



Quarterly comment & features from the Ruthin & District Civic Association

How Safe is our Heritage?

by an Association member



How concerned should we be about the the potential lack of use for some of our most iconic buildings that appear under threat? 2017 has not been a kind year for some of them.

This year, the former courthouse that was the NatWest bank closed. We featured its past uses in our March 2017 edition and again on p3.

Now, there's talk of an uncertain future for the library building.

This year, of course, sees the library celebrate the 25th anniversary of its move to Record Street and we reported on this in our September issue.

The library could in future move to County Hall. Fewer staff and modern working practices mean that County Hall now has the potential space for the library. The County Council no longer needs the same quantum of accommodation that it once did.

It closed Trem Clwyd in 2011 and sold it a year later. In 2015, it then closed the historic frontage of the Old Gaol, 46 Clwyd Street, and this has remained empty, unsold and unlet.

Across the road from County Hall is the 19th century Town Hall, now it seems declared surplus, with the County Council exploring a possible community asset transfer to the Town Council. The Town Council, however,

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prefers to concentrate on the NatWest (see p3).

Also as reported in the September issue, the future of the Rhos Street school building is in doubt.

The library, meanwhile, occupies one of our most splendid buildings. Built in 1785, it's a former courthouse and county headquarters.

Slow Walks Around Ruthin says, "Courthouses need a certain dignity and that is perhaps why the building acquired, during the 1860s, a handsome portico with Doric arches".

The library building represents the tenacity of civic leaders of the time in securing Ruthin as the county town of historic Denbighshire, with its legacy today in terms of status and quality employment.

If the County Council can sell the building so that it remains in use, accessible to all and well looked after, no one could quibble. But is the commercial market likely to bite? Here, the building's uniqueness may play against it and place a limit on its future use.

The Association is fighting to safeguard the building by keeping the library where it is. We think that this is the most appropriate use for this fine structure.

If you feel equally strongly, please contact your county councillors to let them know.

Archived colour copies of Town & Around from 2013 and a colour version of this edition are available on our website at ruthincivic.org



Although Town & Around has something of a revised look and “feel” to it, rest assured that we have tried to ensure its content is in-keeping with the ideals of the newsletter’s origins, and as adopted by editors such as Derek Jones and retiring editor Miles Anderson.

Our recent survey (see below) tells us that T & A is liked, trusted & respected. Thanks to this quarter’s contributors, we think we have the same blend of material. You’ll recognise contributions from some of the usual names; and Seen in Passing continues as it has in virtually every edition since the newsletter started. Please let us know how we’re doing and whether the changes you see suit you.

Town & Around Survey Results

It’s steady as she goes for the Good Ship Town & Around. That’s the conclusion following the results of an autumn online survey of readers that revealed Town & Around is enjoyed by those who read it and the opinion of its various writers is respected and trusted.

After the retirement of editor Miles Anderson, in the light of the responses, your Committee unanimously agreed as a matter of priority to ensure the newsletter's continuation.

Respondents gave T & A’s writers 8.6 out of 10 for the quality of their articles. 96 per cent of those who responded felt that T & A was always or usually impartial.

Asked if T & A should be more controversial, 54 per cent thought not, 25 per cent thought it should be and 21 per cent were unsure. Nearly 80 per cent of respondents thought that T & A should continue to be widely available to all who wished to read it and not just to members. Currently, T & A goes to those councillors, both town and county, who are not members, with multiple copies to the library for anyone to collect. It is also widely available to download via the Association’s website www.ruthincivic.org.

About half of those who replied stated that in future they would be content to receive PDF version of T & A. This would save

How do you rate the articles?



printing and where appropriate postage costs. Neither is a significant burden for the Association currently but the result is worth knowing should costs escalate.

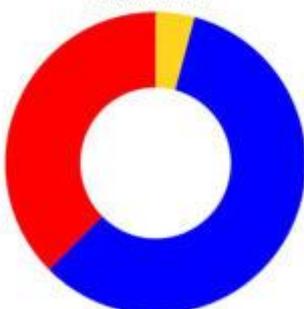
In the light of social media and other online ephemera, when asked whether the Association needed to produce T & A at all, each and every respondent said we should. 83 per cent said that T & A covered issues in more depth and 17 per cent felt that social media were unreliable. When asked whether T & A could be replaced by some sort of blog, some 85 per cent said not.

Everyone who responded felt that T & A covered the sorts of issues and items of interest to them, saying this was the case always or usually. There were in addition a number of written comments, virtually all of which were supportive. The Committee has considered all of them.

As examples, a number of respondents asked for an occasional article in Welsh. Four asked for the use of colour (that would be expensive but colour versions are available online).

Another said, “T & A helped us to feel part of the local Rhuthun community when we moved here. It should be circulated as widely as possible, as it can help draw the community together”. One further respondent said, “It was because of T & A that we joined the association. It helps readers think critically.”

How Impartial?



Always impartial Usually impartial Not usually impartial

Miles Retires



The Association owes a great debt to retired secretary & newsletter editor, Miles Anderson. Miles retired as secretary in October 2015 and as editor in September 2017. He was newsletter editor for nearly seven years.

