctiveness that is Pwllglas.

I am grateful to the ladies from Siop Pwllglas, both staff and customers for making my enquiries so pleasant and furnishing me with so much information

The Quayle Award Presentation

Gareth Evans looks back at the Feathers history

Up to the 19th century the area outside the Feathers was called Town end or in later years Townsend. It is probably amongst the oldest parts of Ruthin where five roads met – a good place for taverns.

There were buildings here at Town end from the earliest times in Ruthin, but the plot where the Feathers now stands was developed comparatively recently. Between 1637 and 1657 the plot was described as consisting of “2 barns containing 7 bays with all gardens at the Towns end of R within the liberties bounded by two sides of the highway leading to Llanfair Church”, when let to Hugh Roberts, Tanner of Ruthin.

The Feathers first appeared in 1809 when Thomas Jones, tailor, left the Horns, (now the Farmers Arms) in Mwrog Street and moved to the Feathers. This is the beginning of the story of the Feathers, so it is just over 200 years old. Thomas Jones was succeeded by Thomas Williams and Thomas and his family ran the Feathers until 1840.

During building work here recently a cache of documents, mainly from the 19th Century, was discovered. They are probably documents relating to the Hand Inn and Brewers and inns owned by the brewery. They trace the history of the Feathers from 1860 onwards.

Before 1850, the Feathers belonged to the Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen Railway who sold it 1861. Following a series of owners it was bought in 1897 by Robert Roberts who added it to the cluster of pubs served by his Hand Brewery – Corporation, Black Horse and the Drovers at Rhewl.

There are no references to brewing facilities at the Feathers but the pub probably brewed its own beer. That changed in 1897 and the Hand Brewery now supplied the Feathers with beer and mineral water. In 1912 the Hand and all its pubs were bought by Ind Coope who, through many changes of name, remained the owners until it became a free house again in the 20th Century.

The original Feathers building of two bays was built in at least two stages. The front bay is earlier and has hand-made local bricks while the rear portion has engineering bricks probably carried in by the railway. This suggests that the Feathers was extended in the later nineteenth century.

In 1874 the Feathers property ended roughly by the north wall of the White Bear garage but Robert Roberts, the owner of the Hand, bought part of the garden of the White Bear in 1898 and an even larger garden further up the Wrexham road the following year. This would give him plenty of space for carts travelling to Ruthin market. The OS map for 1898 show the road to Wrexham now running along Llanfair road so this rear entrance gave not only parking space, but made the Feathers the first pub in Ruthin from this direction by a margin of a hundred yards or so - a useful margin! This large rear area was reduced by road widening in 1945 and by the sale of the southern part of the land to J and P Williams, grocers to create a yard for their shop.

The Feathers survives today because a succession of good landlords kept it going and because a new and young partnership has now refurbished it so splendidly. All around it larger and bigger businesses have come and gone, like J and P Williams who, for the first half of the last century were one of Ruthin's biggest grocers. The Anchor, an important hotel from the 1770s, not to mention all the other pubs a stone's throw away, Antelope, Swan, White Bear, Ship and Machine are no longer with us, but the Feathers continues, and long may it do so



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Daniel Wright Ceramics

Ruth Bacon reviews a ceramicist's images of Ruthin



I produce hand thrown Earthenware tableware covered in white and coloured slips and hand drawn transfers screen printed in black enamel

My work relates to either the function of the object or the locality of the area. I like to combine traditional and modern techniques in a contemporary way.

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Both the Vale of Clwyd and Ruthin have long attracted visitors. George Borrow in his book *Wild Wales* which describes his Welsh tour of 1854, says "...perceived an extensive valley pleasantly dotted with trees and farm-houses, and bounded on the west by a range of hills". He was, however, rather dismissive of "Ruthyn" itself calling it a dull town, although he was interested in its history!

Latter day visitors have been more appreciative of the town and its surroundings. One such visitor to the area is Ceramicist, Daniel Wright. As a boy Daniel frequently came to stay during school holidays with his grandparents, George and Kathleen Hooson. The Hoosons at that time farmed Caer'afallen just outside Ruthin. Well known locally for its stunning Grade 11 listed multi-purpose farm building. Caer'afallen is located on the west side of the lane leading north from Greenfield Road in a delightful country setting, a wonderful place of freedom to a growing child.

Daniel went on to study Ceramics at the Bristol Polytechnic gaining a B.A.(Hons), then an M.A. at the Royal College of Art in London, and finally his Art Teacher's Certificate at Goldsmiths, London. He has lived and worked mostly in England but has exhibited both nationally and internationally.

