

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 2017

Hidden Places

Ruth Bacon goes behind the scenes

No matter how well you think you know your own town, you can still be surprised sometimes. Recently I was on the hunt for music and songs. Having exhausted my own supply of music books, and spent some exasperating time on the internet, I decided to ask if they had any music books at Ruthin Library. There I discovered that they have a large archive of material available to music groups, choirs, orchestras and individuals on request. The next surprise was that it is not located in the library itself but in a huge storeroom in a warehouse on the Lon Parcwr industrial estate. It shares this room with the County's fiction reserve of about 8,000 books. The library's room is in turn part of Denbighshire County Council's Corporate Store.

The music collection is composed of some 21,000 items ranging from printed sheet music to full orchestral scores. At any one time a quarter of these items will be out on loan. Many of the orchestral scores were inherited from the old Llandudno Pier Orchestra's stock. As well as orchestral scores there are sets of music for choirs and musical societies as well as miniature scores for individual study purposes. Sheet music is available for various instruments. Books of Welsh songs, folk songs, sea shanties, traditional ballads, classical music scores and old pop favourites, such as Beatles songs, abound. There are racks of ever popular musicals like 'Cats' and 'Oliver' plus old favourites such as Gilbert and Sullivan operettas.

The room itself is unmanned. A visit to the store is not generally available for members of the public. Requests for a particular item of music can be made through Ruthin Library in person or by telephoning (01824 705274). Requests are dealt with on a weekly basis at Ruthin Library by library assistant, Carys. She receives requests for music from all over Wales and also from such places as the Shetland Islands, the Isle of Wight, Belfast and Londo, to name just a few. The most popular and borrowed item in the archive is 'The Wasps Overture' by Ralph Vaughan Williams which has eighty seven orchestral parts in all. As there are only two sets in the UK for hire/loan and it is rarely to be found in the archive! There is a small charge for organisations to hire items for a three month period, but single items for individuals for study purposes are free.

I was lucky enough to accompany Carys on one of her visits to the archive and, as row after row of lights flickered on to reveal a cavernous room, far larger than I had been expecting, I found myself wondering....what else is hidden away out of sight in Ruthin?

The Courthouse of the lordship of Ruthin symbolises the recovery of the lordship after Owain Glyndŵr's revolt. Trees were felled in 1421 to build it. Four arches made of green wood formed the sides of the new Courthouse and supported the roof and remain in place today.

The Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales believed the original building consisted of a central open hall set between two storeyed end bays and the 1926 restoration reinstated the original concept which we have today.



continued . . .

The Courthouse

Gareth Evans looks back at a very historic building

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TUDOR AND STUART CHANGES - The sale of the lordship to the crown in 1507 changed its status and the ground floor probably appeared after then and became engulfed by shops in the sixteenth century. By 1579 fifteen shops were accommodated on its ground floor. Further changes extended the original building westwards by a bay in a different style and three stumpy projections were added to the south side, at least one with a foundry.

The building was known by various names including the 'Chequer chamber' but from the early sixteenth century its most consistent name was the Pendist. The courtroom was still an important part of government machinery in the mid seventeenth century until replaced by the Shire Hall in 1663. The Pendist was the scene of the execution of Father (now Saint) Charles Meehan, an Irish Franciscan in 1679. Convicted of being a Catholic priest, he was hung, drawn and quartered. The remains of a gibbet are on the north side near Castle Street. During the Stuart period most of the small shops on the ground floor merged into one large shop.

GEORGIAN SHOPS - Ruthin's largest eighteenth century shop developed in the Pendist. Shops replaced the lordship court which was relocated and in the 1770; it was meeting in the town's taverns. Throughout the century, the owners of this shop had close political and financial connections with the Chirk Castle estate, acting for them and supplying the estate with hardware and building material. The shop was known as 'Old Hall' and was the largest in Ruthin and the southern Vale of Clwyd's premier shop.

