

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

June 2016

Tesco - 10 years on Peter Daniels reviews the long term impact

It's hard to believe that on July 31st Tesco will celebrate 10 years of trading in Ruthin. At the time, RADCA felt the building had little architectural merit. Its pallid, utilitarian structure, now looking stained and shabby to the allotment side, is so different to the playfully distinctive Craft Centre opposite, yet there is little doubt which is the more important to Ruthinians.

Looking back at newspaper reports of the time, readers will recall something of a minor backlash when plans were unveiled in March 2005. The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) pointed to the downturn in town trade in Abergele, post-Tesco. A Co-op



spokesman said "the application I believe will be the closing of the Co-op", pointing to Porthmadog, where Tesco had done just that. The county council nevertheless granted planning permission in August 2005 and the diggers moved in during early March 2006.

In May 2006, three months before opening and even before recruitment began the developer sought a significant expansion onto the site currently occupied by Huws Grey. At the time, RADCA questioned whether this was Tesco's motive all along. Planners considered this not long after Tesco opened. There were siren calls about the affect Tesco was having in town. Councillors were told of a 20 per cent drop in town centre footfall and voted 18 to one against the increase in size. On appeal, a planning inspector overturned the county council's decision but Tesco never pursued the matter.

10 years downstream, what effect has Tesco had on Ruthin? It's difficult to attribute changes to any one set of circumstances. The answer is muddled by the growth of internet shopping, the 2008 credit crunch and subsequent recession.

In spite of it, the Co-op survives, albeit with fewer lines. There is little doubt it went through lean times. Tesco forced Somerfield (the former KwikSave) to shut and the Co-op's endurance relates more to the closure of Somerfield.

The FSB had said that "The new store would cause decay in the town centre and impact on the quality of life for residents". This was too pessimistic an assessment but there were nevertheless changes. Post-Tesco, the number of butchers reduced to two and newsagents to one, although Nature's Treasure also now sells newspapers.

The first store to close was Reebee's grocery side, in October 2006, blaming Tesco (and parking charges). The fact that this was the town's only remaining greengrocer would suggest that it was the arrival in 1992 of Lo-cost (now Station Road Co-op) that progressively put paid to town centre fruit & veg. Cllr Eryl Williams said as much during the Tesco planning process. Referring to KwikSave and what had become Co-op Rhuthun, he said, "If you look at Ruthin now, things that were there have gone because the supermarkets have taken over".

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And there is no doubt post-Tesco that the town centre cohort of open shops shrank but, from 2008, this could also be laid at the door of the credit crunch and recession. That number has subsequently bounced back.

What has happened, post-Tesco, and indeed post-Lo-cost, is a change of emphasis within the town centre. As you might expect, the town has fewer convenience and more comparison shops. Like most other market town in Wales, Saturday afternoon has gone quiet, yet Tesco itself is very busy at that time.

A Grand Night at the Hustings

Bobby Feeley reports on the evening

R&DCA organised a Hustings event for the candidates taking part in the Welsh Assembly Election 5th May, 2016. The event took place in Canolfan Awelon on 20th April and as always was very well attended, in fact standing room only.

The Hustings was expertly chaired by Town Councillor Bob Ellis, who made sure the politicians didn't speak too long which allowed the lively audience to ask as many questions as possible. The candidates represented all the parties taking part, bar UKIP who didn't make an appearance. Questions were varied and interesting, on subjects ranging from NHS waiting times, stroke therapy, GPs and out of hours services, Local Government Reorganisation, the European Referendum; one or two questioners tried to use the opportunity to bring forward personal issues, but were quickly deflected by Chairman Bob. All panellists, bar the Conservative, favoured staying in Europe, although not a devolved issue, this was a subject of great interest.



Darren Millar, Clwyd West's sitting Conservative A.M., gave a polished and confident performance, but his answers were not always appreciated by a large faction of the audience! Llyr Huws Gruffydd, Plaid Cymru's number 1 on the list, also a sitting A.M., came across very well, he is excellent at picking up on local issues and I think his followers appreciated his open friendly approach, often saying what they want to hear (is that the luxury of opposition?). Jo Thomas, Labour's candidate was a 'newby' and I must say I found her honesty quite refreshing, admitting on several occasions that she didn't know the answer and was quite happy to agree with her fellow panellists at times, well done Jo for having a go. The Green Party representative answered well and demonstrated his concern for environmental matters on most subjects. Finally the beleaguered Lib. Dems fielded the sitting North Wales Regional A.M. Aled Roberts, who answered everything, clearly demonstrating his experience and knowledge of local and National politics. Sadly, although he gave a very knowledgeable and good contribution on the night, I felt it was a shame that this decent, hardworking Welshman ultimately lost his regional seat to UKIP!

