

# Ruthin Town and Around O Gwmpas y Dre



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

March 2016

## Hustings for the Welsh National Assembly Elections

### Miles Anderson invites a questioning of all the candidates

In May last year we held a very successful Hustings for the Westminster Elections; this was a lively and well attended event. Now on Wednesday 20th April there are the Assembly Hustings for the May 5th' election.

When one reflects on the influence over matters concerning our daily lives, so very many of them are the concern of our National Assembly rather than that of the Westminster Parliament; it is clearly evident that the result of these forthcoming elections should be of greater concern to most of the people of Ruthin and further afield.

Just to remind readers of the areas of policy responsibility devolved to the Welsh Government, they are:-

1. Agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development
2. Ancient monuments and historic buildings
3. Culture
4. Economic development
5. Education and training
6. Environment
7. Fire and rescue services
8. Food
9. Health and health services
10. Highways and transport
11. Housing
12. Local government
13. National Assembly for Wales
14. Public administration
15. Social welfare
16. Sport and recreation
17. Tourism
18. Town and country planning
19. Water and flood defences
20. Welsh language

We are fortunate on this occasion to have Bob Owen Ellis to chair the evening and ensure fair play. It is most important that questions to the prospective candidates are relevant to devolved matters and that the aim of this event is to hear the candidates' views.

Awelon at 7.00pm on Wednesday 20th April is the venue and date for the Hustings. The occasion



is open to all members of the public, and we heartily recommend that if you are at all concerned for our public services, you should, wherever possible, attend this Hustings.

# WHOSE TOWN HALL IS IT ANYWAY?

## Derek Jones asks the question

There was something slightly odd about the report in the last Town and Around, that Ruthin Town Hall had been bought back by Denbighshire County Council. Bought back from whom? Whose Town is it anyway?

Of course, legally, it is the property of whichever local authority owns the bricks and mortar and has the deeds to prove it. Morally and politically, however, a town hall surely belongs to all who pay their council tax, and in that spirit, Miles Anderson, the editor of Town and Around, suggested that I should explore the concept of what he named 'the people's town hall'. How do we, the people of Ruthin and District, see its future?

I like the sound of the Oxford English Dictionary's reference to 'the great hall', used for 'the transaction of the public business of a town', but also for 'assemblies, entertainments, etc'. On the face of it at least,

Ruthin Town Hall is very far, at present, from living up to the spirit of that definition.

How many readers of Town and Around, for instance, who might be presumed to have an interest in such matters, know what 'public business' is being transacted inside the building, by whom, and when? It is possible to find out the answers from the Ruthin Town Council website, but I doubt whether that is enough to give most people a feeling that they too can take part in the discussion.

That was my starting point when thinking about the future of the 'people's town hall'?

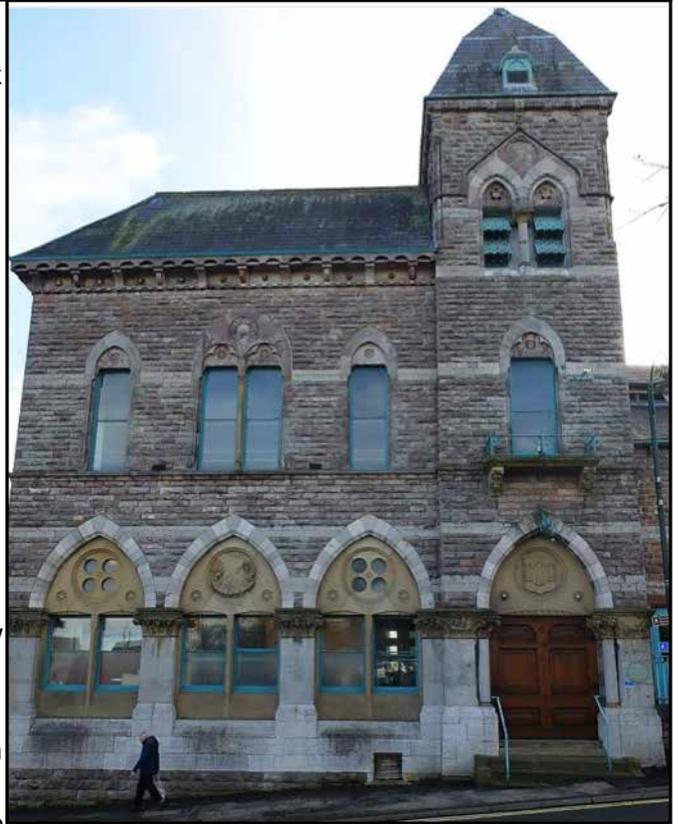
I am encouraged in my adoption of this point of view by the fact that open town meetings have been taking place in the United States, especially in New England, since the 17th century. All citizens have the right to come, express their views on current issues, and even, in some towns, actually vote when it comes to making a decision.