VICTORIAN IRONMONGERS - The Courthouse became exclusively a commercial property and from at least 1827 was mainly occupied by a grocery and ironmongery business. From 1850, it was run by the same family: first, Evan Jones until the mid-1870s succeeded by his son, John Evan Jones and then by his grandson, Herbert Evan Aldrich. For most of this time their business was called Siop Pendre. The former upper courtroom became an auction mart which Herbert Aldrich took over as a show room with his shop occupying the four oldest bays and sometimes called 'Ye Olde Courthouse'. Goods for sale would be impressively displayed outside creating a must-visit experience for most visitors to Ruthin, like today's Tesco. The bankruptcy of the Castle Estate led to the sale of the Courthouse in 1913 and the age of the shopkeepers at the Courthouse began to end.

BANK - There were only two tenants by 1913, and one was replaced by the National Provincial Bank in 1914. The bank purchased the building outright in 1923 for £2400. Aldrich's had left the building by 1926 and the bank proceeded with what was probably a much needed restoration. The bank demolished the rear extensions improving the rear view of the bank and the top of Well Street. Centuries of adaptations to provide commercial space were stripped away and 'The Court House was restored reinstating the central open hall set between two storeyed end bays'.

Aesthetically, the restored building is a triumph closing the south of St Peter's Square and complementing the Georgian Castle Hotel and the reconstructed Exmewe Hall on either side. It is one of the most photographed buildings in Wales and rightly so. The bank saved the building but has now plunged its future into doubt. Let us hope a suitable use can be found

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Green Light for Awelon!

Bobby Feeley reports on developments

The options for the site, developed with Housing Association, Grwp Cynefin, will increase the number of extra care apartments up to around 57, and will include respite care and a new community centre for the wider use of Ruthin residents

Facilities at the site of Awelon residential care home in Ruthin will be completely revamped after a redevelopment project was approved by Denbighshire's Cabinet at the end of January.

The options for the site, developed with Housing Association, Grwp Cynefin, will increase the number of extra care apartments up to around 57, and will include respite care and a new community centre for the wider use of Ruthin residents. There are three slightly varying proposals being considered for the site which are now being taken forward for discussion with Grwp Cynefin, the Canolfan Awelon Committee, users and the Council, to decide upon the preferred scheme to take best advantage of the site for all concerned.

The Council has given assurances that no one permanently resident in Awelon Care Home at the time the decision was made will have to leave, providing their needs can be met. When the development gets underway, care will be taken to ensure least possible disruption whilst the building work takes place, and all residents, relatives, carers, staff and the Canolfan Committee will be kept informed of progress.



The development of Awelon site is a large undertaking, but it will mean older vulnerable people will be cared for in a way that helps maintain an excellent quality of life, retain people's independence, whilst having care and support available as and when they need it up to 24 hours a day. These criteria were key considerations when the proposals were drafted. Extra care will also provide a safe and supportive environment that people want, need and expect.

There are other examples of extra care across the county and there has been an increase in demand for them as people live longer and want to remain independent in their own homes. It's a great option and provides families

with peace of mind that their loved ones are being properly cared for, in a beautifully designed, sustainable modern building, with plenty of help on hand and opportunities to socialise.

The Project Manager for Grwp Cynefin is Rhys Dafis, who is also the Company's 'Regeneration Services Director' and I caught up with him recently when he had an initial briefing meeting with the Canolfan Committee, who, understandably, were worried about the future use of the new Canolfan and whether it would be tailored to meet the requirements for current user groups. There was a good session of questions and answers, ranging from parking, hire costs, shape and size of building and opening hours, and he assured members that all their many and valid points would be considered within the scheme. Rhys told the committee members, "A great deal of thought has gone into the feasibility work to establish the redevelopment options for the Awelon site. All of them needed to have regard to the present and future wellbeing of the elderly residents and provide for the vibrant community activity based at Canolfan Awelon." He added, "As we and the Council firm up the preferred proposal over the coming months, there will be full and ongoing liaison with all parties to ensure that their needs are duly taken into account."

