

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 2015

FATHER CHRISTMAS IS COMING INTO TOWN! And Gareth Evans has a word with him as he passes by



It's that magical time of year. Bells are heard where bells do not exist. Strains of music waft through the dark winter night. In the darkness there is expectation and excitement as, with carols playing, and in a blaze of light, Ruthin Rotary's Christmas float glides into a village square amidst carols and Christmas music. Up and down the roads and tracks of the Vale of Clwyd it travels, and no village around Ruthin, and no street in the town, itself, is missed out. On board, in the midst of a great pool of light and surrounded by sacks full of little presents is the great man himself, Father Christmas, a huge and jolly figure bringing the merriment and magic of Christmas to all.

It was the middle of November when the editor called and asked me to interview Father Christmas. 'Should be easy to find', he said, 'and if you're stuck the Rotarians should know'. The town's venerable Rotarians merely smiled knowingly and left me floundering. I was laying the fire one night when with a rush of wind down the chimney something big and red and shaking with mirth rose behind me! 'Ho Ho Ho' said Father Christmas, eyes twinkling and beard as white as snow, 'the Rotarians say you are looking for me and here I am.'

I began by asking how he coped with all his world-wide work and how he fitted in the Ruthin run. 'Christmas is magic', he boomed, 'and Father Christmas is magic, too'. I asked why he bought his sledge to us in the Vale of Clwyd. 'Why do I do this? It started as an experiment but now I love the children's expressions and the sense of belief and wonderment, which is at the heart of Christmas magic. I know their parents and their uncles and aunts and grandparents and I wouldn't miss this annual visit to the Vale of Clwyd for the world'. 'Your world', he added 'for the magical world is much bigger and complex. It can only be understood by a child's mind'.

I asked if all children were keen to see and talk with him. 'Younger children are more apprehensive; some cry and don't want to see me but I get very coy waves from all. I like their parents to be nearby: this is both a personal and family occasion. I see children in groups of two or three and the wonderment and joy in their young eyes is the best reason for being me. I talk with them in English or Welsh, giving plenty of time for each one. This is important: it's their moment of magic and they can be very forthcoming'.

They talk about the presents they want. Last year train sets, electronic games, I pads, all the stuff which the makers of children's programmes dream up were all in vogue. But I had a surprising request for a bale of hay for a pet horse; this child was not thinking about himself and I made sure his horse had the biggest and juiciest



bale of hay I could find stuffed with Christmas goodies. I had a job keeping Rudolph away from it'.

Some have been particularly helpful; one child who will go far gave me a page out of an Argos catalogue and on a separate page a list of the order numbers of the gifts he wanted. I hope I got the right ones as the magic can do strange things, sometimes, and I hear many children telling me that the previous year I got their requests wrong which does surprise me'.

'I always ask them to leave me sherry or whisky or milk or beer or a glass of wine. Some will leave a mince pie which I make sure I finish and carrots for the reindeer are gobbled up quickly'.

'I get letters from many children, not only through the usual delivery up the chimney but also hand delivered to me on the sledge. Marvellous works of art they are, almost as magical as me'.

Some villages arrange a small event with food – Efenectyd is a good example - and this can be the highlight of the night's ride. Parents and children gather around lantern light with seasonal food heated on gas stoves. Smashing'.

'I thank Rotary for helping me organise this. I have got to know the Vale of Clwyd and its people well. Charming villages like Llanellidan, welcoming streets like Mwrog Street and everywhere generous people donating to the Rotary collection. The collections help many useful local projects which are much appreciated. This, of course, is another part of the magic of Christmas and I am proud to be a part of it'.

'Remember children', he boomed, 'send me your letters in plenty of time or bring them out to me on the sledge as I call! The more, the merrier!'

And with that the jolly old chap just disappeared leaving behind a faint whiff of cinnamon, nutmeg and sherry and a distantly fading ho ho ho.