Miles joined the Association’s Committee in about 2003, taking over as secretary soon after. It was when founding editor Derek Jones retired that Miles then began to compile the newsletter, Miles having begun to pen articles 12 months previously.

Asked about his best achievement, Miles cites the pleasure he found in seeing the printed version of T & A disappearing off the counter at the Library, having compiled T & A, taken suitable photographs and often written a number of articles himself.

He is, of course, very modest. He could easily have mentioned his part in moving the Committee forward, his energy in running the show, the considerable work in organising our hustings, or his contribution to the production of “Slow Walks Around Ruthin”.

I am sure readers will wish to thank him for his hard work on behalf of the Association and want to join with the Committee in wishing Miles and Jill well.

Miles’s first edition as editor in March 2011 included two hot topics of the time: an article on Hiraethog’s wind farms and Miles’s own contribution on the “bold and imaginative” town centre traffic proposals... which it turned out would lead to those once controversial yellow lines.

What Future for the NatWest?

The Town Council is exploring options to safeguard one of our most important buildings to be used for and by the town

There's absolutely no doubt that the former courthouse on the Square would be much better left as a bank. Your Association certainly thought so but, along with others, was unsuccessful in persuading the NatWest to stay. That's all now history, of course.

So, if not a bank, then what?

There's nothing that springs immediately to mind, not without butchering the grade II* listed building beyond recognition which, surely, would defeat the object.

For this is one of the most important buildings on the Square itself—if not *the* most important. It dates from 1421, was stated to have risen from Owain Glyndwr's ashes of the original courthouse—if the sacking of Ruthin included fire—and was sympathetically restored in 1925 by one of the NatWest's predecessors, the National Provincial Bank. With a bit of imagination, it's said you can see



the remains of the gibbet, protruding from the west gable.

The closure of the bank presents an opportunity. The Town Council wants to buy the old courthouse, to safeguard the building for civic use and even, dare we suggest, to serve as a tourist information point (the former visitor centre on the Square opened from April 2013 to September 2014). It could act as a hub for existing visitor attractions and what will we hope be a major pull, the conserved

Castle.

Mezzanine offices would be available for the town clerk. The ground floor space could act as a town museum, exhibition space or a meeting area. The Town Council suggests that it may even be a wedding venue.

The problem here, of course, is that we have other venues with which the courthouse would need to compete. In terms of meeting space, the future of Awelon is uncertain and the ambulance hall is somewhat tired. The library and the Centre are also available.

The courthouse could be useful for a specific size of gathering which may need to be fairly small in nature. It would certainly be to a modern specification. But, is there a demand for another venue?

And then there's the cost. The building is realistically priced at some £120,000 and is actually in good heart. Add fees at £20,000 and refurbishment at some £70,000 and the total project's capital would need £210,000. This is a small price to pay in order to keep a building of this importance in public use for all to enjoy. The idea would be that, after purchase, the venue is self financing in terms of forward revenue commitments.

The Town Council is keen to know what Ruthinians think of this project and Association members & T & A readers are therefore asked to write to clerk@ruthintowncouncil.gov.uk.



Enhancing the townscape and widely welcomed are the fine pedestrian railings installed in early November at the Exemewe House side of Clwyd Street as it rises to meet the Square

Controlled Destruction

At the 2017 Association AGM, Fiona Gale reported on recent finds during “controlled destruction” (erm, excavations) on and near the Clwydian Range, including something rather unique at Moel Arthur

Penycloddiau

Penycloddiau is an iron age hillfort top the Clwydian Range. Excavation of a track through a rampart revealed a large yet part-collapsed dry stone wall some 3½ to 4 yards in width that would have circled the entire site to a length of some 1½ miles. The wall was constructed as a box rampart, one cube of stones at a time, and was therefore made in sections.

Originally believed to be a palisade, the fact that the wall would have taken such a lengthy period to build indicates that it was perhaps unlikely to be for defensive purposes; if protective, those building it would easily have been over-run well before it was complete. As such, Fiona suggested that defence was only believed to be a tiny function of this massive hillfort.

Indeed, Fiona speculated that the wall was important in bringing a whole Iron Age community together and a way of cementing the group. Given its size, there may have been up to 80 extended families living there. This was the total number the area could

support, although they may not have all been there at the same time. Excavators found mortar atop the walls. Although the Romans brought in mortar, that at Penycloddiau was believed to pre-date this and, as such, is unique other than at a site in Gloucestershire.

Moel Arthur



A second excavation on the Clwydian Range at nearby Moel Arthur revealed a bronze age clay-lined trough with stones. It was believed that those living at Moel Arthur would have heated these stones by fire and placed them in water in the trough till the water boiled. This was likely for cooking (as was the case as late as the 18th century on the Hebrides) or it may have been used as a sauna. Carbon dating of the associated charcoal placed the trough as bronze age, before the hill fort itself, and Fiona believed that there may have been activity there as early as 5,000 BC.

What had taken the imagination of the Welsh and international media, however, was the hand-held limestone tools they found. They were each of a worked triangular shape, the top part of which appeared to be used to "peck" other stone.