The results of the election for the Clwyd West Constituency were as follows:
 Darren Millar Conservative 10,831 votes, 41% - elected A.M.
 Llyr Huws Gruffydd Plaid Cymru 5,768 votes, 22%
 Joanne Thomas Labour 5,246 votes, 20%
 David John Edwards UKIP 2,985 votes, 11%
 Anthony Victor Babu Lib Dem 831 votes, 3%
 Julian Huw Mahy Green 565 2%

Llyr Huws Gruffydd retained his seat on the North Wales Regional List so remains an A.M. - Conservatives attained 1 and UKIP 2 on the North Wales Regional List.

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Social Media – a further examination

“Mold [is a] town buzzing with traders and shoppers. Where are we going wrong in Ruthin?”

It’s still possible to park in Mold for a subsidised 50p all day (will that last?). Do the same in a Ruthin long-stay and it’s seven times more



Surely, for a visitor, the ability to park at reasonable cost is secondary to the primary reason for visiting a town: its environment, its attractiveness and the experience it offers

Fuel for an average car’s round trip to Mold plus parking is no different to the cost of long-stay parking here. A more usual three-hour visit in Ruthin is £2 cheaper

A member of RADCA continues to reflect on some questions recently raised about Ruthin on social media, turning to “Mold [is a] town buzzing with traders and shoppers. Where are we going wrong in Ruthin?” The universal answer seems to be car parking charges.

People who look enviously at footfall in Mold need to consider like with like. Mold is more than a market town. Its population is twice Ruthin’s but count the adjoining catchments of Mynydd Isa and Buckley and you have a combined population equivalent to Rhyl, Kinmel Bay & Towyn, over much the same area. Little wonder Mold is busy. This may explain why Mold is something of a paradox. Mold holds its own while other market towns almost universally suffer. Given its surroundings, the question for Mold, however, is why are there not more services in that town.

Returning to Ruthin, it’s inevitable that people will blame car parking as a reason why Mold is more popular. People have always held that view. This is especially true since the increases in Ruthin car parks, from April 2016. It’s still possible to park in Mold for a subsidised 50p all day (will that last?). Do the same in a Ruthin long-stay and it’s seven times more (a fee that actually hasn’t increased for long stay parking). 50p used to buy four hours in Ruthin. Now it won’t buy an hour. The fairer comparison is actually £1.50 long-stay for three hours, said to be the optimum shopping & visiting time for Ruthin.

Remember, though, that Mold was still considerably busier than Ruthin when Ruthin’s car parks were free (charges were introduced on the Square in 1994 and progressively elsewhere between 1998 and 2003).

When Ruthin’s car parks were free, there was also direct evidence for space blocking. This happens in Prestatyn. We should also learn from Holywell. Car parks became free, workers blocked spaces, shoppers couldn’t park and businesses demanded charging again.

Even recently, again on social media, one Ruthin observer felt that never mind the charge, it would be nice to find a space. What she probably meant was that there wasn’t space when and where she wanted to park. There’s a hierarchy of car parking in town, with the Square and Market Street being preferred. Post-Wetherspoon’s, the pressure on Market Street has increased.

Whatever your view of the new charges, they price off demand where there is insufficient supply. It’s about aligning the length of time in a car park with an optimal shopping trip time and it’s also encouraging workers to migrate to less popular car parks.

There are scare stories in the press and on social media about the reduction in people parking. Footfall is also said to be down, as a result. Increase the price of anything and such a reaction is inevitable. No one yet knows how elastic this is: will it bounce back? It’s simply too early to tell.

Surely, for a visitor, the ability to park at reasonable cost is secondary to the primary reason for visiting a town: its environment, its attractiveness and the experience it offers. Here, Ruthin wins and visitors are less likely to grumble about £1.50 long-stay. Perhaps that’s also why Buckley is suffering, even though parking this time last year was free but charges now are modest: Buckley’s still perceived as “empty”.