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Santa's visit schedule in December

5.00pm: (except where indicated otherwise)

December 1st Bryneglwys/Llandegla

December 2nd Pwllglas / Llanellidan

December 3rd Graigfechan/Pentrecelyn/Llysfasi/Rhyd y Meudwy

December 4th Wrexham Road/Maes y Dre/Castle Parc/Ffordd Gwynach

December 7th Maes Hafod/Denbigh Road/Tyn y Park/Porth y Dre/Llawr y Dyffryn/Trem y Foel

December 8th Efenectyd/Mwrog Street

December 9th Llanrhydd Street/Bryn Coch Glas/Cae Castan/Llys y Berllan/St Meugans/Cae-Cast/Llanfair

December 10th Maes Cantaba/all the Menllis

December 11th Glasdir/ The Park

December 12th Co-op (9.30am-300pm)

December 14th Erw Goch/Bryn Rhydd/Lon Speriol/Bro Deg

December 15th Clocaenog/Bontuchel/Cyffylliog/Galltegfa

December 17th Parc y Dre/Park Road/Cae Seren/Min yr Afon/Canol

December 18th Wern Ucha/Ganol/Greenfield Road/Maes Hydref/Wernfechan

December 19th Tesco (9.30am-3.00pm)

December 21st Rhos Street/Haulfryn/Bryn Eryl/Brynhyfryd Park/Mold Road (6.00pm)

December 22nd Rhewl/Town Route-Castle Street/Record Street/Well Street/Railway Terrace/Troed y Rhew

December 23rd Llangynhafal/Hirwaen/Llanbedr/Gellifor/Hendrerwydd (10.00-12.00)

December 24th On the Square (12.00-200pm)

Goodbye PFI

Bobby Feeley tells how we got our buildings back



Last year the Council decided to look into the possibility of terminating the PFI Agreement covering County Hall, Ruthin Town Hall and Corporate Store in Ruthin. In May 2015 the Council issued a formal notice to terminate the Agreement, negotiations have been lengthy and arduous, a complex undertaking, but finally we have now regained full control and the assets have been passed to the Council.

In 2004 the Council entered into the Private Finance Initiative for 25 years with a private sector organisation, to provide fully maintained office facilities at County Hall Ruthin, along with the Town Hall and the Stores on Lon Parcwr. The nature of a PFI is that in return for an annual payment the Council would receive fully maintained buildings, including repairs, caretaking, lifecycle costs, and at the end of the twenty five year contract the building would be handed back to the Council in 'as new' condition. A total of £25m has been paid from 2004 and the Council Finance Officers calculated another £41m would be due over the remainder of the Contract. Changes in regulations, interest rates and the council's office needs, mean that the PFI concept is no longer the viable proposition it once was. At the time it was the only way to ensure the offices remained in Ruthin, because the buildings were dilapidated, with portable cabins, restricted access and were therefore completely unsuitable.

A termination account was submitted to the Council in September, after several weeks of negotiation, the final

elements of compensation for termination was agreed. This complex process has been supported by external specialist and legal advisers, and after all associated costs, the predicted savings are substantial, with £300k already achieved and a further £250/£300k p.a., over the duration of the remainder of the Contract, the Council will have paid approximately £12m less than under the PFI. Crucially, by terminating the Agreement the Council have not only saved a substantial sum, but have gained back full control of the buildings, 15 years ahead of the original contract timescale.

With the negotiations finalised, over the next six months or so we will be working out more effective management, maintenance, and use of all the associated buildings, including Ruthin Town Hall, Council car park etc. This is just a brief outline to keep you informed and up to date, but if anyone would like more details please do not hesitate to email or telephone me. I will keep you informed of progress during 2016.

Bobby Feeley

Bobby.feeley@denbighshire.gov.uk - 01824 705040

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Ruthin History Group programme 2015-2016

The group meets at the St John's Ambulance Hall on Prior Street at 7.30pm

16th December 2015 - Short presentations: Gareth Evans, 'The Bull, a vanished Ruthin building', Gwynne Morris, 'Victorian Christmas cards' and members' meeting.

20th January 2016 - Kevin Mathias 'The Cornwallis West's war'

17th February 2016 - Gwyn Jones, 'The Vale of Clwyd and district in the Eighteenth Century'

16th March 2016 - Dr Bob Sylvester, Deputy Director, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust 'Llanynys, Llanrhaeadr and Llanfarchell: the most interesting churches in the Vale of Clwyd?'