The National Museum of Wales and other learned institutions had not seen anything like this before. As such, the tools are believed to be unique.

Moel y Gaer

Discovered on this privately-owned hill fort, near Bodfari, a third excavation site on the Range, were stone spinning weights. Fiona suggested that this was evidence that the inhabitants keep sheep and, as such, here was both domestic activity and an embryonic rural economy.

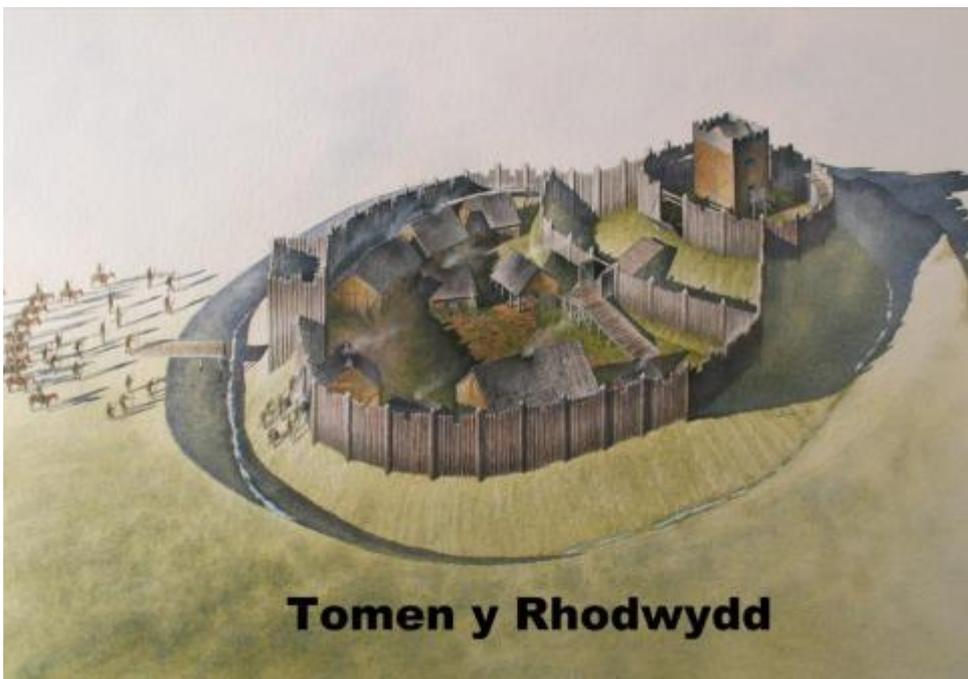
Excavators discovered a likely site for a house and within its garden a bone dated to c.350 BC. There were believed to be three phases of building at the site, indicated by three banks, in one of which was the remains of a drystone wall. Unlike at Penycloddiau, this site and its wall were much smaller in scale.

Works at Moel y Gaer would, in Fiona's view, have made something of an impression. As such, she again felt that the dwelling would have housed another community and the structure would have been more important psychologically than defensively.

Other Sites

The classic motte and bailey castle called **Tomen y Rhodwydd** near Llandegla dates from c.1167 and therefore was Welsh-built. Till recently masked by trees and vegetation, the site was cleared and is now managed. There is also now permissive access from near the B5431.

Archæologists have attempted to understand how the **Leete Path at Loggerheads** was built. Its purpose is known: the River Alyn disappears underground during the summer and the leete was designed to ensure that early industry in the area had a continuous supply of water. It was expected to be a box-section leete but is, in fact, U-shaped and, as such, carried less of a volume of water than previously thought.



Treadmills or Laptops?

DEREK JONES
considers the treatment
of prisoners, contrasting
Ruthin Gaol, even at its
best, with Britain's
newest prison—at
Wrexham

I must admit that I took a sharp intake of breath when I first saw the sign on the by-pass announcing directions to 'Wrexham Prison'—for all the world as if the new gaol was equivalent to Erddig, unquestionably one of the area's most popular tourist attractions, also signed off the same by-pass.

But then, on reflection, I was rather ashamed of my initial reaction. After all, I thought, prisoners' families needed to know the way to this latest addition to Wrexham's Industrial Estate. Not only that, but I had always considered myself to have progressive opinions about the treatment of prisoners, and my response to the sign indicated that I should look again at my attitudes.

My train of thought turned back



to Ruthin Gaol, which ceased to be 'home' for prisoners, just over a hundred years ago, in 1916. In its time, it too was considered progressive, much influenced by the ideas of John Howard, author of *The State of Prisons* (1773). Having visited a great many of them and found they 'swarmed with vermin', he recommended improvements in diet, furnishings and water supply. He was adamant, on the other hand, that prisoners should be housed in separate cells.

Ruthin's new gaol was one of 55 prisons, including the still- notorious Pentonville Prison in London, whose design reflected Howard's ideas. Nevertheless, the museum, which Ruthin gaol has now become, shows that the quest for more humane prison conditions had still some way to go; it displays a machine with a handle which prisoners were required to turn up to 14,480 times every day in order to earn their food (it had no other purpose!).

