

Ruthin Town and Around O Gwmpas y Dre



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

September 2016

Ruthin Town and Around Opens more Doors Heather Williams welcomes visitors and residents alike to step through more of Ruthin's doors

Ruthin is the most charming small town in Wales, a match for England's Rye, Broadway or Lavenham' says Simon Jenkins in his book *Wales - Churches, Houses, Castles*. So again, during September, we are inviting people to look round some of the buildings in this beautiful town - as well as other properties in its environs.

As you will know for the last few years the main Ruthin and District Open Doors event has been held at the end of the month. This year our activities are taking place earlier in September. There are a couple of reasons for this. We have been working with Denbighshire County Council and it was thought that it would be beneficial to have it earlier in the month – to give visitors from further afield another opportunity to come back and see some of the buildings again (which close for the season at the end of September.) In addition, Cadw is opening its properties for free on 24-25 September and therefore the Denbigh Open Doors organisers decided to hold its weekend when Denbigh Castle would also be open.



A Ruthin town taster is being held during the weekend of 3-4 September with a church, house and a medieval castle to explore – which fits the title of Simon Jenkin's book. Guided tours of Ruthin Castle grounds can be taken - including a tour of the dungeon, whipping pit and drowning pool! You can also see how

work in Porth y Dŵr is progressing and visit the wonderful Capel y Tabernacl.

On 10-11 September the main weekend will be held, when there will be a whole host of buildings open and activities taking place in Ruthin and the surrounding area. There are some of the familiar buildings open – including some which were not open last year. There are also some events which are new this year.

The Lord's Garden is now open at Nantclwyd y Dre (see separate article about this historic garden). There is an outside tour of the Gaol with the prison warden, to learn about the architecture and history of Ruthin Gaol and its use throughout different periods of history. Another activity, combining the arts and heritage, is a sketching workshop at St Peter's Church with artist Jane McCormack – sponsored by Graham Holland Associates, Architects and Historic Buildings Consultants. Also new for this year, is a 'Ruthin Memories' tour (based on various buildings and people who lived in the town) with the Mayor, Councillor Geraint Woolford accompanying us. Some of the churches have exhibitions and records on display, and refreshments are available at many of the venues.

Outside Ruthin there are some 'new' buildings to explore. Eyarth Station Guest House near Llanfair DC is open, which has many of the station's original features preserved. Another building is Tŷ Brith, near Pwllglas, a beautiful half-timbered black and white house, known locally as the Hansel and Gretel House.

On the Saturday there is a new historic tour in the lovely hamlet of Efenechtyd, taking in various buildings including a Georgian house and the Old Rectory. On Sunday there is the popular medieval fair at St Elidan's Church – with crafts, medieval re-enactors and birds of prey. If you fancy joining in with the theme please do come along in medieval dress!

Please note that various tours and activities need to be pre-booked – see inside the booklet for details. A booklet is enclosed with T & A. If you have already picked up one, please either pass on to someone else or drop it in at Ruthin Library. For detailed information on the Denbigh weekend see the website www.visitdenbigh.co.uk. There are also other buildings, such as churches, open in Denbighshire during the month of September – see www.cadw.gov.wales/events

Social Media 3

A member of RADCA continues to reflect on some questions recently raised about Ruthin on social media - Much of what is written on social media is banal, blatant or boorish but recently we have seen something positive regarding an age-old problem: boy and girl racers.



... recently we have seen something positive regarding an age-old problem: boy and girl racers

It all started with a comment about how young speeding motorists along Mwrog Street & Park Road might be curbed. Surely speed humps were possible now we had the "by-pass". But the northern relief road is no by-pass and the A494 Dolgellau to South of Birkenhead trunk road continues to channel traffic through the heart of Ruthin. Calming on a trunk road, apparently, is not an option. In any case, residents need to be careful for what they wish: humps promote braking, acceleration and gear changes, increasing noise and nuisance. Older properties on Park Road and Mwrog Street tend to have poorer foundations prone to vibration when heavy vehicles do this.

residents need to be careful for what they wish: humps promote braking, acceleration and gear changes, increasing noise and nuisance.

Because Ruthin is a small town, a higher proportion lives on or near either a main or a distributor road. Others chipped in: racers were reported as pervasive, from Clwyd Street and Well Street to estate roads. Many commented that the police were either powerless or indolent but, in truth, they cannot be everywhere and all the racers had to do was to wait them out. Saner comments confirmed the police had taken action with some vehicles seized but such was the frenzy that no one seemed to believe it.

Some in the Association have advocated a blanket 20 mph restriction through the town centre and on estate roads

Some in the Association have advocated a blanket 20 mph restriction through the town centre and on estate roads. This, surely, is a way of civilising the motor vehicle, giving a greater priority to pedestrians and enhancing the quality of the local environment. Enforcement seems to be the problem with such a limit. Some keyboard warriors were calling on mobile speed camera action.