Ruthin's finest Restaurant Chefs tell of their Christmas Recipes

Miles Anderson reveals their secrets

Rowan Hodgson is chef/proprietor of On The Hill on Upper Clwyd Street. Through his wife's connections they were able to purchase this well regarded restaurant eight years ago. Coming from a family of restaurateurs, being a chef seemed to be preordained. Rowan was classically trained at the Nunsmere Hall in Northwich and followed a Hospitality and Catering Management course at Manchester University. Assisted in running their restaurant by his wife, the Christmas rush for somewhere that is always busy will hold no fears for this couple. "Working our eighth Christmas will be as good as ever," Rowan says. His recipe is for:

Christmas Stuffing –

Ingredients: 1 large onions - diced, 8 rashers smoked streaky bacon - thinly sliced, 2 cloves of garlic - crushed, 2tbsp dried mixed herbs, 1 tsp castor sugar, 100g dried apricots – chopped, 100g vacuum packet chestnuts- chopped, 500g sausage meat, 1 heaped tbs Paxo

Method: Soften onions over moderate heat, add bacon till crisp then garlic, finally herbs and sugar and mix well. In large bowl when cool add remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly. Press into ceramic dish and bake for 20-25 mins at 180oc. Cut in squares to serve with turkey, great also on sandwiches with cold turkey and cranberry sauce!

Owen Hall, of the Middleton Grill on the Square, was born in London, but soon moved to Wales with his parents and now lives, as he says, "just down the road" here in Ruthin. After school he enrolled in Llandrillo College for a professional catering course. He then had experience with the Ryder Cup in Cardiff before working with well-known Chef, Bryn Williams. Still looking very young for his responsibilities, Owen, having started as sous-chef a year and a half ago, is now in charge of the kitchens of this busy restaurant on St Peter's Square. Open lunch till 9pm five days per week, Owen says, "It's going to be great at Christmas, the vibes here are incredible!"

Owen's suggested recipe is:

Jacob's Ladder of Beef with Horseradish and Onion Relish

Use beef ribs coated with English mustard, mixed herbs, garlic, salt and pepper, tomato puree, smoked paprika, bay leaves and soft brown sugar then place on a bed of vegetables in a baking tray and almost cover with beef stock and leave in the 'fridge for 24 hours. To cook cover with foil and put in oven at 200oc for 2 hours and then reduce temperature to 180oc for a further 1 1/2 hours. For the relish, sweat sliced onions in a saucepan with a little oil till soft, then add 2 tablespoons of muscavado sugar and 200ml of balsamic vinegar, 2 sprigs of rosemary, season well and cook till thickened. Then mix well into 2 tablespoons of horseradish. Serve the tender beef on a board with the relish on the side – the long process is well worth the result!

At the Manorhaus, proprietor Gavin Harries and young Ben Helsby share the culinary responsibility for their high-class cuisine. Gavin, originally trained as an architect, carries the role of Head Chef for the five star Restaurant with Rooms here in Ruthin and their other premises in Llangollen. Ben, now classed as Chef here in Ruthin, has trained under Gavin for a year and a half. The regular changing menu with extensive choices will reflect the Christmas seasonal dishes throughout December. Gavin says of their Christmas business, "Our



style is, perhaps, more relaxed than that of others at this time of the year. We will still have our pre-dinner canapes and post dinner coffee served in the very comfortable lounge." The Manorhaus offers somewhere to get away from the Christmas panic, he promises! His Christmas treat recipe is for:



Apple and Ginger Pudding

Ingredients: 50g butter, 1 large cooking apple and 75g light brown sugar. For the pudding mixture: 140g softened butter, 100g light brown sugar, 1 beaten egg, 125ml buttermilk, 2 balls of finely chopped stem ginger plus 25ml syrup, 100g plain flour, 1 1/2 tablespoons of ground ginger, 1/2 teaspoon of baking powder and the same of bicarbonate of soda.

Method: butter and flour 6 ramekins. Heat butter till foaming and add peeled, cored and cubed apple, cook for 1 minute, add sugar, allow to dissolve, and spoon into ramekins. Meanwhile beat sugar and butter, add premixed egg, buttermilk, stem ginger and syrup and fold in the dry ingredients. Spoon the mixture onto the apple allowing about 1cm from the top and bake at 160/180c for 20 minutes. Serve warm with butterscotch sauce and ginger ice cream.