I am not at all sure that Ruthin Gaol should now be called, in the tourist jargon, a 'visitor attraction'. Words matter, and that way of inviting people to



come to Ruthin seems to me to prevent understanding rather than to promote it.

Compare the record of Ruthin Gaol with the regime at Wrexham (HM Berwyn Prison), where, under the direction of its first governor, Russ Trent, prisoners are referred to as 'men', who have 'rooms', rather than 'cells'. Each room, moreover, has a decent bed, a desk and chair... and a laptop.

Berwyn has a health and well-being centre, an education wing and library (including copies of *The Encyclopaedia of Wales*, and *The Dictionary of the Place-Names of Wales*), workshops, and a sports hall. True to form, the Sun newspaper ran a feature article 'Britain's Cushiest Gaol'. One of its readers was "surprised that they didn't just name it Butlin's and be done with it!"

Meanwhile, at Pentonville, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, found, in 2003, that the prison housed rats and cockroaches as well as prisoners, and that even as recently as 2014, many cells (they were still so called) had no pillows on the beds. No wonder there have been riots and attempted escapes.

Berwyn is, of course, still a prison. Men cannot come and go as they please but, treated properly as this article describes, they are less likely to come back, however nice the rooms and amenities are. A 'visitor attraction' it is not; but it has a far better chance of rehabilitating prisoners than its predecessors.

Five Years On

PETER DANIELS takes an Autumn wander around the Glasdir estate, five years after the waters came



It happened on November 27th, 2012. Residents at the new housing estate at Glasdir awoke to posties knocking on doors warning them of imminent flooding. The day ended with evacuations and homelessness. The clearing up took months. There was a great outpouring of sympathy from Ruthin to its newest housing estate.

Meanwhile, life has to go on and, throughout the occupied part of the estate, a visitor probably would have no idea of any of the momentous events of five years ago. The site has matured, vegetation grown and, in the late autumn Sunday sunshine, children play joyfully, as people come & go and others mow their lawns, walk their dogs or wash their cars.

Yet, there is a part of Glasdir that still reminds us of that terrible 2012 event. Few see it because of its location. This is the unfinished estate towards the rear: from patchy scrub ground and bare foundation slabs to boarded-up houses, all seemingly abandoned by



builder Taylor Wimpey. Straight after the flood, the builder completed a small number of part-roofed houses... but then immediately halted.

Indeed, it wasn't till February 2016, over three years later, that the company tidied up the site, boarding up vandalised windows and doors on the empty homes, and cleared the area of plant, materials, pallets and hoardings. This part of the estate nevertheless still languishes, Chernobyl-like, unfinished and unloved.

Meanwhile, from May 2014, a partnership including Taylor Wimpey, extended the flood protection measures around the eastern perimeter of the estate. Welcomed by residents, this might have given the house builder some confidence to resume but, alas, to date there appears no interest in completing unfinished housing.



Optimism

This autumn, there was at least a small sign of optimism. This involved the three show homes that were deserted after the flooding, when the marketing suite closed. A sign at its entrance still reads, "Sorry, but we have had to close this sales office temporarily". In spite of this, Taylor Wimpey has only recently shut off the lighting that illuminated the



the show homes at night.

From early September this year, the three show homes are currently up for sale. They are two three-bedroomed semis and a medium-sized four-bed detached. Prices range from £140,000 to £219,000. Prospective purchasers couldn't ignore these bargains and this, no doubt, is why the three are currently marked as under offer, at the time of writing.

According to that snoopers' super-site, Rightmove, 12 properties on Glasdir sold between the flood and April 2017. Only one made a substantial profit (of 10 per cent). Three sold within three per cent of the original asking price. The price for two transactions was identical to that when purchased new. Three sold for either eight or nine per cent lower than when first bought. Three were marked as new builds when sold, including one in 2013 and one in 2015.

Indeed, there was only one sale recorded in 2013 and one in 2014, with five in 2015 and four in 2016; and one between January and April 2017.

Memories, of course, will fade on Glasdir. Look at the buoyant post-flood protection house sales on Mwrog Street, itself subject to some horrendous flooding, in 2000 and 2001. Confidence will grow in the mitigation measures now in place.

Meanwhile, in addition to the show houses, there are other, almost-completed, buildings on the site that could be brought into use to help families looking for reasonably-priced accommodation. If the former show homes can move quickly, why not others?

We asked Taylor Wimpey for a comment about these but they did not answer. They had previously stated that work would resume when the conditions were right... whenever that may be.

The Griffin Inn

HAROLD JONES offers an update on Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd's former pub... a story which may yet have a happy ending

The Griffin public house is a Grade II listed building which occupies a prominent position off the A494 in Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd.

It was listed in June 1999 and is in the centre of the village on a bend and opposite the Church of St Peter's. It was built in the middle of the 19th century in a vernacular 19th century Gothic style, as part of a series of estate buildings for the Llanbedr Hall estate.

The reason for the listing is that it is of special interest as a second quarter or mid-nineteenth century village inn, retaining good external "estate" character within the village. It has other group value with other listed buildings in the village, including The Gatehouse (Grade II), Church of St Peter's (Grade II*) and Plas Isa (Grade II). The inn is described as two storey in rustic Tudorbethan style, with whitened rubble construction with slated roof.