People often say they will travel to Mold to enjoy cheaper parking but that’s barking! People will elect to go there for other reasons: for the array of supermarkets or for the market (Ruthin hasn’t the population to support our own: we’ve tried). But to abandon Ruthin simply because Mold’s parking is cheaper seems odd. Fuel for an average car’s round trip to Mold plus parking is no different to the cost of long-stay parking here. A more usual three-hour visit in Ruthin is £2 cheaper.

Home and Away

Derek Jones on Place Names

This edition of Home and Away owes its genesis to Brian Hubble, who, in a letter to Miles Anderson, the editor, suggested some variations on the name of Ruthin itself. Brian suggested first that we should explore the Alhambra (the royal palace in Granada, southern Spain, built 1333, and most famously occupied by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella). Alhambra, Brian pointed out, was old Moorish for 'Red Fort'. It was interesting enough that the name of Ruthin should have been thought to mean the same as Alhambra in Welsh, but then Miles chimed in again – was there not another Red Fort, across the world in New Delhi, India, home of successive Mughal emperors from 1657-1857? Indeed there was!



So far, so absolutely fascinating, but now I must enter a caveat. I do



so with some reticence, since I am not a Welsh speaker; but it would be artificial not to mention that there is some dispute among place name scholars about whether the word fort (din) has any influence on the naming of Ruthin.

The latest scholarship is contained in Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales, published by Professors Hywel Wyn Owen and Richard Morgan in 2007. They maintain that, along with Ruthin, Glamorgan (and I didn't know we had a counterpart in south Wales), the real translation is 'red edge'.

We still, of course, have that wonderful primary colour red. Owen and Morgan think the hin in our name must refer to the border or edge of the river Clwyd, or of the sandstone edge of the 13th century castle. In this context, not far away, Rhuddlan, once in Old Flintshire but now in Denbighshire, is on the same river as us, and translates as 'Red Bank'. Rhuddlan was, in 1582, known as Rutland, now the name of England's smallest county but, while we are in Wales, we might as well also mention Red Wharf Bay, Anglesey, Traeth Goch, known for its oystercatchers, shelduck, purple sandpipers, curlew and dunlin, which sweep across its splendid and notably red and muddy strand.

Clearly, there is no end to the riches to be found in our explorations of red! We have not yet mentioned Red (Krasnaya) Square in Moscow, a small area between St Basil's Cathedral, the Spassky Tower and the Kremlin, a World Heritage Site taking its place along with the Alhambra and the Red Fort. Perhaps less exalted is the London Borough of Redbridge, named after the River Roding, which flows through Ilford; and, at the other end of the scale, Redmarshal, a village near Stockton on Tees, County Durham, which, at the last census, numbered 350 people in 130 households!

I cannot resist one small tailpiece. Sandstone, after which so many of the places are named, as mentioned in this edition, is not always red. Geologists tell us that it is made up of quartz and feldspar, and can be tan, brown, yellow, grey, pink or black as well as our local colour.

One final thought on the subject, 'Kremlin' means 'Fortress within the city'. There is a recent book by Catherine Merridale, called The Red Fortress: The Secret Heart of Russia's History (Penguin, 2014).

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More notes on Mwrog Street

Miles Anderson continues his peregrinations

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there were no postal vans in those days and on occasions he would have had to deliver the occasional crate of beer as well as the letters and postcards.

The new community centre and recently developed sports centre there have given a new vitality to the area

Returning to Mwrog Street I pick up the tale at the highpoint of the street at the far end where the church of St Mwrog and St Mary stands on an eminence from where it faces Ruthin Castle and the spire of St Peters across the valley. The building is perched on a seemingly impregnable site with a steep drop to the west and south rather reminiscent some of Edward 1st's castles, but on a much smaller scale.

Retreating down the hill, our Clwydian Historian of 1988 tells us that at the foot of the steps to the church at house No 160, Voel View, this used to be an inn by the name of 'Labour in Vain' or 'Y Labour' (see illustration). The sign depicted two white women vainly scrubbing a black baby. The village stocks were located here for the detention of miscreants and drunkards. Today locals need cross the street to find the welcoming Cross Keys for refreshment, and there is no local punishment for any over indulgence!

Peripatetic tradesmen, such as Jones 'the light cake' would carry his wares in a casket on his head in a basket from 40 Clwyd Street, calling out his wares. Twice a day a horse and trap brought milk round where it was dispensed into the housekeeper's jug for 3p a pint. Similar milk deliveries were made throughout Ruthin until c1940. The postman was also up and on his rounds by 7am – there were no postal vans in those days and on occasions he would have

had to deliver the occasional crate of beer as well as the letters and postcards.