Jonathan, 'Jon', Evans – another young chef has worked at the family run Café R for over 2 years now and is well settled in his role there. Jon worked his way up to his present position the hard way starting as a kitchen porter at The White Horse at Hendrerwydd. Through study and working the long hours that go with the job he arrived at the level of expertise required to hold a chef's position in a quality restaurant. Jon is a local boy, living in Ruthin. When asked if he dreaded the Christmas season, he took on a quizzical look and then replied, "Not really, it is a busy season and we are featuring a varied Christmas menu over the two weeks coming up to Christmas, but I wish people could broaden their horizons when thinking about Christmas food, allowing us to be more adventurous." His suggested recipe is:-

Vegetable and lentil casserole with roast parsnips and beetroot for 6-8

Ingredients: 4 beetroot bulbs, 6 parsnips, 4 carrots, 4 cloves garlic, 2 white onions 350g green pea lentils, 100ml balsamic vinegar, 80g sugar, small bunch thyme small bunch rosemary, 2 pints boiling water with small handfull of vegetable stock cubed, 275 ml white wine.

Method: First top and tail the beetroot bulbs and put into a pan of boiling water with a pinch of salt and cook through until soft. Cut in half, season and coat in oil the parsnips and roast at 200. Sautee the diced onions and carrots with garlic in butter till soft and add lentils, wine and cover with stock. When almost cooked add half the chopped herbs. Apart boil the basalmic vinegar and sugar till it thickens. Peel and slice cooked beetroot, add parsnips, rest of herbs, basalmic reduction and add to the vegetables and lentil. Finally add more stock if necessary and serve piping hot with crusty bread.



A little gem that is easily missed!

Miles Anderson visits Ysgol Rhewl

The route from Ruthin to Denbigh and further west, passes through the village of Rhewl with only a slightly reduced speed limit of 40 mph. It is no wonder that as you approach the stone bridge over the River Clywedog, you are scarcely aware that there is a school in the village at all.

Once discovered, its buildings just visible over the hedge, this is not another example of the proud, self-important Victorian primary schools, such as Borthyn, Rhos Street or Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd.

Ysgol Rhewl may not have the visual impressive presence of other Denbighshire primary schools, but what it does have is a strong sense of warm welcome, of happy children participating in a culture of support and encouragement in a learning environment.

On my visit it was the school secretary, Sue Clarkson who welcomed me as school head Mrs Sian Hilton was at a conference. In the entrance leading to the comfortable staff room where we first sat for a chat there was a notice board filled with awards and acknowledgements of the schools excellent record.

As the rain eased off we took first a tour of the outside play and exercise areas which were surprisingly spacious. We then walked



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There is a gardening club and raised beds for them cultivate, a Willow Walk and story-telling area. On the other side is a separate play area for the little ones with lots of possibilities for role playing and even a little kitchen with a sink and pots and pans

through the 'Peace Garden', dedicated to the memory of a former pupil. There is a gardening club and raised beds for them cultivate, a Willow Walk and story-telling area. On the other side is a separate play area for the little ones with lots of possibilities for role playing and even a little kitchen with a sink and pots and pans.

As Sue said, "We play out as much as possible, depending on the weather. It is really important for the children."

Back in the very commodious teaching areas, we were joined by teacher Caron Jones who told me more about the fifty plus children at Ysgol Rhewl. There is a nursery group for the very little ones, mornings only, but they can make arrangements for them to stay on over the afternoon to suit parental needs, and there is also a Breakfast Club.

There are four permanent teachers as well as head teacher Sion Hilton, with occasional supplementary supply staff. And, rather unusually in a primary school, one is a young man. "He's quite strict," said Sue with a smile, "the boys especially rather like that."

Evidence of strong parental support is everywhere - "Friends of Ysgol Rhewl" as they are known. Besides painting the rainbow coloured fencing, they have arranged a "Race for Life" charity fundraising event, a Hallowe'en Disco and are planning a Christmas Fair. They support the

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(Ysgol Rhewl 1926)

Breakfast Club and after school activities.

One set of parents has involved the school in the "Training Brass Band" which is part of Denbighshire's music co-operative.