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The Council has been extremely grateful for all the comments received during the consultation phase and for the cooperation and dedication of Awelon's committed and caring staff during the lengthy process. This is now about looking to the future and progressing with these plans which will benefit future generations of older people in Ruthin and surrounding area. The redevelopment of the Awelon site is an exciting project and I look forward to seeing it come to fruition over the next few years, I will keep you updated as future plans emerge.

A Geological Walk around Ruthin

Isobel Stewart guide us through some of our rocks and fossils

In 1831 Charles Darwin, an English naturalist, geologist and author of the book 'On The Origins Of Species,' had recently passed his BA exams with honours, and in August that year he accompanied his geology tutor, Professor Adam Sedgwick, on a two week field trip to map the strata of Wales. On the journey up from Cambridge they stopped off in Ruthin and reputedly stayed in the Castle Hotel on St. Peter's Square.

In 1831 Charles Darwin . . . accompanied his geology tutor, Professor Adam Sedgwick, on a two week field trip to map the strata of Wales.

Charles and Adam parted company at Bangor, leaving Charles free to explore the rocks of Snowdonia. While in Cwm Idwal he identified

igneous rock and fossil corals. Last year Berwyn District and Ruthin District Geology Group U3A's had a field trip to Cwym Idwal guided by Paul Gannon, mountaineer guide and science technology journalist following in Charles Darwin's footsteps. I would like to think that during Darwin's stay he saw some of the town's geology in the old building materials and structures around Ruthin Town. Last year in October, our U3A Geology Group took a geological walk around Ruthin. We were guided by group member Brian Hubble who not only gave us a splendid fact filled tour but also produced a two-page hand-out. In any town or village, you can get an idea of the local geology just by looking at the materials used in the old buildings as it was so much cheaper to use local stone.



Our first stop was Bathafarn Chapel which has 300 million years old yellow sandstone around windows and porch. It may have been quarried around Ruabon which is known for its Cefn y Fedw rock. In the walls of the County Hall we saw belemnites and brachiopods fossils in the 300 million year old carboniferous limestone. The splendid pillars are of the igneous rock Larvik. It was probably quarried in the Larvik mines in Norway. You can see thumbnail size crystals of feldspar quite easily.

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The War Memorial which is constructed of three types of rock. The grey metamorphic Ordovician slate found in the Ffestiniog and the Dee Valley region. Permian Triassic sedimentary sandstone found in Hirwaen and Cheshire and igneous granite which may have been mined in Cornwall. Ruthin or Denbigh quarries could have supplied the carboniferous limestone which contains easy to see calcite tubular corals and circular fossils that was used to build the Town Hall.

A great sight is the kerbstones around St. Peter's Square which are made of crinoidal limestone. Crinoids were around in the Ordovician era about 488 million years ago. The fossils we see are the broken stems of the marine animals and look like miniature polo mints. This limestone may have been mined around the Matlock area.

The Old Gaol's carboniferous building blocks contains brachiopod fossils and the Tom Price Memorial has a slate plinth probably from a Berwyn quarry and the main stone is a type of limestone, a very hard dolomite, which could be Permian from 200 million years ago.

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Another very curious and interesting feature is Maen Huail, the large stone outside the Midland Bank. It is thought to be an erratic. Erratics are stones that got wedged under moving ice during the various ice ages. When the last ice melted 14,000 years ago, stones were left behind on completely different geological formations. There is an enormous erratic Maen Digychwyn in Eryrys village now used as part of a garden wall and is well worth viewing.

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Marble has been used to construct the steps of the old picture house. When limestone comes under great pressure and heat the result is marble. It may have come over from Italy.

Along Ffordd Llanrhydd on either side of the road is red sandstone known as the Kinnerton formation. It was formed in very arid conditions in the Permian-Triassic era. There was probably a sandstone quarry around the Stanley Road area.

Most of the stone walls in Ruthin tell a story if you know how to read it. A green stone, a stone with crystals, one black and shiny like glass - I know what these are and where they have come from, do you? If you want to know what a brachiopod is or how sandstone could possibly be formed in dry, arid conditions in this country, it can all be found on Google.