Yet here, perhaps, we have at least part of the answer, literally in the hands of those who complain. Several months ago, the police were recruiting volunteers from the community to wield speed guns and help tackle the speeding menace. If you can overcome the possibility of being a social pariah then the community can help itself. This is fine during daylight hours when there are problems aplenty. It may not suit everyone to be out at night, though, when things are amplified. So far, this remains an unsolvable national problem. And, of course, racers often travel at inappropriate speeds, accelerating fast but they don't always break the limit.

Several months ago, the police were recruiting volunteers from the community to wield speed guns and help tackle the speeding menace

In the meantime, with youngsters investing so much in social media, perhaps here is a legitimate role for that tool, to help to educate and inform those who make other people's lives a misery.

The Lord's Garden

Ruth Bacon celebrates this wonderful restoration

Once again the vision for the future was mapped out to us and once again the dream has been realised.



The transformed Lord's Garden was officially reopened in May following a £220,000 restoration funded by Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin Town Council, Friends of Nant Clwyd y Dre and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Like the house the garden has been designed to reflect the passage of time and provide insights into its history.

All in all it will be fascinating to watch how the garden matures over the next few years.

Many Ruthin residents will remember their first visit to Nant Clwyd y Dre years ago. Wearing hard hats, we were led through dilapidated, dusty rooms with collapsing ceilings and round piles of rubble while the vision for the future of the house was explained to us. That dream was realised and today Nant Clwyd y Dre is much acclaimed. Likewise people will remember their first tour of the Lord's Garden which is situated behind the house. Few people had realised that the wilderness beyond the standard burgage plot had been a part of the original, nor expected it to cover such a large area. We were again escorted around, this time pushing our way through brambles and dense undergrowth along a narrow partially cleared way, a veritable secret garden! Once again the vision for the future was mapped out to us and once again the dream has been realised.

The transformed Lord's Garden was officially reopened in May following a £220,000 restoration funded by Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin Town Council, Friends of Nant Clwyd y Dre and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The work took over three years to complete and over a hundred volunteers of all ages were involved led by Wendy Williams of the Lord's Garden Restoration Project. They have done a superb job. Co-ordinating the work and volunteers can't have been an easy task, especially as the garden is Grade 11 listed on the Cadw register and guidelines

had to be followed. Some traditional skills had to be revived, such as hazel hurdling, to meet the brief.

Like the house the garden has been designed to reflect the passage of time and provide insights into its history. Originally known as the Lord's Acre it pre-dates the house itself. First mentioned in 1282 as having been awarded, along with Ruthin Castle to a Sir Reginald de Grey it appears to have been an orchard and kitchen garden for the castle over approximately 360 years. In 1654 the Lord's Garden was leased to one Eubele Thelwell, "respected gentleman and lawyer of Grays Inn, London", owner of the house and keen gardener, with whose enthusiasm modern gardeners can recognise and feel an affinity.

Eubele was able to purchase the garden for £7 in 1691 and promptly ordered 17 fruit trees!

Visitors today can wander through the centuries. An enamelled mead, a medieval lawn with low growing wild flowers dotted all over it, is due to be scythed by hand in August. There are traditional wattle fences, box hedges, and raised beds full of vegetables, herbs, or scented flowers, and old and newly planted fruit and nut trees. Importantly for future pollination, there is an enclosure for beehives (yet to have tenants!). Two log piles will encourage insects and therefore birds to take up residence. More modern features are a pergola and a greenhouse. The nitty gritty aspects of gardening are there in the form of compost heaps! All in all it will be fascinating to watch how the garden matures over the next few years.

As from August 1st responsibility for the Lord's Garden has passed to Hayley Proudfoot. She gave me a tour of the garden and her enthusiasm and commitment is obvious. One area she would like to develop is a rather shady place near the wall abutting the Cunning Green. Her ideas include a "theatre" showcasing unusual plants or possibly a collection of hellebores. Thus the garden will continue to evolve!

Volunteers are still needed to help maintain all the garden areas. If you would like to get involved please ring 01824 708218/708259.

GHA Coaches: over a quarter of a century in Ruthin

Peter Daniels reviews our now lost local bus service

To those who do not need or want them, bus services are invisible. For those who want or need them, bus services are essential for any reasonable social and economic life. This is as true for vulnerable people as it is those who have a preference to use public over private transport. Sometimes, motorists have no concept of the importance of a reliable and comprehensive bus network. Few realise the complexity of operations and fewer still the number of staff they employ.

For those who want or need them, bus services are essential for any reasonable social and economic life.