Interestingly enough, as Gareth Evans notes in *The History of Ruthin*, (Ruthin History Society, 2014) there were regular public meetings in the town in the 1770s and 80s, covering local and national issues. I say 'public' but I guess only a very small segment of the public would, and could have afforded, to attend. Later, in the same book, Arnold Hughes describes how various educational activities failed, in the 19th century, because women were excluded. So democracy it was not!

Could open Town Meetings, like those in New England, be made to work in Ruthin today? I believe they could. Four such meetings a year held, of course, in the Town Hall itself would, if properly organised, be necessary first steps towards the realisation that the place belongs to us. As a matter of fact the Ruthin and District have done some groundwork for the proposal; the hustings, where voters can ask questions of candidates standing for membership of the House of Commons or the Welsh Assembly, are very lively and packed out. Implicitly they suggest that we should do this kind of thing more often.

Ruthin Town Meetings, however, would be much more than question and answer sessions. They would need to be genuine discussions about matters of moment at the political grassroots. Votes might be taken but could, in our present system, have no power to bind our MP, AM, County, Town and Community councillors in Westminster, Cardiff Bay, Denbighshire, or Ruthin. They would doubtless take hard decisions much as they do now; they would surely, nevertheless, welcome the opportunity to listen to what their constituents are saying before making their minds up.

One of the first discussions of a Ruthin Town Meeting might well be about how to bring the town hall itself back to life. Apart from on market days, when the traders and shoppers convey a sense of hustle and bustle



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next door, the building now seems strangely quiet, even closed, very far from 'the people's town hall'.

How, then, when there is no market, and the Ruthin Town Meeting is not in session, can the Town Hall begin again to live up to its name? The dictionary definition, mentioned above, is, inevitably, at its feeblest when it refers to 'assemblies, entertainments, etc'. The Town Meeting would have to think hard and imaginatively about the range of activities and interests – cultural, educational, noisy and/or quiet – which the Town Hall could accommodate – and slowly develop a programme which reflected our own changing times. Merely to rehearse what used to take place in it may not be enough.

First things first, of course. How does the idea strike the readers of Town and Around? How can the Civic Association ensure that a proper discussion of it, a people's discussion can take place? If the idea gains ground, who would begin the process of turning it into reality?

It would be good to see some reactions, pro and con, in the next edition.

## RUTHIN'S NEW POSTMASTER

### Gareth Evans welcomes the office improvements

The temporary closure of the Post Office last January made many customers realise how important the Ruthin business is; only then did they understand how much they relied on the facility!

After the refurbishment, the Post Office reopened - a brighter, more open setting, closer to customers - under new ownership, as Huw Hilditch-Roberts, a well-known local businessman became the latest in a long line of Ruthin postmasters dating back to 1677.

Born and bred in Ruthin, Huw, his partner and 3 children (aged 15, 9 and 3) now live in Pentrecelyn. After attending Ysgol Brynhyfryd he studied at Cardiff University before embarking on a business career worldwide. Now, a Ruthin Councillor and Town Champion, he is heavily involved in contributing to the development of the town and assisting local businesses. With his interest in digital media, he continues to run his current business l'rDim, with on-line sales; and....in his spare time he coaches the under 16 Ruthin Football team and is chair of governors of Ysgol Penbarras.