The recorded floods of 2000 and 2012 were nothing compared to those of 1931. These followed a quite severe earthquake that occurred here on a Sunday morning in June. Once again blocked culverts and drains left people stranded in the upper rooms of their homes. It was reported that "...there was considerable anxiety and consternation until the town crier, from a vantage point on Ddoltwr Bridge proclaimed the cause".

The housing up the steep incline seems to continue to be more modest in style until the ground levels out after which there are a number of more self-respecting, gentrified homes to the left.

Following the last edition Susan Kilday sent details of Llanfwrog's old community well that could be in danger of being lost forever. It lies between Glan yr Afon and Ty Newydd It was last used by tenants of the old Almshouses before they had piped water. It could have been a stopping place on the ancient pilgrim's route. Access is no longer easy and as a historic site deserves to be saved.

If we have digressed from the north side of Mwrog Street lack of space limited our description, but here were the very substantial Ellis's Aerated Water Works, now gone and remembered in the redevelopment of the site Maes Ffynnon; and there are still wells there.

Mwrog Street's two extremities meet at Lon Fawr – a good place to end. The new community centre and recently developed sports centre there have given a new vitality to the area, and the beautifully restored cottages, with their 2014 Quayle award opposite make an attractive place to arrive in Ruthin. I am grateful for access to Molly Clubbe's historic notes and to Colin Edwards for loaning them to me.

QUAYLE AWARD SUCCESS FOR RUTHIN FARMERS AUCTION COMPANY LIMITED

Harold Jones is impressed!

It is hard to believe that it will soon be a quarter of a century since Ruthin's Livestock Market moved from the centre of the town to a new site on the outskirts. It was in 1992 that the bold move was made at a time when other market towns in the area were retaining their farmers' markets in the middle of their towns. The re-location to the site at Parc Glasdir has proved to be extremely successful and Ruthin is now one of the leading market centres in the region, in the United Kingdom and beyond. Auctions now include livestock sales, vehicle and implement sales, equine sales, sheepdog sales, property sales and furniture sales.



Because of this success the Directors and Managers of the Company realised that the existing facility at Glasdir needed to be enlarged. The result is a brand new L-shaped extension linked to the original building which was opened in August 2015 after an eight month construction period. The new building is part single storey, part two storey and is over 80sq.m in area. Roofs are of shallow pitched profiled metal sheet with green metal sheet cladding and timber boarding to the upper level with red coloured render below.

The main entrance leads to a large foyer and reception area. From here there is access to the cafe and adjacent kitchen with male, female and accessible toilets nearby. A corridor leads to the sales ring which has direct links to the livestock market area. At the other end of the foyer, double doors open onto a large multi-purpose hall which is 360sq.m in area. Since the building was opened this space has been used for a variety of purposes including the opening ceremony and, more recently, the setting for a local Urdd Eisteddfod, and also the venue for charity concerts. The Company hopes that good use can be made of this facility by local groups and organisations. Behind the reception area there is a general office, a meeting room of 38sq.m, individual offices for Directors and Managers, staff facilities, plant rooms and stores. The meeting room is available for use by local groups.

There are a number of spaces at first floor level that can, in future, be developed as offices for expansion or for letting out to companies or professionals in the area. Internal finishes are of good quality and the building has a bio-mass heating system providing a combination of underfloor heating and blown warm air.

The new building provides a focal point, not only for the market itself, but also for the numerous events that the site supports such as the Ruthin Show, Horse Shows, Car Rally Service Areas, Young Farmers Club activities etc.

The success of the market and its new redevelopment will certainly



bring substantial benefits to Ruthin and the surrounding areas. When specialist sales are held customers come from far and wide including overseas and many stay in local accommodation. It is a worthy recipient of the 2015 Quayle Award and we wish

to congratulate the building owners- Ruthin Farmers Auction Company, the Architects – Adrian Jones Associates, the Project Manager – Dafydd Evans of "Kartref" and all the local tradesmen and suppliers who put this excellent project together so successfully..