Over the years, the Griffin Inn has been a thriving pub and did extremely well, particularly in the late 1970s. In recent years, there has been a number of different tenants but none has succeeded in building up a flourishing business to compare with earlier times. Despite it being on a busy transport route, and having a large garden area to the rear, trade has declined to such an extent that in February 2017, the owners, Robinson's Brewery, decided to sell.

Early interest in the sale did not bring in any offers at the level that the brewery was anticipating and the building sadly now stands empty. The property is being sold by Jackson, Stopps & Staff at a guide price of £250,000. At the time of writing, however, they indicate that the property is now under offer.

In recent years, the village shop closed along with the village post office. The village school, which is located on the outskirts of Llanbedr, has been under threat of closure for a number of years.

The closure of the pub has prompted some local action. In June 2017, Julie Masters and Amanda Brewer were appointed to carry out a feasibility study for a community hub in the village of Llanbedr. They produced a survey which aimed to find out where the community is now and where it wants to be in the future. Entitled "Join the Conversation—Making the Most of Llanbedr", it looked at the demographics of the village, the potential of having a self-financing village hub, and other facilities that would improve village life.

A total of 350 surveys were sent out and 155 were completed—a return of 42 per cent. As well as organising the survey, they sought advice from those running the community pub at the Raven, Llanarmon yn Iâl, from The Pub is the Hub, and from the Wales Co-operative Centre.

Of those who returned the survey questionnaires, 82 per cent believed that the pub was important to Llanbedr, as was a village hub that could fulfil a number of differing needs. An interim report on the survey findings and an action plan can be viewed on the village web site.



Also on the web site, you will see an outline business plan and operational model for the development of a community hub within the Griffin Inn 2017.

At the start of the project, three options were identified:

1. The Griffin would be bought by an unknown purchaser and the results of the survey shared with the new owner.
2. The community council would seek financial support to purchase the inn under a community purchase scheme.
3. A purchaser would come forward and lease the building to a community management company, who would run it on a day to day basis.

The report favours the last option and describes the issues that need to be considered including leases, a community benefit society to manage capital for upgrading, sale of shares and a marketing strategy.

Last month came news that will be warmly welcomed within the community, that the Griffin is indeed under offer, it is said, from an individual who wishes to lease it to the local community.

If this blossoms, locals might expect a café and drop in centre, possibly involving postal activities and a shop. A major refurbishment is envisaged leading to a community run management with a professional team operating a food and drink commercial operation.

Things are changing quickly. Please see llanbedrdyffrynclwyd.org.uk for details.



Caring for Our Castle...

In its first major piece of work since its March 2016 foundation, the Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust has this year secured modest funding said to be “a couple of £100,000” to stabilise although not conserve the curtain walls and other important structures all outside the hotel’s immediate care. Work lasted from February to October 2017.

Cadw began with a thorough survey and was said to be “horrified” at what they found. Matters had worsened even after the partial wall collapse of three years ago. For example, part of a tower was observed to be coming away. There were lintels missing. Water and root damage was said to be extensive. Well meaning cement placed in the late 1960s or early 1970s was causing new problems.

The work involved initially stripping back the vegetation cover over the curtain wall. This enabled an assessment and an agreed course of action. The plan was to secure as much of the mediæval and Victorian masonry as possible.



The stabilising work itself included the buttressing of structures and insertion of pins & straps within the walls and is said to be fairly crude, the idea being that it will last long enough to buy time—three to four years—for the trust to seek major funding for a full conservation project. As such, the current work undertaken is reversible. With one tower alone estimated at £250,000 just to sort out a widening gap as one part pulls away from another, this funding, if successful, will need to be of major proportions.

systems remain, though, to ensure some of the fabric in specific areas deteriorates no further.



With less vegetation across the curtain wall, this is now clearly visible from the Lord’s Garden. Not only does this enable conservationists to understand the problems, it gives the structure a real sense of scale. Some strategic root



... and for an Open Space



This summer, we are fortunate that well known retired forester Andrew Phillips has taken over the upkeep of the raised border and surrounding shrubs on the old Borthyn Stores site near Texaco Bridge Services. This follows council cuts.

Using plants he has grown himself and bulbs supplied by Ruthin Rotary, over the summer we have enjoyed a splendid display at this important junction, visible from traffic entering Ruthin from the south west on the A494. Mercifully, there has been limited vandalism and perhaps that’s because someone from the community itself has troubled to take on this responsibility.

Seen in Passing...

Talking of Llanbedr (p7), urgent repairs to the nave roof at St Peter's, Llanbedr DC were under way this autumn to prevent further water ingress. The project is believed to have cost £88,000, 40 per cent of which is from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Morgan's is selling Arkwright's dog food 15kg at £9.79 while, in the background, is a sign advertising bark at two for £12.

And, talking of Brynhyfryd (p11), the welcomed new 20 mph variable speed limit signs on Mold Road went live at the beginning of term, in September. This follows a long campaign. The speed limit reduces from 30 to 20 mph at school arrival

& departure times and the 20 mph limit is mandatory.