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Huw's commitment and promise to maintain a stand-alone post-office in the current location was the reason for his successful bid for the business. 'The Post Office is an opportunity for me to put something back into the heart of the town's economy on St Peter's Square. It's in a great location and is the key footfall provider for the top of town with around 2000 customers a week.

The 'hands-on' owner is one of 5 staff - 2 existing and 2 new staff members, all of whom have helped and supported the transition to make it as seamless for customers as possible.

"The main challenge will be to work with the post office to keep it relevant for my customers so as to meet all their needs. I want 'the trip to the post office' to be a great experience, not a chore, and I believe I have the experience and interest in customers to make this happen. "Business is tough in a small market town with many competing outlets; you have to be on the ball to make sure you give customers what they want". I look forward to the feedback.



Now open all day Saturday, the viability of the post office depends on usage. "Use it, don't lose it" he says. The people of Ruthin and surrounding district will wish him every success.

# Ruthin's Highstreets – recent social changes...and continuities

A member of RADCA reflects on some questions recently raised about Ruthin on social media, starting with "Just how many hairdressers, charity shops and tearooms does one town need?" The simple answer is, as many as that town will support.

Hairdressers and tearooms are a sign of prosperity and, as you might expect in Ruthin, there's quite a few, though the number of teashops has declined over recent years.

So, take teashops. Compare the end of 2015 with one year previously and Annie's, Castle Park Café and Crown House have all shut. Delightful Cupcakes, acting partly as a teashop, opened. Including neither Café Doof nor the new Seven Oaks (outside the town center), that's a net town centre reduction from 10 to eight, or 20 per cent. Eight goes to seven if you include Café R, which closed on New Year's Eve, pending a new lessee.

The number of cafés was static in 2013 and 2012 at 10. If, however, you go back 10 years to 2005, there were 12 in town (not including one that had not long closed). Over 10 years, this means there was a reduction of a third. If the question "Just how many..." implies that there are currently too many, the asker perhaps should be careful what he wishes for.

In terms of salons and beauticians aimed at women, I make it that Ruthin has 13. That's broadly equivalent to Denbigh. Mold supports 20 but with double the population. The number in Ruthin in December 2005 was 12. The number of barbers was also the same then as now.

If not hairdressers and teashops, then what exactly? What other businesses would fill them? The alternative of empty premises is not at all appealing. For the town's size, we already have an acceptable range of comparison shops. Yet, women's fashions & accessories, for which Ruthin was once justly famous, aren't quite what they used to be, although this sector has seen some recent new ideas and arrivals. The fact that this once strong segment has shrunken suggests it is not strong enough to fill any new gaps.

As for bread & butter town centre grocery/convenience outlets, right across Britain they struggle against supermarkets, so it's unlikely in the extreme we could reverse the trend in modern capitalism and return to the 1970s & early 1980s when such shops were still plentiful. The biggest structural change in the convenience sector was after the 1992 arrival of Lo-cost (today's Station Road Co-op) and Tesco only hastened this restructuring.

The suggestion that there are too many teashops & hairdressers does something of a disservice to the hardworking people who run what are often family businesses.

What, then, of charity shops? Hairdressers and teashops indicate prosperity. A large proportion of charity shops is indicative of decline. But, even here, we must be careful, for charity shops have a place in recycling otherwise unwanted or unloved goods at reasonable prices,



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something that you rarely find in mainstream shops. The likes of Pass it On, Simmi's dress exchange and Elysium, all of which offered sustainable clothing, are gone.

We have just four charity shops, which is actually a tiny proportion of our overall tally of shop units. Mold has three times the number. In Ruthin, the Greyhound Society's shop is a rather interesting find. The Children's Society was recently refurbished. We should remember that it was started in 1993 as a temporary affair by our own Ena Woolford, Gladys Carey and Margaret Roberts.