Happy searching and many thanks to Brian Hubble for the splendid walk.

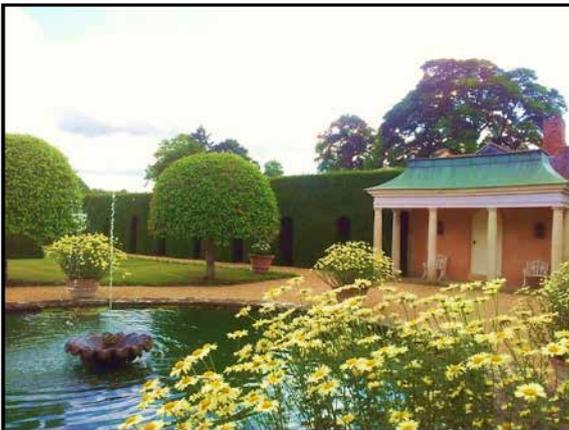
Discover your Heritage

Liz Williams reports on plans for Open Doors in 2017



This year our celebration of Architecture and Heritage weekends, Open Doors 2017 will take place over the weekend of 2nd and 3rd September for the town of Ruthin and the weekend of 9th and 10th September mainly in areas outside the town – either individual properties or clusters in hamlets/villages.

We hope that there will be some new activities – which will be connected with objects of historic and local interest. In addition as Visit Wales is promoting 2017 as the ‘Year of the Legend’, we hope to have some stories told about the legends we have here – from stories about King Arthur associated with Maen Huail, the Grey Lady at Ruthin Castle and the infamous Coch Bach y Bala, who escaped from the Gaol.



We are delighted that Sir Philip and Lady Isabella Naylor-Leyland have generously offered to include viewing of the grounds at Nantclwyd Hall in the Open Doors programme on 9th September. Also there will be a cluster of properties around Llanrhaeadr, which will be available to view and enjoy, including the Old Laundry adjacent to Llanrhaeadr Hall.

All these buildings are sure to capture your interest architecturally and historically, as they give a unique insight into the way our fine old town has developed over the centuries.

The organisation of Ruthin and District Open Doors is co-ordinated by a sub-committee of the Ruthin and District Civic Association. Without these volunteers the event would not take place. Carol Smith, the owner of Porth y Dŵr on Clwyd Street, who was involved with the organisation of Open Doors events for a number of years when it was co-ordinated by Denbighshire County Council, has kindly agreed to take on more of the workload and will be the main contact this as Co-ordinator (taking over from Heather Williams). If you know of any places or sites that have not been included in previous years and whose owners may be interested in participating in Open Doors 2017, Carol would be very grateful if you could pass her details to them email: porthydwr@gmail.com

Watch out for further details as these events become more popular each year and early booking will be necessary for some properties.

Updated information will be on

Facebook - Drysau Agored Sir Ddinbych - Open Doors Denbighshire
Twitter - @OpenDoorsDC

In August (and possibly before) the booklet will be downloadable from the website www.opendoorsdenbighshire.org.uk as well as hard copies sent to members and available in libraries.

Matters of Concern for a Civic Association

Miles Anderson considers various planning, developments concerns

In our last edition, we expressed concern at the possible future development of Rhos Street School building after its closure. This is now put back to the spring of 2018 when the new buildings at Glasdir are scheduled to be completed - but the concerns for the old building are still with us!

On reflection there are a number of other planning and development issues that are of concern to Ruthin and District Civic Association at present.

On the subject of our built heritage, that must be a principal concern for a civic association, there are a number of current and future planning and development situations that certainly have given rise for concern in the localities in which they are situated and so should be of interest to our association.

Most recently, we understand, a decision had been taken by Denbighshire county Council to build a new primary school in Llanfair D.C. to replace the old building at the heart of the village. Certainly, the limitations of the old Victorian building make the task of providing an education to our primary school age children fit for the 21st Century a difficult one, and the promise of a new school in the village will be a great relief to parents, families and school staff. Village located primary schools have always been very highly regarded as institutions that bring life to a village community.