On 13th July 2016, Ruthin's bus operator, GHA Coaches, collapsed. Its garage was on Lôn Parcwr. With it was a threat to 48 local jobs. As such, GHA Coaches was a significant local employer, although it drew staff from as far as Rhyl, Denbigh, Corwen and Connah's Quay.

On 13th July 2016, Ruthin's bus operator, GHA Coaches, collapsed

Starting in 1983, GHA operated one minibus till 1986. It tried again, with a coach bought in 1988. It first operated a bus service in Ruthin in 1992. This was the Monday & Saturday only D8 to Wrexham (this was the extent of that service back then). GHA beat previous operator Wright's of Wrexham, a company that less than a year later would itself collapse.

By then an emerging school bus operator, it was in 1995 in greater Wrexham that GHA got its big break. Then, in 1998, GHA won the local bus contract to operate from Ruthin to Mold. Previously operated by Crosville Wales, this involved two buses and a double decker at school times. GHA purchased its first of many new buses for the area. GHA retained the contract to the end.

When Pentre Llanrhaeadr's Pentre Motors gave up coaching in 2007 and Rogers's of Graigfechan finished in 2013, GHA enjoyed something of a local monopoly.

In 2002, GHA took over local family firm Cloion Coaches and with it Lôn Parcwr premises (subsequently modernised and extended), bus service 76 Denbigh - Llandyrnog - Ruthin - Graigfechan, a handful of deeper rural bus services to Ruthin's south and west and some school contracts.

There followed the 151 Denbigh - Llanrhaeadr - Ruthin - Corwen - Llangollen service, previously with a number of operators.

A commercial frolic in 2007 on GHA's 151 by Crosville Wales' successor Arriva resulted in GHA retaliating by operating Wrexham - Ruthin - Denbigh - Rhyl. This knocked out M & H Coaches from the Denbigh - Ruthin - Wrexham route. In 2009, in partnership with Denbighshire, GHA invested in an X50 hourly service from Denbigh and Ruthin to Wrexham. The hourly Wrexhams were a far cry from the twice-weekly service it inherited in 1992. Arriva withdrew from the 151 corridor in 2009, whereupon GHA re-established itself hourly from Ruthin via Corwen & Llangollen to Wrexham.

When Pentre Llanrhaeadr's Pentre Motors gave up coaching in 2007 and Rogers's of Graigfechan finished in 2013, GHA enjoyed something of a local monopoly. From February this year, GHA had operated all local bus services south of Denbigh.

At the same time, it became clear that there were significant problems with the operator. Complaints proliferated. We now know why. Some blame bus service deregulation, itself approaching its 30th anniversary in October. The press has speculated as to why the company folded but it was never quite as easy or straightforward as they made out.

The two principal directors were hard working, as was its management in Ruthin. After the trauma of the failure, virtually all have found jobs, permanent or temporary. We wish them well and thank them for their years of public service. Scattered to the four winds, they are based elsewhere, which means they no longer directly support our local economy as once they did.

Meanwhile, the bus network has fragmented and in an age of austerity may never fully recover.

Meanwhile, the bus network has fragmented and in an age of austerity may never fully recover. On page 144 of the recently published History of Ruthin, it says "Local bus services by the end of the century... were mainly under the umbrella of the Arriva brand". Arriva had been absent from Ruthin largely from 2002 and totally from 2010 but the GHA collapse has resulted in Ruthin currently seeing Arriva buses again, on the former GHA Denbigh - Ruthin - Wrexham service.

Civic Trust Societies creating pride in place Heather Williams reports on a stimulating meeting

Earlier this summer the Civic Trust Cymru organised an event in Conwy to bring together Civic Societies in North Wales. This was to help to inspire groups, give an opportunity for societies to network with each other, as well as updating us on new legislative changes. Representatives from 10 Civic Societies attended including two from RADCA.



Two societies from further afield in Wales gave presentations about how they had energised their societies and these seem worthy of giving feedback in T & A.

Two societies from further afield in Wales gave presentations about how they had energised their societies and these seem worthy of giving feedback in T & A.

Tony Koniieczny from the Abergavenny Civic Society spoke very enthusiastically about how they had rejuvenated their Civic Society. They created a new mission statement 'Preserving the best - improving the best' and created a new structure for their organisation eg. new sub-committees.

They also developed two activities which had increased awareness of their group. First of all they held a photography competition which raised public awareness. Themes were the 'good, bad and the ugly'! Perhaps this is an interesting idea which could be used in the Ruthin area.

The second activity was a characterisation study of the town. Members of the Society demonstrated this through an interactive presentation of some streets in Abergavenny to show how to use the Civic Trust Cymru toolkit to undertake a characterisation study. The Ruthin and District Civic Association carried out a similar activity in the mid-1990s, just prior to Local Government reorganisation – but without the use of this particular toolkit. <https://abercivsoc.com/projects/>.