What has happened, though, is that we've seen a restructure in shop types and a considerable churn of traders yet, currently, there are fewer vacant units in Ruthin than in many years. Occupation rates in Ruthin are better than the national average. To an extent, we get the town centre shopping experience we deserve. If we prefer to buy our jewellery, clothes or our white goods on the internet (or from outside Ruthin), we cannot complain when the likes of Lewis Electrics closes (as it did in 2013, squarely blaming online competition). We have chosen supermarkets over town centre groceries and the result is just two butchers and no greengrocers.

It is difficult to get a cup of coffee or a hairdo online (though no doubt Google is somehow working on both). With no online competition, is it any surprise, in a relatively prosperous town, that cafés and hairdressers flourish? Meanwhile, it's up to us to support our local businesses, whoever they are and whatever service they offer. If we don't, who will? There's always room for more visitors but we cannot rely on them.

## Seen in passing...

Interesting to see that Tesco has taken upon itself the role of traffic flow organiser. It might not be much, but this is the arrival at their entrance, or rather at their car park exit, of a sign advising drivers to "Turn Left Only". Although it can only be seen as a 'request' rather than a statutory prohibition to turn right, so they are not taking upon themselves powers to permit or restrict vehicle flow. Nevertheless it does help enormously to prevent great holdups as cars attempt to turn across the stream of traffic approaching the town centre via the Link Road.



Circles in our landscape are frequently a source of pleasure – stone circles, those magical crop circles - but the appearance of white painted circles along some of our regular pathways, such as the much improved and enjoyed Railway Terrace, give no pleasure. They are someone's method of highlighting un-cleared-up dog excrement. It is unbelievable that in a town that has so much to celebrate in its built and social environment people still exercise their dogs in public places and fail to clear up after them!



Whilst the road works were being carried out on Prior Street, it was amusing that despite this road being a designated one-way thoroughfare, with no permitted access from St Peter's Square, it was necessary to have several notices in place indicating the road temporarily closed to traffic.

Lower Clwyd Street has recently burst into rainbow colours. The offices of Plaid Cymru are now washed a refreshing cream colour. And not to be outdone, next door is now a startling cerulean blue. All very cheering!



Slaters car showrooms on Well Street are now just a distant memory. The prominent site stood empty for years before Ruthin Décor took it over and now runs a thriving business there. But there is just a small part of Slaters still remaining. If you park to the rear of the business there is a finger sign to the left that is still part of Slaters. It indicates the way to "Reception, Parts, Showroom". It is good just to have a small memento of a past existence!



*Industry was locally based in those days and the 1840 map shows two tanneries as well as the Aerated Mineral Water bottling plant. There would also have been a slaughter house and nail foundry as well as eight pubs and several shops.*

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*There are quite generous plots of land behind the properties if their fronts are straight on to the pavements. The land further behind was only developed comparatively recently creating more residential accommodation; Mwrog Street was a highway with single properties to either side.*

those of the gentry. Industry was locally based in those days and the 1840 map shows two tanneries as well as the Aerated Mineral Water bottling plant. There would also have been a slaughter house and nail foundry as well as eight pubs and several shops. Life at that time would have been quite raw with little time for leisure and the parish church and the chapels, and Sunday schools would have gathered the residents, and those further afield, together on their one free day, the Sabbath.

The two chapels, standing adjacent on the north side of the road are named as Capel Seubel, brick built and now dated 1826 – 2015, and Capel Bethania, stone built and larger, once designated as Baptist is now indicated as Welsh Presbyterian.

The north side of the street continues its association with the provision of religious instruction with the distinctive brick built Llanfwrog Parish Institute dated 1899 occupying the site of numbers 66, 68 and 70. The building was designated for the provision of Welsh language Sunday School instruction for adults and used the English medium for children. Continuing the religious preoccupation of the north side of Mwrog Street, St Peter's, the parish church of Ruthin, has recently established a base at number 10!

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Looking generally at the properties on this side of the street, it seems



that there are a substantial number of more middle class properties situated here, especially at the extremities. Next to Park Place there is a small terrace of decorative houses with small gardens to the front behind a hedge, for example. And beyond the two chapels are several substantial villas. Many of the cottages in the centre have recently been re-developed, with two making what are now comfortable and spacious single dwellings.