Other activities connected with Ysgol Rhewl involve the local football team organising a pensioners' Christmas lunch, cooked in the school's very impressive kitchen.

"The parents are fantastic," Sue said.

Visiting Ysgol Rhewl was an inspirational experience – such a happy and positive environment for our children to start up the education ladder. And Ysgol Rhewl may not be as old as many local primary schools, but in two years they will be celebrating their

centenary. Sadly, despite strong support from parents and governors, DCC are still planning for the closure of the school.

Rhewl's ...the Drovers' Connection

Liz Williams relates more of Rhewl's place on the map



The name Rhewl translated into English means 'Highway' or 'Thoroughfare', and the village here on the outskirts of Ruthin once played a very important part in the lives of the Porthmyn of North Wales – the Drovers.

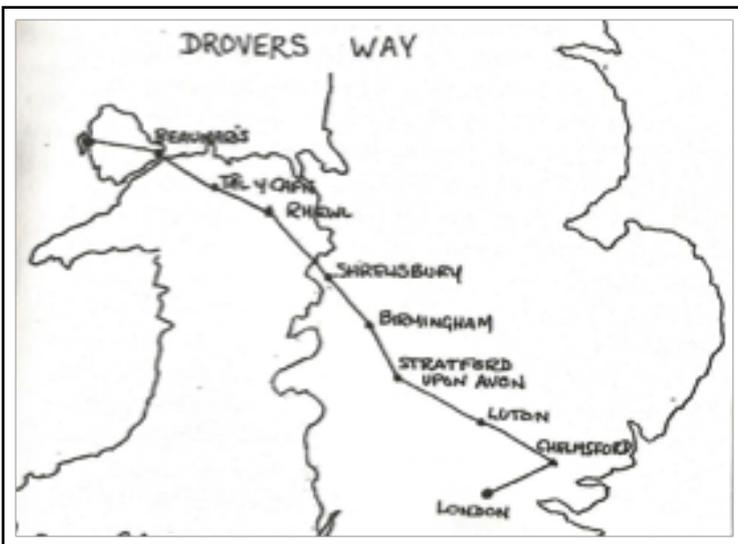
Their importance to the village is celebrated by having the highly regarded local choir named in their honour – Cor-y-Porthmyn – who regularly have a full calendar of choral events throughout the year.

The Drovers Arms on the side of the road from Ruthin to Denbigh has a very interesting history as the resting place for drovers of old as they drove their herds on their way from Anglesey to the London markets

The public house, The Drovers Arms on the side of the road from Ruthin to Denbigh has a very interesting history as the resting place for drovers of old as they drove their herds on their way from Anglesey to the London markets. It was an important stop on their long and hazardous journey which would take approximately three weeks.



Just across the road, and a small field away, is the property now known as



Buarthau. The facts about Buarthau were unearthed by Idris Evans who has studied the lives of the drovers in great detail, and wrote his book, 'Hard Road to London' – a graphic account of the lives of the Welsh Drovers.

The name Buarthau, or the singular Buarth, translate into English as 'Farmyards' or 'Enclosures'.

There are not many dwellings in Wales with these names, but those that do exist are usually close to the roads where cattle drovers travelled or rested, and the name is a certain indicator of an association with the walking and safe keeping of animals during their journey to London to be sold.

Down Memory Lane Part 3

Emrys Wynne continues his recollections of Ruthin

I can vaguely recall the cinema in use where the antique emporium is now. After finally closing down as a cinema in 1964, the building became a dance hall, then Cashwise and VG Supermarkets. I'm not sure how the clientele managed to dance on what was the cinema's sloping floor. I do remember having to push a shopping trolley up the aisle of the Cashwise and VG Store and having to use the soles of my shoes as 'brakes' when going down the next aisle. Later I was able to dine in style in the same building on a floor that had been partially levelled out by Roy and Janet Hughes. Today, I peruse the most interesting items that are for sale and then leave the said building rueful of the fact that I have thrown or given away many of the toys that I deemed to be of no further use to me as my age entered double figures.

On one side of the main entrance door to the cinema was a sweet-shop, owned by Miss Mostyn. This shop now sells electronic 'cigarettes' or 'vapes'. I remember the shop on the other side being a travel agency when I returned to Ruthin in 1987 and it was from here that I used to purchase my ferry crossings to France. Today, I could have hair extensions applied to my head in this salon! Now there's a challenge!