They held a photography competition which raised public awareness. Themes were the 'good, bad and the ugly'!

Clare Thomas & Rose Philips representing Aberaeron Society gave another inspiring presentation. In order to kick-start and create interest, a big exhibition was held when over 4000 photographs were collected. These were subsequently catalogued & developed into an archive. Memory workshops were held and interpretation material was developed eg mosaic art work. A permanent exhibition was finally developed which gave a legacy for the project.

They did a lot of engagement work with the community eg working with the schools, and got a lot of funding via different sources to finance the various stages of the project eg Heritage Lottery Fund and the Rural Development Fund. <http://www.cymdeithasaberaeron.org/>

Have a look at the websites of these Civic Societies. Certainly these presentations gave food for thought. If you want to get more involved and suggest new activities contact one of our Committee members.

New Ruthin Primary Schools, Glasdir

Bobby Feeley reports on the new proposals

The two new schools to replace Rhos Street and Pen Barras, are now on track to be open by September 2017. In February 2016 local contractors, Wynne Construction, were appointed to build the new schools on the Glasdir site in Ruthin. It is well documented that the Rhos Street site is far too small and inadequate to accommodate the two schools, in addition, Ysgol Rhewl is due for closure, and some may choose to attend either of the two new schools, the current calculations show requirement for a total capacity of 525 in total, (Rhos Street 210. Pen Barras 315) subject to alteration as project progresses.

The design team has worked closely with Denbighshire Council, staff and children, to develop 2 well designed schools to meet the necessary standards for the twenty-first century. Following the completion of the initial design stage work, the Contractors held a well-attended pre-planning drop in session in April 2016 at Ruthin Farmers Market which was attended by around 200 parents, staff, governors and residents. The event showcased site plans including digital 3D images for the new development to be located at Glasdir Farm.

Head of Education and Children's Services in Denbighshire, Karen Evans, said "I was heartened to see a positive response to these proposals, which will improve significantly the teaching and learning environment for both Rhos Street School and Ysgol Pen Barras".

Managing Director, Chris Wynne, of Wynne Construction, added: "We were extremely pleased to meet so many parents, children and other community groups during the evening, and we look forward to continuing our community engagement and other activities as the project progresses".

Sessions have also been held with pupils from Rhos Street School, Ysgol Pen Barras and Ysgol Rhewl, where pupils had the opportunity to work with the landscape architect to come up with ideas for the outside classrooms and habitat areas. This generated some fantastic ideas for meadow areas, bird houses and bug towers! Pupils will continue to have input into the development during the course of the project, including site visits to Glasdir to view progress. The planning application is due to be heard at the Planning Committee on 14th September, 2016.

In addition to planning and design work for the new schools, there is work ongoing in relation to active and sustainable transport for the relocated schools, and valuable points have been raised by Sustrans, a leading UK charity, encouraging smarter travel choices. The contractors have been asked to design the scheme to comply with the Active Travel Act, and this is reflected in the current scheme. For example, Glasdir farmhouse and existing boundary wall will be demolished allowing the pathway to be widened from the Denbigh Road entrance. Walking, cycling, footpaths, lighting, pedestrian crossings, cycle and scooter parking will all be looked into during the project and the Council are aiming to achieve a BREEAM 'excellent' rating and elements relating to sustainable transport and facilities are key to this.

The development of two new schools for Ruthin has been needed for twenty five years and, with unprecedented budget cuts over the last four or five years, I began to think it would never happen. It has been difficult at times and there have been compromises to make but I am sure all will be pleased with the brand new state of the art schools in autumn 2017 – especially the children.



The design team has worked closely with Denbighshire Council, staff and children, to develop 2 well designed schools to meet the necessary standards for the twenty-first century.

Pupils will continue to have input into the development during the course of the project, including site visits to Glasdir to view progress.

... the Council are aiming to achieve a BREEAM 'excellent' rating and elements relating to sustainable transport and facilities are key to this.

I am sure all will be pleased with the brand new state of the art schools in autumn 2017 – especially the children.

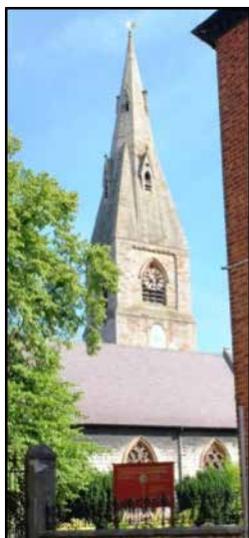
RINGING THE CHANGES IN RUTHIN

Peter L. Furniss, Ringing Master of the North Wales Association of Church Bell Ringers tells of their history and future proposed developments.