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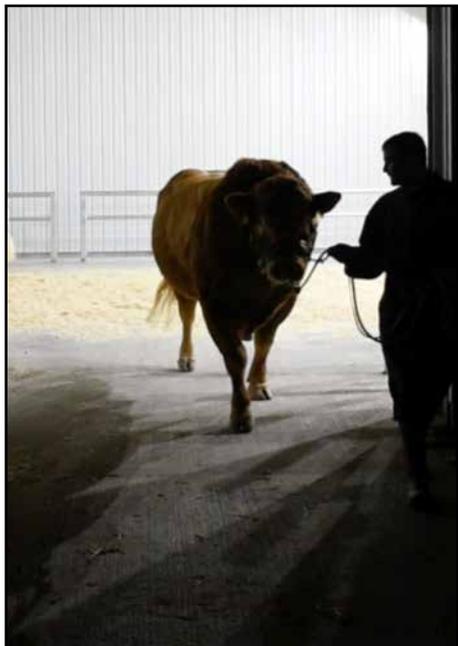
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Genus – another worthy winner of the Quayle Award

Miles Anderson talks to James Hudson

Genus has a history stretching back to the latter war days when the Ministry of Agriculture were looking into ways of ensuring better and healthier cattle to provide the nation with high quality milk as well as the best beef possible; and AI (artificial insemination) was decided to be the safest and most reliable breeding method. In 1946 the Ministry built a unit at Ruthin with eight stud bulls.



Talking to manager James Hudson, a young man from a West Country farming background, it was soon very obvious that having a high quality breeding programme and the science of genetics was very important to him. However, he confessed that, until recently, although the company had been working very successfully, with the farming community, it had not been engaging with the wider community, in particular here in Ruthin where it's most important base was situated.

Just over a couple of years ago it decided to open its doors and welcome in those people who had never dared to venture passed the gates – well with all those great bulls about, you can hardly blame them! But now a warm welcome awaits the visitor to their newly developed "Gallery". At the click of a button spotlights lit up, projection screens dropped down and blinds blocked out or revealed the light. When not in projection mode the expansive windows all-round the room can be used to show off their amazing examples of beef at its most spectacular best. On my previous visit with the Quayle Award subcommittee, we had watched spellbound as a parade of beasts that paraded before us – thankfully at a safe distance.

Since opening the Gallery just six months ago they have welcomed over a thousand visitors. The Gallery also offers an excellent opportunity to highlight Genus' excellent services to visitors interested in having their cattle serviced. Genus base in Ruthin is the most important of their bases in UK and they are actively involved in business in more than 70 countries worldwide. There is no doubt that Ruthin's hotels, restaurants and shops benefit from these visitors.

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Although in the UK as a whole only about 50% of cattle breeding is by AI, in countries such United States, Brazil and Argentina, farms there do not generally maintain stock bulls, and it is likely that this will be the trend in the future back at home. And it is good to note that amongst their popular breeds such as Holstein, they also have the Welsh Blacks represented in producing beef cattle.

Inside the Gallery there is a plaque with an image of probably the most famous breeding bull based at the Ruthin stud, Picston Shottle, to whom the Gallery was dedicated at its opening ceremony. The semen from this bull has provided over one million 'straws'. Straw is the term used for semen when processed through the onsite laboratory for inseminating. This means it is more than likely that there have been over a million offspring from this one bull!

When I enquired about the letters ABS that accompanies the logo of Genus, James told me that it was an American company that they had taken over. Interesting to have a business closely associated with Ruthin taking over an American company!



The Gallery offers very comfortable seating for up to 39 people and catering and refreshments can be arranged. Viewing can be arranged of specific bulls and viewing the onsite laboratory as well as all the usual audio-visual, WI-FI and network access that is expected these days. These facilities are proving very popular with breeding groups, young farmers and students in particular.

The Gallery at Genus is certainly an exceptional facility that, in the view of the Ruthin and District Civic Association, is a worthy joint winner of the Quayle Award

Café R re-opens at the Craft Centre

Ruth Bacon finds much to celebrate

The popular Café R re-opened at Ruthin Craft Centre on the 9th May following an absence of some four months. After some local speculation as to the new tenant, it was finally revealed that Denbighshire County Council had stepped in to run the café using its own catering service. Jamie Groves, Head of Facilities, Assets and Housing says, "We decided to run the facility ourselves as we now have a very established and successful catering and bars function, operating venues such as the North Wales Bowls Centre, outside catering, school meals service etc...We have a range of skills, resources and offers available to support the venue now and into the future. Café R is considered to be a very important venue to both the Craft Centre and Ruthin. Our decision to operate it, fully demonstrates our ongoing commitment to ensure it remains sustainable now and into the future."