But we are then left with another much-loved redundant school building. The Rhos Street School building was not listed and that is probably the case with Ysgol Llanfair, but in this case it is at the centre of a conservation area. Finding uses for such buildings is not easy.

Another development proposal in the village of Llanfair D.C. that is at present being considered is the application to build 63 new homes on the land opposite Neuadd Eleanor, the Village Hall, on the Wrexham Road. This is not the first proposal to develop this piece of land. One of the major concerns is that this site has, at present, no foot or vehicular access to the village except via the A525, a busy main road. This would result in a village development disconnected from the main village community, something to be avoided if possible. I am sure that solutions can be found to these and the other concerns of the local residents, and, of course, Denbighshire is committed to the provision of more homes.

Another disconnected housing development that I am sure was not intended, is the situation of Taylor Wimpey's involvement in the housing construction development at Glasdir. The floods of November 2012 put a stop to their development of the site, although there were regular promises that this would be resumed once flood defences and house insurance matters had been resolved. After all this time it seems unlikely that they will resume work at here and the residents of Glasdir, in their very attractive homes, seem likely to live in a disconnected suburb of Ruthin, again something not originally intended and nor desirable.

Some of our members in Graigfechan have been expressing concern that the new housing proposals to be built in their village could be out of sympathy with their rural setting. All quality architecture should take account of the environment in which it is located and should if possible enhance its amenity value or at least be neutral in its impact.

Nearer home, Castle Farm in the Wrexham Road appears to be scheduled for redevelopment. This site has been like a beautiful, green

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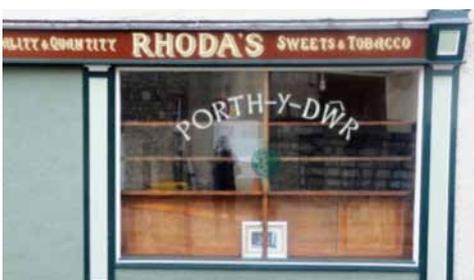
oasis in the suburban housing that surrounds it. Although there is nothing wrong with suburban development, it provides very desirable and convenient housing, nevertheless the loss, if that were to happen, of Castle Farm and its vernacular buildings, set back from the road with a wide expanse of lawned space as its frontage would be an environmental loss to Ruthin.

And, of course, there is St Peter's Square! Nat West Bank is to pull out of its occupation of The Old Court House unless something very unforeseen happens. What then of the viability of the other two banks? We seem to be seeing a considerable diminution in the footfall across the centre of the town which I am sure cannot be blamed on the temporary closure of the wine shop. Wetherspoon's or, as it should be called, The Castle Hotel, continues to be well used, as is Bar Llaeth, but despite having all the shop premises occupied and a rejuvenated Post Office at the far end, St Peter's Square is generally a much quieter space than we would like it to be. Now all that is quite a lot for a civic Association to be concerned about!

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SEEN IN PASSING ...

- Qualifying as a 'seen in passing' item, we cannot have failed to notice that our Town Hall has become, or more accurately, still is a white elephant! With the proposed redevelopment of Awelon, we cannot be sure that their meeting room will be still available for larger occasions. Such events that should be in the town centre, such as Hustings for Parliamentary and Assembly elections, would be most suitably held in our Town Hall.
- Recent travellers approaching Ruthin from the Corwen direction might be forgiven if, from the signage, the thought we were a topsy-turvy or upside town, or perhaps this damaged sign caused them to consider us a 'town of two halves' – but, of course we know none of that is true!
- It is not that long ago that the local pedestrian police force was usually seen wearing baseball caps as their headgear. Some thought it displayed a lack of seriousness. But the other day on St Peter's square two officers were in evidence wearing the traditional, impressive helmets. It seems to lend to them a dignity that should go with their duties of law enforcers, or interpreting their Welsh name, the peace force!
- Porth y Dwr, sitting, as it does, looking up Clwyd Street has been much spruced up in recent times. What a delight to see its original sign and the designation on and above the shop front window.
- This unseasonably mild winter, though we could still be in for a nasty cold shock, has brought forth a bountiful blessing of snowdrops this year. There are carpets of these harbingers of spring on the banks and verges all round town.