His own description of his recent work is as follows.

I produce hand thrown Earthenware tableware covered in white and coloured slips and hand drawn transfers screen printed in black enamel. I am inspired by English slipware and 1950s, Ridgware ceramics particularly, the "Homemaker" range. I have also been influenced by the Italian designer Piero Fornasetti. My work relates to either the function of the object or the locality of the area. I like to combine traditional and modern techniques in a contemporary way.

Daniel has used this technique to produce several distinctive ceramic ranges linked to places including Much Wenlock, Hay-on-Wye, Stafford, Eton and St David's.

In 2013, his many happy boyhood memories of days on the farm and of Ruthin and the Vale, led Daniel to design a new range of tableware featuring Ruthin for Ceramics Illustrated, a recent exhibition in Gallery 3 at Ruthin Craft Centre. Items from this Ruthin range can be seen and are on sale in the retail gallery. Some of the distinctive



architectural characteristics of the town decorate bowls, jugs, mugs and storage jars and graphically illustrate "the locality of the area". Look for St Peter's Church gates, the Seven Eyes, the Library (the Old Courthouse), and the iconic 1934 design of Capel Y Bedyddwr, on Park Road.. Other motifs include tractors, ever present in this rural area. The inclusion of old fashioned keys in the designs puzzled me initially but Daniel tells me they are there to represent the gaol. To sum up the range; "the function of the object" is clear, but as well as serving a useful purpose, each piece can puzzle, delight and act as a conversation starter, provoking discussion beyond its everyday utility.

Daniel now lives in St David's in Pembrokeshire and in January this year opened the Goat Street Gallery which overlooks the Cathedral

What is happening at Ruthin Castle?

Chris Evans tells of new visions for the building and the business

It is a month or so now since news broke that Ruthin Castle ownership was changing.....So what does this mean for the future of this historic ancient monument?

Fundamentally it means that it is far more secure and that the important conservation process already being proposed can move forward. The ultimate owners are now more broad-based and are planning gradual controlled investment in the hotel to continue raising standards and performance and secure its future and with that, it's continuing position as a major source of employment and revenue for the town and local area.

As part of the reorganisation of the ownership there are now two separate specialist companies incorporated.

The first is the operational hotel company, Ruthin Castle Hotel Limited run by Prima Hotels, a company that brings with it the strength and experience of being owner and operator of a group of luxury 4-star hotels in the UK.

The second is a charitable company, Ruthin Castle Conservation Limited that will focus purely on the conservation, restoration and protection of the historic property and educational elements associated with that.

During his and his wife's ownership over the last ten years, Anthony Saint Claire was very much involved in the history of the castle and with efforts to take major steps towards its conservation. He discovered that operating as a commercial entity it was almost impossible to secure meaningful grant aid towards conservation of the ancient walls and property and that the burden of conservation cost was far too great for the hotel operation to support by itself. Over £4million was invested in the hotel property during those ten years. Estimates of immediate pure conservation work still needed were in excess of £2million and brought no supporting revenue towards this or towards sustaining conservation after the immediate work. As a result a full program of conservation work could not progress and only the most critical repair work was undertaken.

In 2013 an Association was formed by the owners with a view towards creating a separate charitable Foundation that would be eligible for grant aid. Although supported by members of the local community and receiving an offer of a grant from Cadwyn Clwyd towards a market appraisal of elements that may be included within a sustainable conservation plan, it became impractical to progress when the owner's bankers declined to support plans to create a 'peppercorn' lease of the ancient walls and gardens to the Foundation.

With the recent restructuring and creation of a separate charitable company, an opportunity has been created to move forward positively with the conservation project.

Anthony Saint Claire remains involved as a Director and brings with him the experience and knowledge gained over recent years. Through his negotiations in the restructuring the owners and new bankers agreed to a potential separation of property title on the site so that the charitable company can at last become eligible in its own right, for significant grant aid towards conservation. This is a very major step forward.

Strategic planning has already started to outline the process necessary for conservation of a variety of elements of the property and include elements that can produce revenues for the charity that will ensure that the project is sustainable. A mix of these elements is essential in practical terms and in order to win grant aid. The project is long term. At present hotel guests are encouraged to make a voluntary contribution towards conservation and these donations will now be applied to fund the essential preparatory work in the grant application process that could significantly multiply the effect of the contributions.