Most of the new team, the chef, catering assistants and waiting on staff are already employed by the council. One face however will be familiar to customers of the old Café R, that of Julie Radwell who is the new Front of House.

Some changes have been made. The kitchen has been updated and new screens surround the outside seating area. Indoors there is a slightly different lay-out of the furniture. Also there is a numbered sign on each table because a system of "Order and Pay" at the counter rather than a waiting on service is now in place. Any dietary requirements or allergies can be discussed before ordering.

A new menu offering plenty of choice from breakfast to afternoon tea has been introduced. A range of light lunch favourites such as sandwiches, paninis, baguettes and oven baked jacket potatoes are available and some interesting combinations of fillings feature, while a selection of salad bowls offer variety. There is a "specials" board which changes daily. This offers dishes such as lasagne, quiche and risotto. The traditional afternoon tea for two sounds perfect for hungry people but if you simply want a coffee or tea that is fine. There is now a designated children's' menu with a number of favourite dishes to choose from, all followed by a scoop of ice-cream!

Jamie describes the venture as evolving and he is open to suggestions from customers. Asked about the possibility of Café R once again offering its popular Sunday lunches he says the subject has been discussed this week with the staff which concluded..."we are busy now, and at the weekend and have a quick turnover of tables – this might reduce if a Sunday lunch were introduced but....never say never and we will continue to monitor the business"

According to both Café R and the Craft Centre staff, the first couple of weeks have been busy, and feedback (no pun intended!) from the public has been good. The café is open daily from 10am until 5pm. Table reservations can be made on 01824 708099.

Philip Hughes, the Craft Centre's Director sums up by saying "We are delighted to have Café R open, and offering a full service to all of our customers and visitors." Many local people will agree with that wholeheartedly!

Denbighshire County Council had stepped in to run the café using its own catering service



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Discovering Old Welsh Houses in the Ruthin Area

Margaret Dunn introduces this valuable research group

Some readers will be aware of the activities of this group in dating and researching houses built pre-1700. We are a registered charity which



has been busy for around ten years, but mainly in North West Wales. We aim to protect old Welsh houses by working with local people to find out more about the houses & help save them from demolition

A number of Denbighshire houses with oak timbers felled from 1500 onwards have been researched in the former Edeirion district; others being in Clocaenog (Paradwys), Llanfwrog (Ty Cerrig) and on the outskirts of Ruthin (Caerfallen). All our reports, Newsletters etc can be seen on our website: www.discoveringoldwelshhouses.co.uk. They are also available on Coflein, Archwilio, the HERs & at local archives.

We aim to protect old Welsh houses by working with local people to find out more about the houses & help save them from demolition

We need local expertise to help identify potential pre-1700 houses with suitable original oak timbers; to ease meeting with owners to discuss the project and to help with oral and documentary research into the history of key houses and the families who lived in them.

It is now hoped to augment the work undertaken by Denbighshire County Council and others by focussing our activities in parts of North East Wales, including the Ruthin district. We await the results of several grant applications before we can identify where and when we will be working in 2016-17 or in future years.

Working alongside local communities, organisations and individuals is a crucial part of our projects. We need local expertise to help identify potential pre-1700 houses with suitable original oak timbers; to ease meeting with owners to discuss the project and to help with oral and documentary research into the history of key houses and the families who lived in them.

We give talks explaining the project to local groups and hope that some people will be interested in joining in with activities in their community. Membership is £10 p.a. and includes receiving the quarterly newsletter which gives details of the local Denbighshire branch monthly events as well as those of the whole Group. Events include guided house visits, talks and archive sessions.

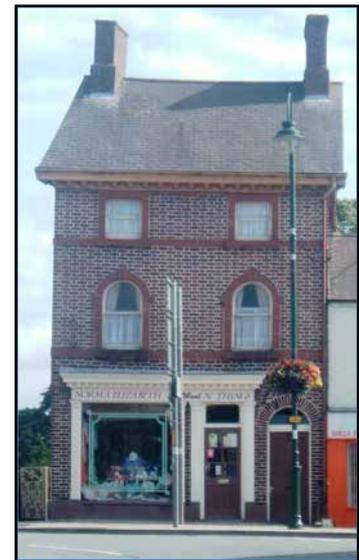
We use approved specialists to assess and sample suitable timbers to obtain, where possible, the timber felling date. As timber was used unseasoned, the date of construction is close to the felling date. This assists identify the development over time and across North Wales of styles of carpentry and plans of houses. We sometimes undertake architectural recording of houses if this has not been done.