Shakespeare *Alfresco* returns to Nantclwyd!



Friends of Nantclwyd y Dre have been able to arrange a new company to bring their outdoor production of Shakespeare to entertain us again this summer. Illyria will be performing A Comedy of Errors on 25th June. The evening will start at 6.30 and we know from previous years that having a picnic as an added pleasure in Nant Clwyd's beautiful gardens on one of these occasions has been very popular, so patrons are advised to book early. Tickets will be £15.00 each and will be available from Siop Elfair bookshop and Janet Kenyon Thompson's Eagles bookshop both in Clwyd Street.

RUTHIN'S LAST BREWERY

Gareth Evans has retraces its history

A part of old Ruthin re-appeared on Castle Street before Christmas, a nineteenth century red-tile advertisement of Roberts Home Brewed Ales uncovered during the renovations at the Corporation Arms.

The Last Brewery - Robert Roberts was from Ruthin and bought the Corporation Arms in 1879 when he was 27 and ran it with his wife, Martha where they developed their business and brewing skills. He initially sold four types of beer, probably all milds in 35, 18, and 9 gallon casks. Roberts was obviously seeking regular bulk orders.

At the end of 1890, he bought the Hand Brewery and Vaults or Hand Vaults public house on Well Street and transferred his brewing there.

The Hand - The Hand was built between 1681 and 1688 by the Myddeltons of Chirk Castle as an inn. It was stone-built and was taken down and rebuilt in brick in 1870. Today it houses 'Work and Leisure Wear' on the ground floor.

By 1890 the individual publican brewing his own ales was being replaced by the common brewer supplying several public houses. Robert Roberts followed a series of successful common brewers at the Hand. William Edwards ran a profitable business, which he sold to Foulkes and Co for £950 in 1882 when it could brew only one beer at a time.

The Hand Brewery was acquired by Benjamin Trimmer in 1888 who modernised and extended it. He sought to draw water from Galchog, west of Ruthin, where a limestone outcrop provides calcium in the water promoting clarity, flavour and stability in the finished beer, but was frustrated by vested interests. Roberts bought the Hand in 1890 and circumvented the opposition by carting water from the Galchog spring.

Roberts transformed Trimmer's business into a large operation. He replaced some mild beers with bitter and pale ales. His 'Cwrw Hand' or 'Hand Ale' had a longstanding reputation. His seasonal beers included his 'very best October Brews' and stronger ales for winter consumption.

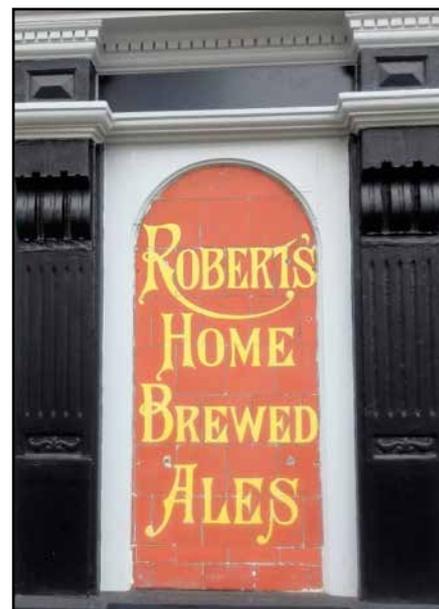
With the profit, Roberts bought public houses. To the original Corporation and Hand (Vaults) he added the Feathers in 1897 and the Black Horse on St Peter's Square in 1896. He probably owned the Boars Head and had close connections with the Farmers Arms, the Royal Oak on Clwyd Street, the Drovers, Rhewl and the White Horse, Hendrerwydd and supplied other public houses.