The bells of St. Peter's church have a long history. The earliest reference to them is in 1654 in Chirk Castle Accounts:

The sound of St Peter's bells has celebrated many civic, judicial and national occasions such as the victory at Sebastopol . . .



A major scheme has now been launched to restore the bells so that they can once again play their full part in the life of the church and town

As a preamble to developing the interior for greater community use, plans are taking shape to restore the bells of St Peter's Church.

St. Peter's church can trace its foundation back to 1310 when John de Gray established a collegiate church, which is a church staffed by a community of priests, in this case seven.

The bells of St. Peter's church have a long history. The earliest reference to them is in 1654 in Chirk Castle Accounts: "Paid to the ringers at Ruthin at our going to Gwedyr £0 2s 6d". In 1683 Thomas Roberts of Shrewsbury was paid £23 17s to recast the "Great Bell". This work was paid for jointly by Sir Thomas Myddleton of Chirk Castle and Sir John Salusbury. The fact that the bell was recast suggests that it was already in existence in 1683 and the fact that it was described as the "Great Bell" suggests that there were other bells although how many is not known.

There are many historical references to the bells of St Peter's. In 1788 it is recorded that a 6th bell was added to the peal and in 1843 an appeal was launched for a complete new ring of six bells. A further appeal in 1889 funded the addition of two bells in time to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden jubilee.

The sound of St Peter's bells has celebrated many civic, judicial and national occasions such as the victory at Sebastopol, the cutting of the first sod for the Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen Railway, the opening of the assizes, the election of a new mayor and even the final clearing of the outstanding accounts!

The sound of the bells of St Peter's was woven into the very fabric of the town to such an extent that there were even complaints when they were not heard.

However in 1977 with the fifth bell becoming cracked and growing concern for the fabric of the frame and the tower, bell ringing ceased.

Following a chance remark about three years ago interest in ringing the bells was rekindled. A firm of structural engineers was engaged to report on the structure of the tower and a firm of bell hangers to advise on the state of the frame and fittings. The tower was pronounced structurally sound and the bell hangers reported that although the frame and fittings were at the end of their useful life they were safe to allow occasional ringing by experienced bands of ringers, with the exception of the fifth bell which is too badly cracked to be rung. Since that time the bells have been rung for weddings and other special occasions by ringers organised by the North Wales Association of Church Bell Ringers.

A major scheme has now been launched to restore the bells so that they can once again play their full part in the life of the church and town. It is intended to repair the cracked bell by welding, tune all of the bells to modern standards and re-hang them with all new fittings in a new steel and iron frame lower in the tower. The total cost of this work is in the region of £87,000 excluding VAT. It is hoped that much of the money needed can be raised from grant making bodies and approaching £20,000 has already been raised or promised. Once the work is completed St. Peter's will have a ring of bells to be proud of. The North Wales Association of Church Bell Ringers have committed to training a new local band which it is hoped will include pupils from local schools.

If you would like to make a donation towards this scheme, large or small, please contact the Treasurer of St. Peter's PCC, Wendy Brassey, and make clear that your donation is intended for the restoration of the bells.

Writings on the Wall

In his latest contribution to his series

Home and Away, DEREK JONES makes connections between some Ruthin plaques and their counterparts elsewhere.

Ruthin's green plaques are relative newcomers to its urban landscape. They are none the worse for that, but it does seem right, for various reasons, that Town and Around should draw attention to the fact that the scheme to fix blue plaques to appropriate buildings in the streets in Greater London are 150 years old this year. Now administered by English Heritage, the scheme is the oldest of its kind in the world.

Marking its birthday, plaques have been fixed, this year, to buildings associated with, for instance Sir Frederick Ashton, choreographer; Samuel Beckett, dramatist and novelist; Patrick Blackett, physicist; Tommy Cooper, comedian; Elizabeth David, cookery writer; and Dame Margot Fonteyn, ballerina. There are some 500 blue plaques commemorating many different professions and achievements.

One of them has a particular and authentic connection to Ruthin. On a building in Cunard Crescent, Enfield, N1, where a building called Bush Hill House once stood, a plaque announces that 'Sir Hugh Myddelton, engineer of the New River, lived here 1609-1613'. Sounds familiar? It should! Myddelton is also commemorated in St Peter's Square on 'The Seven Eyes of Ruthin'. Its green plaque reminds us that he was responsible for bringing London its first supply of fresh drinking water.