My mother would buy clothing from Crinolene, now Beresford Adams. Next door, Selwyn would welcome you to Tŷ Coch, Ruthin's Mace store. Yes, this is the third grocer that I have mentioned in Well Street, and I am yet to get to the old Tesco and the old Co-Op on the same street! Today, the building is still called Tŷ Coch but the one time grocery store is now the Flame and Grill food take away. Before becoming a take away food outlet, this was The Coffee Mill and before this it was Smyth's florists. When it ceased to be a grocery, it became a frozen food shop. I always remembered Marian's shop as Chester Cleaners. Prior to being this it had been a cake shop and a chemist. Jan's shop next door was always a card shop. In the sixties, Ethel had a private library in the back of the shop. I am most grateful to Marian and Jan for helping me to gather and correct much of the information in this article. Halifax and Santander had agencies in the property on the Wynnstay Road corner. Before then, this building was a newsagent calling itself Ruthin News which is where some members of the congregations at Pendre, Tabernacl and Wynnstay Road Chapels would collect their Sunday newspapers whilst their children selected their sweet rewards for attending the Sunday School. I always remembered the newsagents being called Siop Gwen, which, in my opinion was a much sweeter than 'Ruthin News'. Gwen was Gwen Tolman and after Gwen, Mike Davies took over the business.

Across Wynnstay Road, Ruthin's old Tesco used to be where Chatwins the Bakery and Café is now. This is where I beg to differ with the authors of the recently published, *The History of Ruthin*. There was a Tesco on this site in Ruthin before Kwiksave opened where Station Motors was located on Station Road. After Tesco temporarily left Ruthin, Idris Evans opened his restaurant, 'French Connection' here. Next door to Tesco was Sam the Barber and then in 1968, it became Mrs Hetherington's Deli and Café. I attended a footcare clinic, in this place a few years ago. Now you buy and sell electrical items amongst other things in the same shop.

The Conservative Club now occupies what was the Plas Coch banqueting hall, run by W. Rees Jones. As a minister of religion, my late father, D. S. Wynne and my mother attended many a wedding breakfast on the first floor in Plas Coch. The Wynnstay Hotel, on the other side of Dog Lane junction, opposite Chatwins was a favourite

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watering hole when I was almost old enough to frequent such places. It's only recently that this has ceased to be a Hotel and is now two residential properties. Part of the Wynnstay Hotel building used to protrude above the pavement, causing much difficulty to Crosville bus drivers who wanted to turn right. This protrusion was removed in 1969 to ease the problem. Beyond Wayfarer, where Record Street joins Well Street, and beyond the Police Station, is Ruthin Library. This was Ruthin County Hall and it was here, felons were tried either by the local magistrates for minor offences up to 1974 or with more serious offences, by the Assize Court Judge up to 1972. I recall the procession from the Judge's customary accommodation at Nantclwyd House (now Nantclwyd y Dre), down Record Street to the County Hall. I had a good look at the inside of the courthouse in 1974 thanks to a minor motoring offence involving the previously mentioned Austin Maxi!

Seen in passing...

- That most attractive building at the front of the Old Gaol is now standing empty and looking for a new life. Could this become the home for Ruthin's long awaited town museum? Are the financial constraints too onerous for just a part of this handsome building to be turned to housing the artefacts that tell the history of our town and its surrounding villages? Several years have slipped past since the Civic Association suggested the taking over of the then crumbling Star Inn for such a purpose. The suggestion created quite an amount of interest. That property, however found a new commercial life. But now just opposite is a further excellent opportunity to create Ruthin's Museum – we really could do with one. Let us know if you would support this project.