There are quite generous plots of land behind the properties if their fronts are straight on to the pavements. The land further behind was only developed comparatively recently creating more residential accommodation; Mwrog Street was a highway with single properties to either side.

There is much more to tell of this fascination Ruthin thoroughfare, tales of the people, the long established trades family, the Clubbes, Archdeacon Newcombe and his concern for the 'moral fibre and wellbeing' of his parishioners and Joseph Peers, Denbighshire's Clerk of the Peace who lived at Plas Newydd. Further details will have to await the next edition of Town and Around.

## A SPRING IN THEIR STEP

### Derek Jones Commends the Craft Centre's New Season

Two new shows seem particularly appropriate after a wet and windy start to the year.

In galleries 2 and 3, you can see log baskets, shopping baskets, and apple trays by Mandy Coates, a basket maker from the Elwy Valley, and watch a film which shows Mandy at work. You can also learn to do it yourselves at a series of workshops in March and April.

Meanwhile, in April out in the courtyard, Mai Thomas was inspired by Noah to construct an Ark, which will rest for a time in the Courtyard. She and the Craft Centre staff invite you to help fill it 'with creatures great and small'

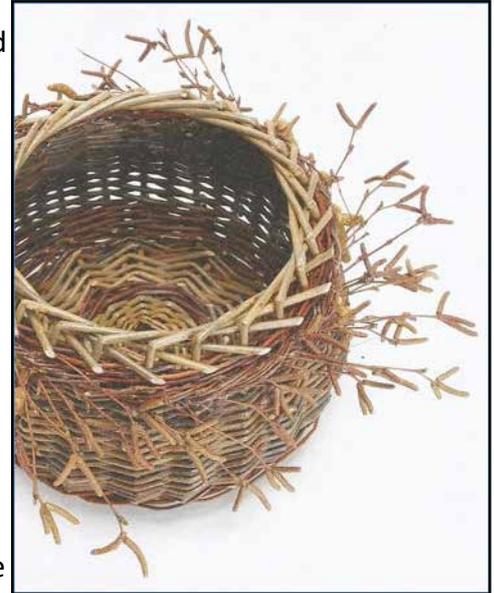
David Jones from Beaumaris takes another feature of everyday life – washing lines - using them as a peg for his imagination. Angels on Washing Lines is nothing if not colourful, and children of all ages should love the prints and sculptures on display in Gallery 1. What on earth is he up to when he depicts 'flying fish with human heads' or 'the cyclist powered by a tiger'? Make your own minds up.

Local primary school children take centre stage in Studio 5 with their own ideas about how wallpaper might be made more quirky and colourful. How should houses be decorated? In three weeks during the autumn, encouraged by Eleri Jones and Susan O'Byrne, the children developed some surprising and colourful abstract patterns, their introduction to the world of decoration.

Decoration and colour are major themes of the Centre's continued exploration of the nature of craft: What is Craft? Who does it? Why do they do it? Why does it matter? Mandy Coates is again on hand to help us towards the answers. Of course, questions beget new questions. That's life.

Perhaps enough has already been written here to demonstrate that Craft is not remote from the way we live. A previous Craft Centre show was deliberately named Not Too Precious. It attracted praise from Charles Saumarez Smith, chief executive of the Royal Academy: 'Ruthin Craft Centre shows crafts of the highest quality...with an exhibition of Welsh crafts...and a very beautiful exhibition of jewellery in non-precious metal from makers all over the world, mainly Scandinavia and Japan'.

In the same vein, the name of Ruthin gets known around the country and the world – in Birmingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, Swansea and the City of London and with exhibitions that were first assembled here, opposite Tesco! There's a new series of exhibitions every season; in June, such is the flexibility of the building, it will almost seem as if a new Craft Centre has been constructed overnight! More details from their website: [www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk](http://www.ruthincraftcentre.org.uk).