WHY NOT look at our website, invite us to give a talk and/or contact us for further information?

Margaret Dunn 01766 890550; brynbedd1@gmail.com. PLEASE HELP US if you can!

Seen in passing...

- The courtyard of the Craft Centre has been filled with blossom – first the white globes of the magnolia managed to avoid being burnt by the frosts and then all the cherry blossom was a delight; and around the car park there are a series of miniature wild flower meadows with a tree in the centre of each – what a pity with Café R being temporarily closed there have been many fewer visitors to enjoy the beauty of it all. And the cherry blossom has also progressed up Market Street on the trees in the decorative guards, as part of the Art Trail.
- The recently sited 20MPH signs near schools, as in Llanfair and Llandyrnog have been noted. These are only advisory rather than mandatory, but they are very welcome. This restriction has been available for some time and it is good to have it now being used for the additional safety for school children.
- At last there is action on the long standing scruffy site on the corner of Wynnstay Road. We understand that new homes are to be built there.
- And there are developments on the Lon Parcwr Industrial estate. A large site to the left opposite the turning right that leads us, amongst all the other offerings to the charming, recently opened café at the garden centre, has found a new tenant. The yard is filled with gleaming machinery. New owners Harrison Machinery are retailing and servicing horticultural and agricultural machinery. Call in for a chat and look round if you are interested.
- At the recent viewing of Memories of Ruthin there were two recurring regrets that old postcards regularly bring forward for discussion. One is the dislike of the roundabout imposed on St Peter's Square and the other is the characterless bridge over the Clwyd at the bottom of Clwyd Street. The graceful and much loved bridge still exists underneath. It had railings each side so that the river in its then wider, more slow flowing character could be admired. And one image still extant and also much loved is the house at the bottom of Well Street that encompasses Norma Elizabeth's wool shop. It has the appearance of being like a recreation a child's drawing of their imaginary ideal house.
- Free parking is at a premium in Ruthin so it was with surprise that we found an offer of one hour's parking "di dal" at the top end of the car park on Market Street for just four cars – perhaps an expression of DCC's generosity to shopping car owners.
- The Ruthin Good Citizen of the Year Award 2016 was awarded to Mr Huw Thelwall Davies, Uwchaled, Wern Uchaf, Ruthin and the Ruthin Young Person of the Year 2016 has been awarded to Liam Rickard, a Year 8 pupil from Ysgol Brynhyfryd. Congratulations to them both.



A Light Hidden under a Bushel

Miles Anderson finds a lack of welcome to Cae Ddol

I had a most pleasant stroll round Cae Ddol with visitors to Ruthin recently. We all found it a delightful experience - the open grassy spaces to walk, the recently restored lake and island with its information board for young and not so young visitors. The children's swings were being well used that day, as was the skateboard section.

With such a pleasant park available for public use in our town it is easy to miss. Going down Clwyd Street you can quite easily to walk right past it. There are no signs at the turning off the road saying 'Welcome to Cae Ddol, Ruthin's Public Park'. And if people are tempted

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to venture towards it, possibly attracted by the pleasant tree-lined newly constructed pathway by the river, the signs they are most likely to see are advising car owners about parking restrictions. There are six of them, two at the turning off the road, two other very large ones and two smaller.

The next sight is the public toilet block. This development once was awarded a Quayle award. On the outside are numerous signs advising to availability, and payment required – all very necessary, and even a plaque commemorating the award of ‘Toilet winner of 2009’. However the steel reinforced entrance doors make it look more like a cell-block rather than a welcoming facility.

It is only as you actually turn into Cae Ddol itself that there is a sign announcing that you have arrived at the town’s public park, and that rather than saying ‘Welcome!’ is mainly devoted to advising of opening and closing times and what is not allowed.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have an ice cream and tea stall there and welcoming signs both on the road and at the entrance? Cae Ddol certainly deserves it.