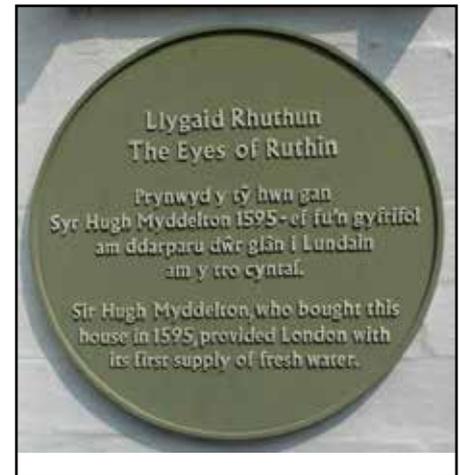
Of course, neither of the Myddelton plaques gives us much detail of his achievement. So it's worth saying here that the New River along which the fresh water flowed, is 38 miles long from the River Lee, near Ware, Hertfordshire to the River Head in East London. It took seven years to build, needed 200 labourers, and cost £18,500. The labourers, incidentally, were paid the equivalent of 2p a day. Sir Hugh, on the other hand, was a cloth maker, a mine owner, a goldsmith, MP for Denbigh Boroughs, as well as a canal engineer, – certainly wealthy by any standards.

This might be the place to turn to Wales' capital city, where, on the site of the old Cardiff County Gaol, a blue plaque records the fate of Dic Penderyn (Richard Lewis), who, at the age of 23, 'was hanged on this site on Friday 13th August 1831 for the alleged wounding of a soldier during the 1831 armed rebellion of the Merthyr trade unionists, when 24 people died'; the plaque was donated by the National Union of Mineworkers in October 1980.

The name of Sir John Trevor, who lived in Castle Street, Ruthin in the late 17th century, was remembered on a green plaque erected under the auspices of the Civic Association when I was chairman. Perhaps we should have dug a little deeper! Sir John was Speaker of the House of Commons and Master of the Rolls from 1685 until 1690, and then again, more briefly, from 1695, when, we now learn, he was deprived of his office for having embezzled 1,000 guineas.

Should his name be remembered three centuries later in his home town? Perhaps not!

On the other hand, this discussion enables us to record that he had the misfortune to be cross-eyed. Pity the poor MPs, on both sides of the chamber who tried 'to catch the Speaker's eye'!



plaques have been fixed, this year, to buildings associated with, for instance Sir Frederick Ashton, choreographer; Samuel Beckett, dramatist and novelist; Patrick Blackett, physicist; Tommy Cooper, comedian; Elizabeth David, cookery writer; and Dame Margot Fonteyn, ballerina.



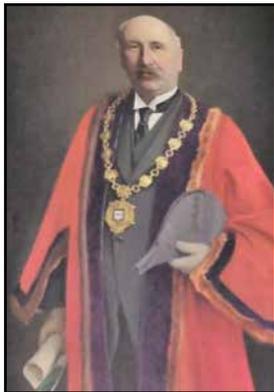
Sir John was Speaker of the House of Commons and Master of the Rolls from 1685 until 1690, when, we now learn, he was deprived of his office for having embezzled 1,000 guineas

First World War Memorial Plaque presented to Nantclwyd y Dre

Gwynne Morris reports



This plaque (illustrated) was presented to the family of Lieutenant Philip Lecomber of the 2/7th Manchester Regiment and carries his name



After the First World War the next-of-kin of all British and Empire service personnel who were killed as a result of the war were presented with a memorial plaque. These in time became known as the 'Dead Man's Penny'. They measured approximately 4¾ inches (121mm) and weigh approximately 11¾ ounces (333gms). The name of the recipient, without rank or number, was engraved on each of the plaques presented. This plaque (illustrated) was presented to the family of Lieutenant Philip Lecomber of the 2/7th Manchester Regiment and carries his name. He died in battle on the 27th March, 1918, near Harbonnieres in France, aged 21 and is officially commemorated on the Tune Cot Memorial in Belgium.

The family have a letter showing that he was recommended for the Victoria Cross. However as there were no other surviving senior Army Officers, the recommendation was not carried through.

Philip was the youngest of three sons of Alderman William Godfrey Lecomber J.P., C.C., Mayor of Ruthin from 1917-1923 and was given the Freedom of the Borough on 6th October 1921. Philip was a pupil at Ruthin School for five years.

In March 2015 Phillip's family made a poignant gift to the town in a ceremony at Nantclwyd y Dre. A display case was presented containing Philip's photograph, together with one of the ceramic poppies from the Tower of London along with its certificate of authenticity. There is also a three page copy of the letter regarding the recommendation for the award of the Victoria Cross. This now stands on the wall next to the portrait of his father.

Philip's 'Dead Man's penny' has recently been added to the display cabinet and it is hoped that a special commemorative service may take place at Nantclwyd y Dre in March 2018.

Seen in passing...