This is the start of a complex process including surveys; proposal drawings; consultations with community bodies such as CADW, Cadwyn Clwyd and Welsh Historic Gardens, statutory applications, budgets, business plans relating to sustainable revenue sources, applications to grant bodies, and then the legal and



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other work in implementation. This will inevitably take time.

In the end however, Ruthin Castle should be preserved and protected for the future and should be more accessible to the public as well as increasing visitor numbers to Ruthin and providing employment and other benefits to the town and local community. The recent process of reorganisation has opened up clear opportunities and may be seen as one more important step in the long history of the castle.

One early secondary but fascinating focus of the conservation company is an archival research project to collate peoples' memories of Ruthin Castle in a book.



Titled "Memories of Ruthin Castle", the project is to form part of the Ruthin Castle Charitable company and will bring together living testimonials from all ages. People of the community and further afield are therefore being invited and encouraged to step forward and take part.

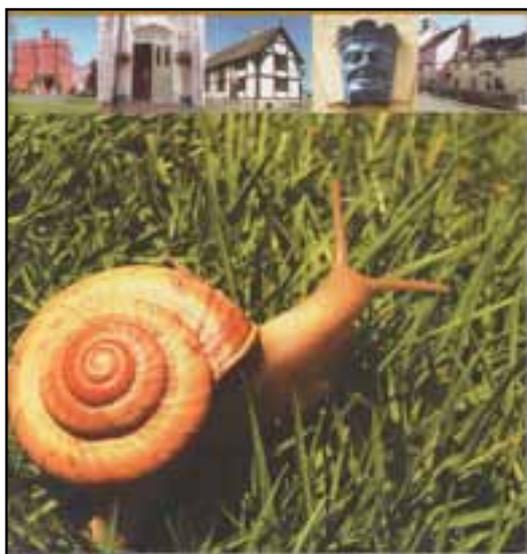
Ruthin Castle is very interested to meet and hear from people who have memories related to the Castle as a hotel and also stories from previous generations when the Castle was a home and clinic.

Anyone with a story to tell or who has artefacts available, or wants to get involved should email reservations@ruthincastle.co.uk Ruthin Castle Conservation Limited

A Charitable Company dedicated to the conservation and protection of Ruthin Castle.

WALK SLOWLY AND SEE MORE

Derek Jones welcomes a new edition



Life is short, and there's a lot to pack in: so many people you want to get to know; so many books you want to read, works of art, films and television programmes to see; so many places to visit, and, today, so many opportunities to do so. It really isn't possible to do it all, but, if you're anything like me, you want to fit in as much as possible – even beyond the legendary three score years and ten!

The down side is that, if we are not careful, the more we see, the less we see. We rush to read a book, for instance, so that we can move on to the next, and, by the time we are ready to embark on the one after that, we have forgotten the content of the first one. The same goes for holidays, and the same for days out. So far as visiting a town is concerned, there is a strong case to be made; walk round a town more slowly, look more closely and you will see – and retain – more of it.

I welcome, therefore, the new edition of *Slow Walks round Ruthin*, the booklet I wrote (which Hafina Clwyd translated into Welsh, and for which Miles Anderson took the photographs) in 2009. The booklet suggests that 'this town is worth more than a quick look round and away'. Stay around for a couple of days, I further admonish, 'and you are soon aware that Ruthin is a real place; local people meet and greet each other, in Welsh and English, in the streets and shops; they are happy to spend the time of day with family, friends and acquaintances, because this is, first and foremost, a community, people's home town'.

Of course, we have no means of knowing, how many people stayed overnight as a direct result of *Slow Walks round Ruthin*, or even how many of those who picked up a copy of the booklet, used it for the purpose for which it was intended – slow walking! But, quite evidently, it has been taken away by many, if only for armchair travel in the town – and there's nothing wrong with that especially if it is read slowly!

I wonder, on the other hand, how many local people have walked round the town they think they know well, making use of the booklet to help them see even more of it. And I wonder whether they might now want to look again at my words, criticise them and so prepare the ground for the third edition of the booklet! That would indeed be satisfying.

*walk round a town more slowly,
look more closely and you will see
– and retain – more of it.*

Introducing Grumpy Old Man* – Hên Ddyn Sarrug

Most of us who are privileged to live in the attractive, lively, welcoming and interesting town of Ruthin, in a beautiful and peaceful part of the world, regard ourselves not only as fortunate, but also as having some responsibility towards maintaining, or even enhancing this natural, physical and social environment which we appreciate so much. However not quite all of our fellow citizens seem to share in this and Grumpy Old Man becomes very irritated by those few among us who appear to care little, and do less, to care for the town and surroundings, at worst actually creating eyesores for us all to 'enjoy'.