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And whilst on the subject of signs, could there be a prominent one indicating Crispin’s Yard? After all St Crispin was the patron saint of leather makers, one of Ruthin’s oldest industries. And in this the 400th year of Shakespeare’s death, Henry V’s Agincourt speech preludes one of our greatest ever victories, mainly achieved by the Welsh archers, and that was on St Crispin’s Day. Cae Ddol and Crispin’s Yard have much to celebrate; better signage would bring in more people to enjoy it all.

New look Website

Peter Daniels welcomes its smart appearance

By the time you read this edition of Ruthin Town and Around, you may have noticed that the painters and decorators have been in to spruce up the Association’s website. It’s out with the old and in with a brand new design that has tried to modernise the site (just enough), and be a more attractive “shop window” for those who may be interested in joining.



The home page makes it easier for everyone to understand the Association and to navigate the website. It features just four key areas from which everything else flows: 1. What we do; 2. Why join; 3. Publications; and 4. Events & meetings.

Rather than use more familiar pictures that are commonly seen elsewhere, the

website tries to attract attention by featuring images that are a little different. They are generally more unusual views of Ruthin.

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Grant funding in 2010 allowed the Association to introduce and maintain its first web presence. The website has served us well but some of the content was out of date and the design needed refreshing. The new site accomplishes both. It’s now responsive to visitors’ devices, from smartphones to tablets to PCs. It’s still a work in progress, though, so please call back regularly.

It is also linked to the Association’s new Facebook and Twitter experiments. We hope to gauge reaction to social media presences from within and outside the Association. Do please “like” and follow us.

The original grant funding is long exhausted. Best of all, then, the new website hasn’t cost the Association an additional penny and is easier to maintain. Let us know what you think via contact or visit www.twitter.com/ruthincivic or www.facebook.com/ruthincivic

Grumpy Old Man returns

GOM starts by welcoming some positive changes – empty site on Wynnstay Road now tidy, concrete blocks on Station Road replaced by steel fencing and Red Rocks cutting plastic bag eyesore has gone although obtrusive fence remains – can GOM claim some credit for these improvements?

Now to the next Grump: recently I had reason to walk along the main road from Llanfair to Ruthin, and, later, along Mwrog Street. I was horrified by the amount of litter at the roadside. As a regular walker and cyclist, seeing all this rubbish is nothing new. But where does it come from?

Some may be accidental, especially during periods of high wind. Some of it may be dropped by young people who, for whatever reason, are late in learning a sense of responsibility and environmental appreciation. Some (given the increasing preponderance of energy drink bottles) may be left by 'joggers' to avoid the encumbrance of carrying an empty bottle. The most absurd is the weird practice of a few dog owners who pick up their pooch's droppings and then throw the bag into the hedge – just what is that all about? Then there are some 'custodians of the countryside' who allow their field boundaries to become festooned with bale twine and plastic sheets. Along Maes Llan road recently contractors working on overhead lines left behind, thrust into the hedge, seven pairs of strong rubber gloves, pieces of rope and some 'catering' left-overs.



However, the main offender is, by far, food and drink containers which have obviously been jettisoned from a vehicle. Again, one wonders at the mentality. How can we, as a local community, do more to reduce the litter left by a minority? How can anyone live in such a pleasant area and not care for it?

But, three cheers – for Denbighshire County Council, recently seen clearing the verges near Pwllglas, and for Ruthin Town Council who organise an annual clean-up. Five cheers and a big thank-you to those few individuals who simply clear their neighbouring streets and lanes for the benefit of us all. Credit to Denbighshire for employing enforcement officers

Can't we be like some continental countries such as Austria, the Scandinavian ones and even parts of France and Germany? Surely we can!

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.

iRuthin 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

Contributors: Miles Anderson, Ruth Bacon, Peter Daniels, Derek Jones, Heather Williams

Design by Dave Hislop

Future events

- **Quayle Award presentations**, details to be confirmed
- A new venture this year is a visit to see the restoration of Tyddyn Street Chapel under the guidance of architect Robin Wolley on 6th August.
- **Open Doors** dates for September start on the opening of newly restored Porth y Dwr and Ruthin Castle on 3rd and 4th with the main events being organised for the weekend of 11th and 12th. Llanellidan's Medieval Fair is also organised for the 11th and 12th.
- October is once again the month for the association's **annual general meeting**. This year this is to be held on Thursday 20th when after the official business we will be able to enjoy a talk by Margret Dunn on the dating of old Welsh houses.
- All notes for your diaries.