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## Bringing our Heritage to Life!

Another year is here and there are expectations that heritage buildings will be open yet again in September. Cadw now leads and co-ordinates the Open Doors event (the Civic Trust for Wales/Cymru had this role until 2013) and it aims to maintain and broaden the scope of the buildings involved in the programme. In Cadw's Open Doors 2015 report it can be seen that the county of Denbighshire still had the greatest number of buildings open throughout Wales. RADCA was responsible for co-ordinating half of these events – despite issues regarding funding and the lack of a paid co-ordinator, Whilst Cadw markets events at a national level, it does not provide any funding to help with activities at a local level. Therefore it is necessary for local civic societies/organisations to look for their own funding sources. Discussions have recently been held with Denbighshire County Council, Cadwyn Clwyd and other organisations, which has led to the Working Party putting together an innovative proposal to obtain funding. We wait to see if this application has been successful.

## The Cunning Green opens again!



*... at last the pathway that Ruthin's residents hold dear, will once again be available to be walked!*

By the time this edition of Town and Around is published the end of the closure of the Cunning Green will be imminent and the public will have access to it once again. Scaffolding was recently erected and skilled craftsmen are still working to restore the historic walls to Ruthin Castle. And at last the pathway that Ruthin's residents hold dear, will once again be available to be walked!

It has been a long time and a tortuous route with several false dawns along the way. For those with failing memories it was 11th May 2013 that we have recorded as when the pathway had to be closed for safety reason.

In March 2014 we reported that there were ongoing talks between DCC and the relevant property owners and we had high hopes of an early conclusion to discussions and repair work shortly to commence, with the Cunning Green being open for the commencement of the tourist season.

By December of the same year we were still taking up the cudgels reporting on the involvement of CADW and the extension of areas of concern to other parts of the wall. But matters seemed to be moving forward, and once again we anticipated a reopening for the 2015 tourist season. At the Ruthin and District Civic Association we are well aware how long negotiations between various bodies and interested parties can take. Substantial sums were involved on this occasion and it was important that the repair, once completed, would ensure that the wall's safety for a few more hundreds of years.

Talking to the onsite workers, they are not just reinstating the crumbled section of wall but will be removing some of the castellations further up to take out trees that have rooted in the crevices of the stone work. On March 17th, Ken Skates AM Heritage WAG, will perform the official opening. This would allow us all to celebrate the return to the public domain of this much enjoyed public pathway through our most important historic landscape.

## Glasdir – what is its future to be?

Rather like the saga reported above of the restoration of the Cunning Green, this situation has been a concern for the Civic Association for a number of years. It was in the March 2013 edition of Town and Around that Derek Jones was reviewing the situation at Glasdir as remedial works to the flooded properties was being carried out, following the November 2012 floods.

We are now producing the March 2016 edition and at the moment the estate appears to be abandoned by Taylor Wimpey. The notice on their showroom door states that it is reopen on the 3rd January 2013 – we are still waiting!

It is hardly in anyone's interest that there should be a small development of what are generally acknowledged to be

very attractive houses, stranded in a rural setting close to Ruthin but separated from the town itself without the community facilities that one would expect to find in a separated village location.

On the Taylor Wimpey website of developments in North-East Wales it shows one development in Broughton and a planned development near Rossett. But nothing in Ruthin!

However all may not be lost. Taylor Wimpey responded by return to our email expressing our concern at the lack of activity saying:-

“We continue to work extremely hard to resolve insurance and mortgage lenders confidence in the flood defence works undertaken in 2014, to reinforce the works previously undertaken.

This has been a tenuous and challenging task, to which I am happy to advise that we are making some significant headway with.

It still remains the intention of the company to return and complete the Glasdir Development, and we are hopeful, of being in that position during the first half of this year”.

They promise to keep us updated but so far this matter has dragged on for up to three years.