Grumpy Old Man becomes very irritated by those few among us who appear to care little, and do less, to care for the town and surroundings . . .

Here are a few of these as starters, and, maybe GOM will resurface from time to time in future editions of this publication.

* Just for the record, GOM is not by nature grumpy at all – but is generally of a cheerful and tolerant disposition!

Grumpy Old Man 1.

Yes, it's still here after all these years, the scene of dereliction on Wynnstay Road, in full view of everybody and well within the conservation area. A succession of owners have bequeathed a scene of weedy neglect.

There have been false dawns - planning applications (for housing, and a garden centre, at different times) which for one reason or another have been failed or withdrawn. These things happen, and it is understandable for people to sit on an asset until the right opportunity for development comes along. But – does it have to be so untidy? It wouldn't take much to tidy the site and repair the wall. And could it not, in the meantime, be a simple and pleasant garden – a restful haven for those carrying shopping bags between the Co-op and Top of Town?

Grumpy Old Man 2.

Nantclwyd y Dre is, of course, one of the jewels of Ruthin. Visitors (still, alas, too few) are inevitably impressed by the restoration and the stories which are told within. The garden, manned by volunteers, becomes more attractive year on year and the unusual gazebo is a delightful feature.

Mounting the steps to the gazebo, what do you see? A fine retrospect of the house, a wonderful distant view of the Vale and the Clwydians, an



interesting panorama over the roofs of Ruthinand at your feet, a derelict yard, overgrown tennis court, and a rough meadow which only a few years ago was a busy and pretty bowling green. This has got to be the biggest eyesore in town, if hidden from most.

Let's hope that very soon a profitable and environmentally acceptable use for this land will soon be found and that the whole view can be enjoyed in all its glory.

. . . a derelict yard, overgrown tennis court, and a rough meadow which only a few years ago was a busy and pretty bowling green



Ruthin Carnival Fun Day

Ruth Bacon reports on a great day out at Ruthin School



Ysgol Gellifor children blowing bubbles at the spectators added to the atmosphere

There was a small funfair and two bouncy inflatables which were obviously very popular with the children.



There were dogs of all sizes, shapes and colours entered. Classes included Waggiest tail, Dog most like his owner and Best in Show!

"We had a procession but nowhere to process to". This was the situation faced by Joice Hession, who was the procession organiser on the Ruthin Forward team when they began to organise this year's Carnival. This problem was solved by Ruthin School who generously donated the use of their playing field in the front of the school free of charge to Ruthin Forward. And what an excellent Carnival venue it made with the backdrop of the attractive school buildings on one side and the Clwydian hills on another. Even the weather helped; the wind was chilly, but the sun shone and it didn't rain.

The event started with the procession through town to Ruthin School. Although not long it was varied and friendly. About twenty people in fancy dress led the parade. There were several Rose-Queens with their retinues and floats entered by local schools - Ysgol Gellifor children blowing bubbles at the spectators added to the atmosphere. According to Joice the aim was to keep the whole event as local as possible, so a rose-queen who was from Rhyl came from furthest away.

Ruthin Mayor, Stephen Beach, opened the Carnival at 12 noon. Speaking to him later he expressed his gratitude to Ruthin School for their generosity, and to those local businesses which had provided financial support. He also praised the Ruthin Forward team for their hard work.

Some thirty five stalls were arranged around the perimeter of the field. All were decorated and colourful. There was a wide range of things on sale from foodstuffs to crafts of all sorts. All the items we associate with carnivals were there - sweets, ice-cream, candy floss, face-painting, tombolas, raffles and a small bar. Local shops had stalls as did the Macmillan Panto Society, Royal Airforce Cadets and St Peter's Church. There was a competition for best trade stand and a delightful shepherd's hut from Moel Famau that had been converted into a tiny shop won.

A large refreshment tent was manned by local schools who had been invited to cater, giving them an opportunity to fund-raise. Live music entertainers included singer Geraint Woolford and pop group 'The Alibis'. There was a small funfair and two bouncy inflatables which were obviously very popular with the children.

The size of the field allowed for small arenas to be placed centrally allowing for different activities. Welly throwing and a bike track occupied two. Another, which had large inflatable balls that children could get into and then try to roll around in, was the source of much merriment. Yet another was devoted to a fun dog show.