- The whereabouts of a splendid display board recording the names and dates of previous Mayors of Ruthin has caused some concern. But now it has been located and will soon be on display in the very suitable interior of the Market Hall.
- There have been some changes in the shops around St Peter's Square. The closure of the long established Montecito was quickly followed by its reopening as another ladies boutique. The corner shop that once had the soubriquet of 'The Purple Shop' lost that designation when on becoming the Ruthin Visitor Centre, it was quickly covered by layers of white paint. Now it has succumbed to a rather distinctive but uncontroversial, black and white. Whilst opposite the Children's Charity shop is currently having a major refurbishment.
- There are still however two empty premises on the other side looking for tenants, and from the sign outside the Wine Vault with its Tuscan colonnade, it is also available to let.
- Ruthin's U3A has now secured a well-deserved place in the town's social and cultural calendar. Their latest newsletter gives details of a recent application for funds from the National Lottery. The application for £2,203 to purchase a colour printer, lapel mike and amplifier, media projector, toner cartridges, First Aid training, Bingo caller machine, laptop computer and rent for use of the Rugby Club for a year was successful. Congratulations to Rose Hislop and her team for putting in a successful bid. The projector, lapel mike and amplifier could be available for loans to all U3A groups. Ruthin's branch now comprises 211 members and 27 different interest groups. And it costs just £15 a year to join. If anyone would like further details please check out their web site on u3asites.org.uk/Ruthin or contact Rose Hislop on 01824 705331 For all further information contact rose@hislop.co.uk



Home and Away

DEREK JONES begins a regular new column, making links between Ruthin and the rest of the world

'A narrow path between two walls or hedges, especially on a hill'. That definition sounds familiar. Most readers, I suspect, would say that it referred to the Cunning Green, the subject of some very good news in the last edition of Town and Around.

In fact, it is taken from the Directory of the Sussex Dialect and Provincialisms in the County of Sussex, published in 1875, and refers to what are still known in East Sussex as twittens. There are still several in Lewes, now county town of East Sussex. They include, for example, Church Twitten, and, perhaps more marginally, Keere Street, which, although named street, has all the characteristics of a twitten, including the fact that vehicles are not allowed to enter.

Of course, the underlying geologies of Ruthin and Lewes are different. Lewes is built on chalk down-land, containing many flints which feature strongly in the walls of its twittens. In the Cunning Green, by contrast, sandstone is very much in evidence, colouring its atmosphere. On the other hand, there is much otherwise to link the topography of Lewes and Ruthin: both are hill towns, both are river towns – the Sussex Ouse runs below Lewes town centre, whilst, as we know, the river Clwyd is a familiar feature of Ruthin town – and around!

But twittens? Where does that word come from? It sounds almost as mysterious as Cunning Green. Specialists in local dialects suggest that the word may be related to zwischen, the German for 'between', or to the Dutch tussen, which has a similar meaning.

Of course, you could describe many of these passageways, less romantically, as alleys, and, of course, in this sense, the Cunning Green is not unique, even in Ruthin. The one that links Upper Clwyd Street and Clwyd Street comes immediately to mind. There are many more; write to Town and Around, and we'll feature some in a later edition.

A strong international theme is already apparent in this new column, saving us from a too narrow parochialism. Wikipedia has a full entry on the subject of alleys, with examples drawn from many different countries, including, for example, Santorini in Greece, and Sana'a in Yemen. What are known as Medina Quarters in North African cities, comprise whole areas of narrow, vehicle free streets, where it may be quite easy to get lost!

Back in the British Isles, the use of the word ginnel in Yorkshire is worth a mention, thought to be derived from the French chenel, (channel). In Conty Durham and Newcastle-on-Tyne, alleys are called chares, considered to be connected to the Old English cierr, a turning, and to be related to wynd, still in use in parts of Scotland.

Among my favourite words in this very partial glossary of dialect words for alleys is the snicket. One of the most celebrated black and white photographs of the 20th century is A Snicket in Halifax by Bill Brandt (1904-1983). We are still able to describe the snicket as 'a narrow path between two walls', but the atmosphere is altogether different from that of the Cunning Green. This is a photograph which helps us imagine the Halifax that grew up during the Industrial Revolution – shining black cobblestones, overlooked by the gable of Dean Clough Mill. How many boots have trodden on this snicket! Even the arrival of a supermarket nearby cannot take away the power of Bill Brandt's great work.

Last word to the Oxforddictionaries.com on what they aptly name



A Snicket in Halifax by Bill Brandt (1904-1983)

But twittens? Where does that word come from? It sounds almost as mysterious as Cunning Green.

Back in the British Isles, the use of the word ginnel in Yorkshire is worth a mention, thought to be derived from the French chenel, (channel).