# Home and Away-Courtyards

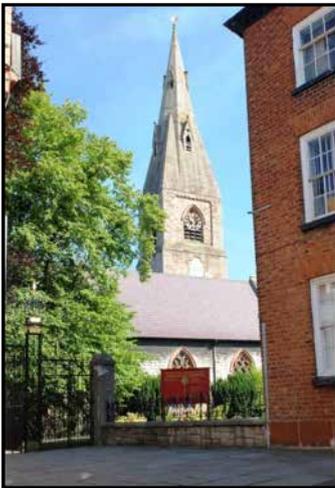
## Derek Jones looks at ours and others far afield

Home and Away in this edition reflects my continued admiration for the arrangement around a courtyard of the workshops, studios, café and galleries, which make up our Craft Centre. I hope to make valid connections between it and other enclosed spaces at home in Ruthin, and away in two port cities, Liverpool, and Split (Croatia);

'Courtyards' is a catch-all term, to include the variety of ways in which townscapes can be enriched by the building, or, more often, the evolution of enclosed spaces, free from vehicles, giving us the chance to look much more closely than usual at often familiar features. Some courtyards do more than that: they enable us to enjoy the flow of human traffic without seeming to be too inquisitive.



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At its best, the courtyard of the Ruthin Craft Centre satisfies many of the needs I have identified. It is certainly enclosed. A description of a street in Paris as 'first a landscape, then a room', rings a few bells in Ruthin as well. Entering the 'room' through splendid gates, you soon discover that there is plenty to see: shop windows, where crafts, suitable for your own rooms, are made and displayed. A splash of colour greets you through the window of the shop immediately to your left, which houses the greatly-admired textiles of Cefyu Burgess. At the far end (though nothing is very distant), the windows, which run across the whole width of the courtyard, not only to

enrich your experience of the enclosure but invite you inside to look at changing exhibitions more closely.

If, in between, the displays seem more muted, they prompt the reflection that different, quieter moods have a valid part to play in our lives. Who could not fail to stop in admiration of what the Centre is doing to help people who suffer from dementia recover some memory by touching and feeling the texture of crafts made locally. This is no arty-crafty ghetto! The splendid magnolia, accompanying cherry trees and other plants provide further colour when in bloom and of course Café R and its outdoor benches, are familiar meeting places for many local people; we must all hope that the café soon has new tenants, not least, when summer comes, so that we can enjoy eating al fresco there. It is an essential feature of the courtyard.



Night and day, the sight of St Peter's, always visible from the gates, reminds us that the Craft Centre is also part of the town. It looks especially good when illuminated in the evenings and prompts the memory that at its side, the Old Cloisters could also be seen as a Courtyard, a quiet version, perhaps, but one which provides some relief from the array of cars parked in the square outside the gates. (I am as guilty as any other car owner in this respect!).

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A visit to the Granby Street Projects in Liverpool may seem a million miles away from our subject matter here, but, in spirit, it is not! Ten semi-derelict terraced houses have been refurbished by a group of



architects named Assemble Studio, working together with local people. Two of the houses were beyond repair but their walls have been put to good use to support a glass roof, allowing winter gardens to evolve, making for an enclosed space (or courtyard) for the use and enjoyment of the residents. The whole project has recently been awarded the Turner Prize, the first time it has been given to architects and local people for a neighbourhood they have regenerated together.

From the very new to what might have been dismissed as a useless ruin. You leave the waterfront in Split and go underground, to emerge into the sunlight of a courtyard

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surrounded by the ancient columns, ceremonial steps and the doorway of what was once the palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (reigned 284-305 AD). People sit on the steps to enjoy the sun, to make occasional visits to the many stalls, and to eat their lunch. The courtyard (known as the peristyle) is at once intimate, life affirming, and utterly memorable. No wonder it is a World Heritage Site, which a few years ago, local people saved from ruin by the planned development of modern shopping centres and an underground car park! Long live courtyards everywhere!

## A Jewel in the Vale

### Ruth Bacon welcomes Brynhyfryd's new head



Geraint Parry, the recently appointed head teacher of Ysgol Brynhyfryd brims over with enthusiasm as he talks about the school, its children and its future. He is committed and passionate about making a difference.