This was organised by Guy Roberts and his wife Alex of Pet and Equine Services. There were dogs of all sizes, shapes and colours entered. Classes included Waggiest tail, Dog most like his owner and Best in Show! All proceeds from the dog show went to Merlin Animal Rescue and Little Brown Dog, a local charity.

MP for Clwyd West David Jones and his wife Sara were present. Sara crowned the Ruthin Rose Queen and her retinue in a ceremony held in a special "throne room" tent. Dressed in cream and purple robes each child had their own special seat ranged around the Rose Queen's throne!

All in all it was a successful and enjoyable event. However Ruthin Forward would welcome feedback about the Carnival so, "they can make it even better for next year!" A form is provided on their website

Seen in passing...

- The open day at Goodman, once the Anchor Hotel, was well attended and all were impressed by the quality of the conversion. We now have very high class, ensuite accommodation for 30 very lucky students attending Ruthin School. The arrival of these young people will almost certainly help to ensure a very sound financial future for the school. Looked at another way, from the town's perspective there will be 30 more young people, who are receiving a high quality education, arriving in our town with almost certainly considerable spending power – good for the shops, restaurants and cafes. This should be an economic bonus for Ruthin as a whole.
- It was reported that visitors wanting to stay in Ruthin for the Festival this summer were unable to find adequate hotel accommodation. Certainly our hotel bed-spaces are now much reduced with the change of use of both the Wynnstay and the Anchor. Could we become like so many university towns where the student accommodation left vacant during holiday periods is profitably used to tours, study groups and tourists? Goodman could further benefit Ruthin and help solve its bed shortage.
- One again our public floral displays are high – both in elevation and quality! It was even surprising to see five large colourful pots appear outside the Ruthin Leisure centre. It was interesting to note that the equally admirable large floral displays in the Craft Centre courtyard were not provided by Denbighshire, whose site this is, but were provided by Café R at their own expense – Well done Café R.
- On the Subject of flowers – the Civic Association's big festival of Open Doors is planned for the 27th and 28th September (See organiser Shelly Barratt's article on the front cover of this edition). Last year there was much disappointment that our hanging baskets were removed just before our open Doors weekend. The excuse / reason given was that they were dropping petals and might make the pavements under them slippery – a health and safety hazard! We hope that they will still be in situ for this year's Open Doors.
- As you enter the library, if you look up above the interior door to the library proper, there is an inscription "Treftadaeth Doreithiog / A bountiful inheritance". This seems a very apt description to the wealth of knowledge and information, as well as pleasure the room contains. Being intrigued as to how the inscription came to be there, and asking one of the librarians, we were told that it was the title of an exhibition long past by local artist Mary Cunnah. The title just got overlooked when the exhibition ended. A case of serendipity!
- Not quite "Seen in passing..." but by the end of the month there will be a new plaque unveiled in Ruthin. The Town Council have cooperated with Ruthin and District Civic Association in funding a long overdue plaque commemorating Well Street as the home of Ruthin's home bred artist whose bicentenary was celebrated last year. We are grateful to the owner of Crown Cottage for permitting the wall of this charming house of sufficient antiquity to carry the commemorative plaque.
- Open Doors will shortly be with us and we will be able to show off WW1 Memorabilia. We can, of course only avail ourselves of items of interest from the First World War rather than the second. In the library there will be exhibits connected with William Peake (illustrated – Peake was the maternal of local author, Colin Edwards); a helmet of William Martin Williams who survived being shot in the head; cartoons drawn by Bruce Bairnsfather; examples of 'Trench Art'; silk embroidered postcards; and photographs of Ruthin taken during World War1. There will also be information about some Ruthin soldiers in the churches/chapels eg William Peake in Llanfwrog Church and Robert Evans in the English Presbyterian Church

The arrival of these young people will almost certainly help to ensure a very sound financial future for the school . . . This should be an economic bonus for Ruthin as a whole.



Ruthin Tourist Information Centre.

Brian Hubble applauds the volunteer spirit but is concerned for its future financial security

It can be a most interesting experience, with the great majority of visitors, (from all over the world, though the largest number are from North West England) being friendly, receptive and expressing very positive feelings about our town.

Started tentatively in 2013, and continuing more purposefully into 2014, the Tourist Information Centre on a corner of St. Peter's Square is increasingly successful. An initiative of the Ruthin Chamber of Trade, it has depended on financial backing by only a small number of Ruthin businesses, and principally by the Town Council and DCC, and a group of willing volunteers.