Also talking of County Hall (p1), there are modest improvements to the car park to create some 20 more spaces. There are days when visitors struggle to find on-site parking, and this can put pressure on the more popular town centre car parks.

The County Council is seeking tenders for the supply of average speed cameras along the length of the A5104 skirting Bryneglwys, between Clawdd Poncen and Rhydtalog. Drivers along this stretch of road seem to have something of a tendency to cause crashes and it is already subject to a new 50 mph restriction. The average speed cameras will help enforce that limit.

This autumn has seen a number of red letter days in town, with the re-painting by the Royal Mail of our letter and pillar boxes. The programme started and finished during early September. A number of them were looking decidedly shabby but are now splendid.

Also looking resplendent are the town centre bus shelters, at Market Street, Wynnstay Road and Station Road, including the replacement of perspex with glazed panels and, where necessary, a repaint.

It is a delight to note that in early October the Cuning Green footpath reopened. Having been back in use in March 2016 after the May 2013 closure, Storm Doris saw to it that the path would close again, in March 2017, after a tree damaged the wall.



Seen on the day of the Royal Welsh 1st Battalion's freedom of the county ceremony was this sign outside the Star Bistro (above). Were the puns intended?

B & M Bargains is the latest private parking ground to adopt sanctions for wayward motorists. If you park there and walk off the site, you now face a £90 fine. It seems, though, that the Co-op no longer penalises over-staying motorists as once it did.

Eglwys Efenechtyd

Eglwys Efenechtyd yn ail yng nghystadleuaeth Cymru Sanctaidd. Adroddiad gan HAROLD JONES



Ym mis Gorffennaf 2017 fe gynhaliwyd cystadleuaeth "Cymru Sanctaidd" gan Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol yr Eglwys. Y bwriad oedd gofyn i'r cyhoedd i bleidleisio am eu hoff gapel neu eglwys yng Nghymru.

Lansiwyd y gystadleuaeth gan y darlledwr a'r newyddiadurwr Huw Edwards, sydd yn Is-Lywydd "Sacred Wales—Cymru Sanctaidd".

Enillydd y gystadleuaeth oedd Capel y Tabernacl, Treforus, Abertawe gyda 7081 o bobl yn pleidleisio. Dyluniwyd Capel y Tabernacl Treforus, adeilad rhestredig Graddfa I, gan y pensaer o Gymro John Humphreys. Agorodd y capel yn 1870 ac fe gostiodd £18,000 i'w adeiladu – swm enfawr ar y pryd.

Mae'r capel yn perthyn i Undeb yr Annibynnwyr Cymraeg ac mae'n adeilad ysblennydd sydd wedi cael yr enw "Cadeirlan Anghydfurfiaeth". Yr oedd 50 o adeiladau yn y gystadleuaeth gan gynnwys Cadeirlan Llandaf, Cadeirlan Llanellw, Eglwys Sant Dyfnog Llanrhaeadr a Chapel y Tabernacl Rhuthun.

O ddidordeb arbennig i ni yn Rhuthun a'r Cylch yw'r faith fod Eglwys Sant Mihangel a'r Holl Angylion, Efenechtyd wedi dod yn ail gyda 4498 o bleidleisiau. 'Roedd yr eglwys yma ar agor i'r cyhoedd ar y 9ed a 10ed o Fedi eleni fel rhan o raglen Drysau Agored Rhuthun a'r Cylch.

Y Pentrefi

Adeilad rhestredig Graddfa II* yw'r eglwys a gofnodwyd gyntaf yn 1253. Mae nodweddion yr adeilad yn cynnwys yr hen ddrws mynediad gyda'r clicied, colfachau a chnociwr drws gwreiddiol. Mae'r pren to o'r 16eg ganrif a hefyd ffenestr ddwyreiniol Gothig Saesneg (1290 – 1350) a adferwyd yn 1984 yng Nghanolfan Grefft Rhuthun. Y tu mewn i'r eglwys mae darluniau ar wal cynnar iawn, gweddillion diddorol a bedyddfaen pren unigryw.

Dywed Cymru Sanctaidd fod yna deimlad gwirioneddol o hanes yn yr eglwys fechan yma. Credir ei bod wedi dechrau fel cymuned fynachaidd. Yn y fynwent y tu allan mae yna goed yw ac mae'n bosibl eu bod yn hynach na'r eglwys ei hun.

Yn drydydd yn y gystadleuaeth oedd Eglwys y Grog, Mwnt, Ceredigion gyda 1884 o bleidleisiau. Gellir gweld mwy am y gystadleuaeth ac am y 50 eglwys a chapel ar www.sacredwales.org.uk.

For the currency of this edition, a translation of this piece is available at ruthincivic.org/publications/town-and-around/archive/

Down Memory Lane



Part 4 of EMRYS WYNNE's recollections of Ruthin

It has been more than a few months since the latest instalment of my walk down memory lane through Ruthin in this magazine. In fact, it has been two years! Part 3 of my walk finished on Well Street, outside what was at one time Sam the Barber's shop and lately a place where one could buy and sell items that were no longer of any use to their original owners. This shop has now become part of Corwen Carpets, which is located on Gwen Tolman's old shop (Siop Gwen, Ruthin News, Santander).