Originally from Bodfari, he attended Ysgol Maes Garmon in Mold. A keen musician, he plays piano and guitar. He gained a degree in Geography at Cardiff University and went on to work at the Standard Chartered Bank. Realising that banking was not for him and wanting to do something he felt was more worthwhile, he decided to train as a teacher. And he has never looked back! His career in education spans twenty five years, fifteen of which have been in senior management. Having worked in a diverse range of institutions from secondary schools to FE colleges, not to mention a spell as an inspector with Estyn and as an adviser with the Department of Education, he brings to Brynhyfryd a wealth of experience and knowledge. Most of his work has been in communities in the North West of England. Not only did that mean a long commute from the Vale but he had always hankered after returning to his roots to work.

When the opportunity arose to apply for the headship at Brynhyfryd he jumped at it!

Delighted to be back in what he describes as his own community, the Vale of Clwyd, he feels he has a sound understanding of the needs of, and challenges facing, the children in his care. Children here are growing up in a safe environment and to some extent are cushioned from the outside world. However, Geraint knows from his own experience that many will find it difficult to find future employment locally. Therefore he feels it is very important to prepare children for a life of work outside their home area, to give them the confidence, skills and resilience to deal with changes so they are able to improve their life chances. As he put it, the school needs to provide a window to the wider world. He feels he is very lucky and privileged to be working in a bi-lingual school he as believes bi-lingualism can enhance thinking and reasoning skills creating a more cosmopolitan outlook in children.

With the ability of the children and the support of their parents Geraint feels the school has great potential. Already he is seeing a greater rate of progress here than in other schools he has worked in. His ambition, he says, is to make Ysgol Brynhyfryd the Jewel in the Vale!

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 . prepare children for a life of work outside their home area, to give them the confidence, skills and resilience to deal with changes so they are able to improve their life chances

# March 31st, 2016 – a Significant Anniversary for Ruthin!



*... it was the foresight of senior staff at Ruthin-based Glyndŵr which secured Ruthin as county town.*

It was 20 years ago on March 31st that events changed the landscape of Ruthin's principal "industry". Glyndŵr District Council ceased and a day later Denbighshire County Council began. In modernising the town hall as the only conceivable location where Denbighshire's then 49 councillors could meet, it was the foresight of senior staff at Ruthin-based Glyndŵr which secured Ruthin as county town. Ruthinians should be grateful to them for safeguarding this economic benefit.

Denbighshire's birth wasn't always easy. The aftershock of the Rhuddlan Debt had as profound an impact on services as has the current austerity. There was an accommodation crisis that split departments across multiple locations. For two years, some remained at former Clwyd County Council's Mold HQ. Between 1997 and 2011, Denbighshire made good use of the redundant government agricultural offices at Trem Clwyd. In 1998, Denbighshire completed offices in Denbigh and Prestatyn but there was no funding available to replace Ruthin's substandard council offices, at least not till a private finance initiative saw construction begin in 2003. It was officially opened 10 years ago on March 31st. In the Council's hands from 2015, the legacy is an attractively designed building fitting of the name County Hall.

## 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.

Committee members elected at the October AGM to serve for the coming twelve months are:

Liz Williams, Chairman

Heather Williams, Vice Chairman

Robert Williams, Hon Treasurer

Kay Culhane, Anne Roberts, Menna Jones, Harold Jones, Kathy Daniels and Peter Daniels.

### Forthcoming RADCA events are:-

- April 1st a showing of photographs of 'Memories of Ruthin'. This will be at 7.00pm at Awelon. There will be a charge of £3.00 per person and the event will form part of the Ruthin Memories week.
- April 20th Hustings for the Welsh National Assembly Election, 7.00pm at Awelon  
Bob Owen Ellis will chair the evening. This a free event, open to all, (see details on page one of this publication)

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](mailto:ruthincivic@btinternet.com) Further information, and back numbers of Town and Around can be found on [www.ruthincivic.org](http://www.ruthincivic.org)

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](mailto:miles-and-jill@freeuk.com)

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