There are currently enough volunteers, each offering a 2-hour stint per week, to be open almost every day of the summer months— except Sunday – from 11 am to 3 pm. Even so more volunteers would be welcome, perhaps to extend those hours in future, and to cover for volunteers' holidays. Just call in! It can be a most interesting experience, with the great majority of visitors, (from all over the world, though the largest number are from North West England) being friendly, receptive and expressing very positive feelings about our town.

The printed information available includes things to see and do in Ruthin and District, local events, some local businesses, and sections covering accommodation, Denbighshire and Flintshire, and North-West Wales/Snowdonia. - Wifi is available.



Rt Hon David Jones cutting the ribbon to open Ruthin Visitor Centre



Given that the centre has had little publicity, is in the first full year of operation, and there are no directions to it in the car parks, the fact that 431 people made 252 enquiries of all sorts in July alone is surely a message that it fulfils a real need, especially in this prime location. A significant number of the visitors, when they realise what is here, decide to spend the day in Ruthin, rather than just have a quick glimpse and move on, and therefore contribute to visitor-spend in the town. Some have returned for events, such as Gwyl Rhuthun, Graigaid, and Rome & Juliet at Nantclwyd y Dre.

At present, however, neither funding for the future, nor the prospect of a long lease on the premises, are secure. Now that the momentum is building, it would be a considerable loss if the goodwill and expertise which is being built up comes to nought, and we are once again seeing visitors wandering aimlessly round the Square bereft of information and advice.

Maybe the small number of people committed to the management and financial backing of the centre will grow. Maybe some kind of grant funding from various sources might be available, maybe not! This issue will surely be a test of whether or not Ruthin does mean business!

Pick up a copy!

Two important publications are now available. Urgent if you want to enjoy the varied and interesting events, talks, walks and open access, the bilingual booklet detailing the programme for Open Doors is now available. Although our principal concern is the Ruthin weekend, 27th and 28th September, Denbighshire kicks off with events in the Corwen area on the 6th and 7th, Llangollen on the 13th and 14th, as are St Asaph and Bodelwyddan Castle and Denbigh on 20th and 21st September, as also is Rhuddlan. Year after year there are complaints that "if only we had known of all these events....." The highly illustrated publication is worth a close scrutiny!

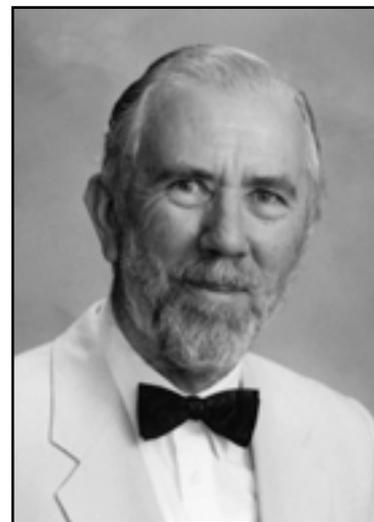
And now we are into September the much missed Slow Walks round Ruthin..A guided tour is back on the streets, so to speak, in a new edition. This has been acknowledged as Ruthin's most effective publicity publication.

There should be many places to collect your copy, but probably the most popular will be Ruthin Library, which is the main booking venue for Open Doors, and the Craft Centre. Don't miss out on a copy!

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Ruthin and District Civic Association will be held at 7pm on Thursday 9th October at Ruthin Castle, Ruthin. Following the presentation of the annual report and the election of officers for the next twelve months, we are delighted to have Dr. Goronwy Wynne give us a most interesting talk on the travels of Thomas Pennant entitled "Thomas Pennant, the man who knew everybody".

This is an open meeting and all are most warmly welcome, although only members will be entitled to vote. Having Dr. Goronwy Wynne as our guest speaker is likely to ensure that this is a popular event and it would be useful if you could let our secretary, Miles Anderson, know if you expect to be able to attend. His contact details are miles-and-jill@freeuk.com, or 01824 707632. We will, of course circulate the minutes of last year's meeting and the Agenda for the evening in advance of the date



Subscriptions now due!

Members are reminded that their annual subscriptions to Ruthin and District Civic Association fall due on 1st September and at last year's AGM it was resolved to fix these at £10 (£15 Joint/Family). This is the first increase for 9 years and we hope that members will understand that this is necessary to cover the overall increase in costs of running the Association and producing Town & Around over the intervening period. A membership form is enclosed with this edition. If any member wishes to pay by Standing Order or Bank Internet Transfer, rather than cheque, could they please contact the Treasurer Robert Williams - telephone (01824 704998) or email (ruthincivic@btinternet.com) - who will supply the necessary Form/Reference Number and Bank Details.'

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.

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

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

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