- Our first pleasure has to be to offer our congratulations to Philip Hughes on his award of an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours. Under his guidance the Ruthin Craft Centre has become acknowledged as the foremost centre for the celebration of the applied arts in Wales and its reputation is worldwide. Philip's dedication, expertise and inspiration ensure that not only do the regular changing exhibitions achieve the highest standards, but his involvement in education and engagement with the wider public through the courtyard's activities reaches beyond the galleries viewing public. Ruthin is most fortunate to have Philip directing its world renowned Craft Centre.
- Upper Clwyd Street is doing well just now. Firstly No 5 has received very good reports for its quality food and service in a newspaper report. It is important for visitors to Ruthin that its restaurants and cafes are well recommended.
- And just lower down a new craft shop has opened in Clwyd Mews. It seems that Ruthin is still bucking the trend in keeping its High Street premises prosperous and vibrant.

RUTHIN MEMORIES

Anne Roberts tells how Ysgol Borthyn relived past memories

Following on from a chance conversation with Polly Snape about Ruthin's past, during which we looked at some 'old' photographs showing various events and activities in the town in days gone by, Polly mentioned that Ysgol Borthyn was keen to get involved in some kind of project, as she had been teaching at the school, and the idea of 'Ruthin Memories' was born; Polly subsequently applied for, and was granted, lottery funding to cover the event.

For one whole week during May, Ruthin's past was brought alive by Polly Snape, a local Director/Teacher, and the children of Ysgol Borthyn.

As it was during my term of office as Mayor, I was delighted to be able to meet with the children at Ysgol Borthyn, on several occasions. We had a trip to Cae Ddol where we talked about the park, when I was a child at Ysgol Borthyn, they were quite shocked that there was no zip wire in those days! We also had a walk around our lovely town to view the many lovely buildings, each one featured having been researched by the pupils beforehand, using their electronic devices at school to access the internet. Many local businesses got involved; they displayed the children's posters at their premises, posters which had been created to show the history of the building. We had milkshakes at Bar Llaeth, just as they did in the 50's, and we also had real ale (apple juice!) from the serving wenches (in period dress) at The Wynnstay B&B in Well Street.

The children were shown old photographs by Ian Lewney, some taken at Ysgol Borthyn in days gone by, and they were fascinated by how they dressed for school, and also by the fact that slates were used for writing on. They heard about what we did to amuse ourselves, the river in Cae Ddol being the main playground during the summer months. They also learned what children had to eat at birthday parties in the 'olden' days, and some were far from impressed!

A tea dance was held at Ruthin Castle, where the children had invited some of our more senior residents and they enjoyed the music of yesteryear; also our current Mayor, Geraint Woolford, entertained everyone and talked about his family's association with Ruthin Castle Medieval Banquets.

There were plays, depicting Ruthin's past, where the children dressed up and brought some of the memories to life; also a quiz by Ian Lewney, based on the many wonderful buildings, was held at Awelon. A pram race was held in the school field for the younger pupils – great fun, as were the pram races held in the past on the streets of Ruthin.

Several of us enjoyed a guided walk by Heather Williams, to view the local architecture and to learn about the interesting history of each building.

Members of the public, both young and old, participated in all these events, and everyone agreed that the project had re-kindled memories and brought out little-known facts about our lovely town. The children's enthusiasm was obvious and played an important part in making the week so enjoyable.

What a wonderful idea and a truly inspiring way to showcase our lovely town, and to teach our young people about Ruthin's past.

I would like to thank Polly Snape, the Staff at Ysgol Borthyn and, especially the children, who were a delight and for giving myself and many others, so much pleasure during the course of the week.

For one whole week during May, Ruthin's past was brought alive by Polly Snape, a local Director/Teacher, and the children of Ysgol Borthyn.

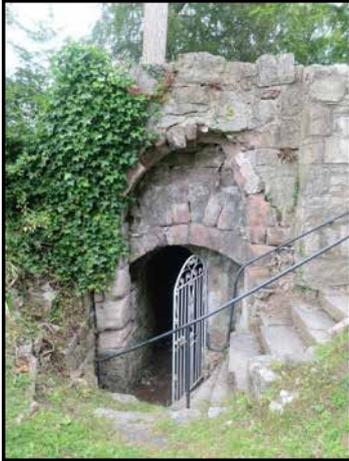
We also had a walk around our lovely town to view the many lovely buildings, each one featured having been researched by the pupils beforehand



They also learned what children had to eat at birthday parties in the 'olden' days, and some were far from impressed!

The Ghosts of Ruthin Castle

Liz Williams investigates



The Lady in Grey of Ruthin Castle is probably the best known ghost of the castle but there is another ghost, that of a knight – a phantom knight in gleaming armour has also appeared, usually in the oldest part of the castle. Although fully armoured, he wears only one gauntlet. It is possible that the loss of his gauntlet happened in tragic circumstances. This event could have caused his spectral return to the ruins searching for this gauntlet. It is interesting to hear that a single gauntlet was found during a recent excavation at the site.