The Army & Navy Shop is now where Phil Jones had his DIY shop—About the House. I cannot recall what was here before About the House but I am pretty certain that Ken Favell may well have run his business from here or nearby, during the 1970s.

Why would I remember this? Well, my school woodwork project was to make an Ottoman and my teacher, Iorwerth Gruffydd Jones, told me that I could try getting a sheet of cork to place over the plywood lid. Plywood does have a tendency to splinter around the edges and therefore was likely to cause a degree of discomfort to anyone who sat on it immediately after bathing!

Having tried the usual timber outlets in Ruthin, my father thought that Ken Favell may well be able to help. He came up trumps, with a sheet of cork the right size and depth. My teacher was amazed that I was able to get hold of what was quite expensive to buy and usually was only available at the timber merchants by special order and in large, very expensive sheets. My Ottoman actually won the first prize in Eisteddfod y Tai, Pentre Celyn. I was very proud of it... but fortunate that there was no other entry in this

competition.

If my mother was planning to purchase a joint of meat for Sunday dinner while she was on Well Street, she had a choice of three butchers' shops. She could call at Dic y Golf's shop, that was next door to Mrs Prince's fruit & veg shop, or she could call at the Crown House, now Miss B's Café. There was later a fruit & veg shop next door to Crown House, in what is now the entrance to Miss B's. The third butcher's shop was where St Kentigern's Charity Shop is now located—I must admit, I have no recollection of this shop being a butcher's.

On the same side, in what is now Sue Ryder's charity shop, there was a baker and cake shop, with tea rooms upstairs. I recall Pentre Celyn Sunday School children, myself amongst them, going to the tea rooms after the Gwyl Ysgol Sul that was held at Capel Tabernacl on the first Saturday in November.

Elsa Frischer had a photography shop on Well Street, before moving to St Peter's Square. The shop was located where the entrance is for the flats, just off Well Street. The Manor House, across the road, was John Lennon's ex-wife, Cynthia Twist's home. In my childhood days, it would have been GP Doctor Hughes' home. This has been renamed Manorhaus and has been, for a number of years, a boutique hotel and restaurant.

Further up the road were the offices for Ruthin Rural District Council, which now houses small retail units and a Chinese restaurant. When I came to live in Ruthin in 1987, it was from here I was able to purchase English language CDs, tapes and records from Sheridan's, who had moved from across the road where there is now an antique shop. Next door to this shop was the Co-op. Until recently, this was Creative Image hairdresser's shop, which has now joined Creative Hair Design, just across the road.

The oldest chapel in town, Capel Pendref, is located further down, on the opposite side of the road. I cannot recall ever having entered this chapel as a child or indeed as a teenager. I do, however, vividly remember going into Price the Printers, next to the chapel, and which is now part of the café in Siop Nain. It was here during the 1960s and possible the early 1970s that most if not all of the local printing was carried out.

There were many events held in Ruthin and its outlying villages that required publicity posters, tickets and programmes and scores of local chapels had to print their annual reports. The printing press was rarely redundant. It's greatest claim to fame, however, is that it was in here the Welsh National Anthem was first printed, in 1856.



Next door, we have Siop Nain, which I am almost certain was a newsagents when I was a child. Gwynne Jones had his chemist's shop next door. I recall calling here, an aspiring early adolescent scientist, to buy some potassium permanganate and a bottle of hydrogen peroxide... as well as a tube of Clearasil.

After advising me about applying the Clearasil, Gwynne Jones smiled kindly, when I was leaving the shop, and added "don't go blow yourself up". I had no idea what to do with these items. They were safely kept in my laboratory—a cupboard in the living room in Glanaber. I did not manage to save enough money to buy the paraphernalia that, when put together, constitute a laboratory. In any case, I had no idea as to who the local test tube, tripod and petri dish supplier would be. I cannot remember what I did with the H_2O_2 and $KMnO_4$. Yes, I did produce some purple coloured liquid by mixing the $KMnO_4$ with some H_2O in my mother's best china tea cup! The resulting equation should have read:

$(KMnO_4) + (H_2O) + \text{best china cup} = 1$
(less than happy mother). My dream of being Ysgol Brynhyfryd's most revered scientist was to fall at the first hurdle.

To be continued...

Part 1 June 2015; Part 2 Sept 2015; and Part 3 Dec 2015, all available at www.ruthincivic.org

Back Where Brynhyfryd Belongs

RUTH BACON goes back to school and revisits the head of Ysgol Brynhyfryd to consider progress

In March 2016 Geraint Parry, the newly-appointed headteacher of Ysgol Brynhyfryd, told this newsletter that he wanted to make the school “the Jewel in the Vale”.

Eighteen months on, I asked him whether he felt his ambition was being realised. “Undoubtedly”, was his reply. “I am delighted to report that in so many measures the school has become the highest performing school in North Wales”.

Under the Welsh Government National School Categorisation System schools are colour coded according to their perceived need for improvement. There are four categories ranging from Red (in need of greatest improvement), through Amber and Yellow to Green (Highly Effective). Ysgol Brynhyfryd is one of only nine schools in Wales to move up two categories in the last year. It began the year in the Red band and is now in the Yellow band. A big jump!