Among my favourite words in this very partial glossary of dialect words for alleys is the snicket. One of the most celebrated black and white photographs of the 20th century is A Snicket in Halifax by Bill Brandt (1904-1983)

'alleyways of language': 'In these days of mass media and global communications it is comforting to think that regional lexical variation in British-English is alive and well, and in fact it seems right up people's alley. When linguists set out to collect distinctive local vocabularies, one of the classic questions informants are asked is "What do you call the narrow walkway between or along buildings?" Comforting indeed!

Ruthin Country Market

The new home for the Ruthin Country Market, in the community hall of the English Presbyterian Church, on Wynnstay Road, is well advertised on Fridays once one has ceased to look for it on Market Street.

Its new home has established this venue as a place to come if you really want to have home cooked and locally produced food. Teas and coffees along with a friendly chat are a part of the friendly welcome that Ruthin's home bakers offer to their customers.

Open from 9am till 12 noon do come along to see their array of bread, pastries, pies, savouries, confectionary, cookies and last but not least those fabulous cakes that they do.

"We are always looking for new members," Hazel told us, "and it is only 5p to join." More home bakers would be very welcome especially with the approach of Christmas.

There is a special list available to pick up if you want to order your Christmas cakes, Christmas puddings or lots of other seasonal specialities. Call in and pick one up as well as partaking of a sgwrs a phaned.



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Ruthin Food Bank delivers Christmas Hampers

As last year, the Ruthin Branch of the Vale of Clwyd Foodbank will deliver Christmas hampers to those perceived to be in need. Potential recipients are identified through Social Services, the Red Cross and Sheltered Accommodation providers. Organisers are at pains for their not to be seen as receiving charity, but the foodbank responding to a perceived need. Local organiser, Bob Ellis, would like the people of Ruthin to know that the Foodbank does support the needy, whilst being grateful to all the organisations, schools, chapels, churches, individuals and Tesco who have donated food throughout the two and a half years of the foodbank's existence in Ruthin. From April 2013 until August 2015, the Ruthin Foodbank has supplied food to 378 Adults and 181 children making a total of 559 people.

The Foodbank is run by four teams of volunteers at Canolfan Awelon each Thursday morning (each team working once every 4 weeks). There are 27 volunteers. There will be a food collection at Tesco Ruthin between December 4th and 5th.



Recent Civic Association Events

The visit of Rhuddlan Castle and its historic surrounds on 27th August, led by Fiona Gale was much enjoyed by a goodly number of members.



The September Open Doors events were a great success, many declaring that it was the best Open Doors ever. There were twenty properties open in the town. To quote a few figures, at the Old Gaol there were recorded almost 600 people passing through the door and Nantclwyd y Dre saw 400 visitors, and, if it is not invidious to highlight one site over the others, the gardens of Nantclwyd Hall earlier in the month were generally conceded to be the star site of the whole event – let us hope that they will participate again next year.

At the October AGM the turnout was disappointing, but the Chairman's report was of a very busy and successful year past. The accounts showed that the Association is financially in good order, and with the exception of the secretary who was stepping down, all the officers and other committee members were re-elected. The Chairman, Liz Williams was pleased the three new members, Peter and Kathrine Daniels and Ian Lewney were elected to reinforce the committee team. The following presentation given by the Welsh National Assembly Outreach and Liaison Officer on how the Assembly operates and represents us, was interesting and informative – all in all a good evening and we look forward to another busy and rewarding year ahead in 2016.



Ruthin and District Civic Association

The Association's main aims are to promote 'Civic Pride' in the town of Ruthin and its surrounding villages. We aim to promote high standards in any relevant planning processes and in encouraging architectural excellence.

We always seek to work with our local authorities and organisations in pursuit of the preservation and improvement of the town's rich history and culture. In this respect we hold quarterly members meetings as well as monthly committee meetings.

If you would be interested in becoming a member of the association or join the committee, please contact our treasurer Robert Williams, Lenton House, Mold Road, Ruthin, LL15 1SL, 01824 704998 or ruthincivic@btinternet.com Further information, and back numbers of Town and Around can be found on www.ruthincivic.org

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We welcome letters and contributions.

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