Of the Lady in Grey there are two differing accounts of her fate. According to one version the haunting began in the 15thC. She was the wife of a steward who on discovering her husband's infidelity, killed and decapitated him in a fit of rage. She was found guilty and sentenced to death by beheading. The second version dates back to the time of Edward 1st, otherwise known as 'Edward Longshanks' 1272-1307, who ordered the building of Ruthin Castle. This was part of Edward's plan to be overlord of Wales and his 1284 Statute of Rhuddlan effectively annexed Wales making it a province of England!

Ruthin Castle was a strong baronial castle with numerous defences. In this version the Lady in Grey was married to an officer stationed at the castle who had an affair with a younger, local peasant girl. The wronged wife killed her rival, was tried for her murder and sentenced to death for the crime. She was buried in un-consecrated ground nearby and has not since left the castle.

Ghostly orbs have been seen around the castle, which are taken to be an indication of the presence of one or more human spirits.

Our Mayor sends a personal message



My name is Geraint Woolford, and I am the current Mayor of Ruthin. I was born and bred in Ruthin, and after leaving school moved away from Ruthin with my work. I moved back to Ruthin 20 years ago and am so pleased that I did.

The Role of Mayor is for a 12 Month term of office, and is a very busy term, with a great variety of events and functions to attend. As Mayor, I am keen to engage with local businesses and organisations in Ruthin in the hope of promoting our beautiful town, and encouraging visitors from all over the world.

The UK is going through very difficult and uncertain times, but I genuinely believe that Ruthin has a lot to offer and can prosper, providing that we all work together.

The tourist attractions within our town are numerous, and this is to be enhanced further by the creation of the Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust, which will bring the Castle with all its history into the tourism package. I am very pleased that I, as Mayor, have been involved in this project, and am delighted that Ruthin Town Council has been so closely involved.

I am keen to help groups, organisations or businesses in Ruthin in any way I can, and welcome contact from them at any time during my term of office. I don't have any miracles up my sleeves, but hope that I can do something to assist them if required.

I love my town, its history, its character, and its people, and that is why I am so proud to be its Mayor.

Reports on recent events



It was on Wednesday 29th June that members of the committee and a good group of members of the Association met first at Genus and later at the new farmers' livestock market building to make the awards for the Quayle award. Living in the Vale of Clwyd with its long association with a high quality agricultural industry it is surprising, perhaps that the industry is only now receiving its first award for the excellence of a development. And rather like the reputation of the London buses, when one comes along, so does another. The association is very proud that in 2015 there were two very deserving contenders for this prestigious award.

Liz Williams, our chairman had much praise for both projects as she made the presentations first to James Hudson of Genus and half an hour later to Glyn Owen of Ruthin Farmers Auction Company.



On Saturday 6th August a select group met at Tyddyn Street Church Centre in Mold. We enjoyed a most interesting talk by Robin Wolley, an association member and architect responsible for the transformation of this once dark church into a light, bright modern building, suitable for community use whilst retaining its original purpose. He is passionate that such buildings should continue in public use rather than becoming private dwellings. The work was completed about five years ago by an excellent Ruthin firm. The dark varnish and pews of earlier times have been replaced by stripped pine, comfortable chairs, uplighters and light grey paint. At the 'west-end', remodelling has created a useful mezzanine floor with glass panelling at its front. There are modern kitchens cloakrooms and a disabled lift. The afternoon was introduced by church member Mervyn Philips who told us of the history of the building, of its proximity to the old railway and the 1869 Mold riots. It was a most informative and interesting visit and it is hoped that more churches and chapels may take advantage of these ideas and are able to retain their importance in the local community. Kay Culhane.



The Annual General Meeting will be held at 7pm on Thursday October 20th at Canolfan Awelon. The evening will commence with the Chairman's report on the year's activities and the Treasurer's report on the association's financial situation. After the election of officers and the committee to serve for the next twelve months, we will be delighted to relax and enjoy a talk by Margaret Dunn on the dating of old Welsh houses. We extend a warm welcome to all, although only members will be eligible to vote, and anticipate an interesting and stimulating evening – do come along and join us

Subscriptions now due

September the 1st is the date when subscriptions to the Ruthin and District Civic Association fall due. Please ensure that the Association can carry on its good work by supporting us. Membership renewal forms are included with this edition. Please complete them to join the Association or to continue membership.

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

Contributors: Miles Anderson, Ruth Bacon, Peter Daniels, Bobby Feeley, Derek Jones, Heather Williams, Liz Williams.

Guest writers: Gwynne Morris, Peter Furniss.

Design by Dave Hislop

Page 12