Mr Parry is confident, however, that the school will move into the Green band in January 2018. He states the school is already fulfilling the criteria for doing so.

One visible sign for Ruthin residents that these improvements are happening is the large poster outside the school that proclaims “best [provisional] GCSE and A level results in Denbighshire”. In fact, students achieved a 100 per cent pass rate at A level, with over 30 per cent getting A* or A grades. Every student who applied for a university place got one.

The school is also regarded as a centre of excellence in delivering



the Welsh Baccalaureate and has been recognised for its best practice. All students do the Bacc at key stages 4 and 5.

As well as the academic subjects, the school has a vibrant, plentiful programme of music, arts and sport. One student last year was accepted at the Royal College of Music to study Opera. Other pupils have had both national and international successes.

Numbers on roll are rising. An extra 30 children were admitted in Year 7 in September. The school's children do not come solely from Ruthin, as the number of buses travelling through town at the beginning and end of the day attest. A massive seventy percent of pupils travel by bus.

Indeed, Mr Parry describes the catchment area as spreading from the boundaries of Snowdonia to the boundary with England. Children are now attending from such places as Wrexham, Bala and Mold. One of the reasons Brynhyfryd pulled out of a Sixth Form Consortium that linked it with other schools was because of travel issues for its youngsters attending functions.

An exciting technology improvement was introduced during the summer. £500,000 was invested in upgrading the IT infrastructure throughout the school, meaning every department now has its own IT suite. Every classroom has a state of the art large touch screen active panel which allows interactive learning. Teachers and pupils can access information as and when—literally the world at their fingertips.

Another change saw a new perimeter fence erected during the summer, a significant step towards safeguarding the school's children.

A third change was the introduction of a new uniform in September. Staff have commented that this year saw the best ever start to the academic year in that pupils returned with a more mature and positive outlook. Certainly they look smart and residents have commented on the general improvement of behaviour in town.

And what of the future?

Mr Parry's ambition now is to make Brynhyfryd the best in Wales...

Ruthin & District Civic Association

Retiring Chair

At October's AGM, Chair Liz Williams stood down. Since 2013, she has led the Association with vigour and considerable enthusiasm. Her exuberance has been infectious. We are delighted that Liz has agreed to stay on the Committee.

We are confident that members will be very grateful for Liz's time in the role of Chair.

New Chair

Liz is followed by new Chair Anne Roberts MBE. Very well known around Ruthin, Anne is a town councillor and, of course, a former town mayor. She has also sat on the RADCA Committee since Oct 2013.

In addition, the 2017/18 Committee comprises Heather Williams (Vice-chair); Robert Williams, (Treasurer); Peter Daniels (Secretary) and Kay Culhane, Kathy Daniels, Harold Jones and Menna Jones (and, of course, Liz Williams).

Future Events

The Association aims to have a fuller programme of events for 2018 and this will be available shortly.

Meanwhile, on February 21st, 2018, at 7.30 p.m. at Canolfan Awelon, the Association's Secretary, Peter Daniels, will again show some of his presentation on the changes in Ruthin 2005-2015.

This time, it is part of the Ruthin Local History Society's programme. The presentation will include some new material over that shown to Association members & friends two years ago.

Entry is free to History Society members. Otherwise, £2 per head.

Town & Around

The continuation of the quarterly newsletter remains a priority for the Association (see p2).

In order for this to happen, we need regular offers of help with suitable articles and in editing. If you think you can do some of this, please get in touch. Members and non-members are welcome to pen suitable material.

If any members have suggestions about how T & A may be distributed more widely or can offer help with distribution can they please contact the Association (see right).

Town & Around is published quarterly free of charge by the Ruthin & District Civic Association. It is available from Ruthin Library and on the Association's website ruthincivic.org. It is delivered free to Association members

We welcome articles, contributions, suggestions and letters, in Welsh or English

Please send them to cymru@clwyd.org or to Coedlan, 25 Stryd y Brython, Ruthin, LL15 1JA

The deadline for the March edition is February 9th, 2018

Thanks are due to this month's contributors:

Ruth Bacon, Peter Daniels, Derek Jones, Harold Jones, Emrys Wynne and the help of Fiona Gale

Views expressed by contributors are their own and neither necessarily reflect those of the Association nor those of their employer

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Join Ruthin & District Civic Association and help support our work and the production & distribution of Town & Around

Annual subscription rates are £10 (individual) or £15 (joint/family).

The Association tries to help protect & enhance the outstanding market town of Ruthin and the areas nearby. Our main aims are to promote "civic pride" in the town and surrounding villages. We also aim to promote high standards in planning and encourage architectural excellence. We organise the annual Open Doors heritage weekends and the Quayle Awards.

(1) Name _____

(2) Name _____

Address _____

Telephone: _____ Email _____

I/We enclose a cheque for £10 or £15 (delete as appropriate) payable to Ruthin & District Civic Association. Please forward to Robert Williams, Hon. Treasurer, Lenton House, Mold Road, Ruthin LL15 1SL (tel 704998 / ruthincivic@btinternet.com)