'Robert Roberts (Hand Brewery)' was always in the press; whether attending a function or a council meeting, he was always identified with the Hand. He was the only local brewer advertising his ales, in fact, for the Ruthin media he was the only local brewer.

The Hand generated traffic. A water cart would have been a familiar sight as 1000 gallons of Galchog water were needed weekly. The brewery's three working horses, heavy cart and dray floats and 'delivering lorry' would have been busy. Frequent deliveries of coal for the boilers and barley would have added to the bustle. All around the Hand would have been pervaded by the smell of malting. The Hand's beers included three milds a 'best bitter' and a pale ale, all popular beers in late Victorian Britain.

The First World War – The war severely affected Robert Roberts's business. Beer was heavily taxed. The glory days were over. The Hand Brewery business was sold to Ind Coope 1912 in 1917 who closed the brewery and Roberts sold the contents in May 1919.

The last brewery in the town had gone. His steam powered brewery



The Last Brewery - Robert Roberts was from Ruthin and bought the Corporation Arms in 1879 when he was 27 and ran it with his wife, Martha where they developed their business and brewing skills



HAND BREWERY,
17, WELL STREET, RUTHIN.

R. ROBERTS, Wholesale & Retail Wine & Spirit
Merchant, Brewer and Malster.

Begs to call the attention of the Gentry and Public to his celebrated **HOME-BREWED ALES** (pure Extract of Malt and Hops), which may be supplied in Casks of 36, 18 and 9 Gallons at the following prices:

	36 Galls.	18 Galls.	9 Galls.
XXXX (Mild) ..	50/-	25/-	12 6
XXX (do) ..	42/-	21/-	10 6
XX (do) ..	36/-	18/-	0 6
B.B. (Bitter) ..	50/-	25/-	12 6
P.A. (do) ..	42/-	21/-	10 6

Guinness's Extra Stout, Barclay & Perkin's London Stout and Bass & Co.'s Burton Ales in Cask and Bottles. Finest Scotch and Irish Whiskies and Ports, Sherries and Champagnes of well-known brands.

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had two boilers, one holding 1000 gallons and could brew three beers at once. He had a cooperage with 480 casks in 1919.

Roberts's property was dispersed, the malt house becoming a cheese creamery. Other buildings became a depot for agricultural merchants. The Hand Vaults continued until around 1960 known simply as the Hand and is now a private house and an outdoors shop. The Corporation, Boars Head, Feathers, Drovers and Farmers' continue as public houses despite the changes in leisure activities

Recent Civic Association events

Heather Williams reports on current happenings

The house is a good example of a 16th Century hall and parlour cross-wing plan type

It was then bought by the Hooson family who created a model dairy farm and a market garden in which Italian prisoners of war worked

A visit to Caerfallen

Some members enjoyed a lovely afternoon at Caerfallen, Greenfield Road on 18 February, kindly hosted by the owner Zoe Henderson. The house is a good example of a 16th Century hall and parlour cross-wing plan type. From the outside features can be seen which show that this was a high status house – in particular this shown by its height and star-shaped brick chimneys.

This striking timber- framed L shaped house dates back to before 1560 when it re-roofed by Robert Turbridge, North Wales Surveyor to Queen Elizabeth 1. The family sold the property to Thomas Myddleton of Chirk Castle a hundred years later and it was rented out to tenant farmers. This continued when Lecomber, (Mayor of Ruthin) bought it. It was then bought by the Hooson family who created a model dairy farm and a market garden in which Italian prisoners of war worked. One of the members was delighted to see the house where his mother was a dairy maid. In 1955 Zoe's grandfather bought it and now she is carrying out sensitive restoration work of the main house and the outbuildings.

Pieces from the Past



An interesting selection of objects was on view at an event organised for members on 2 March at Ruthin Castle. These items included a ticket for a Meat tea in the Drill Hall to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, a 1912 auction catalogue for the Llwyn Ynn Estate near Llanfair DC, an Edward Pugh aquatint print of Ruthin, Ellis and Cambrian bottles, an 17th Century shoe and 1861 menus from Ruthin Castle in the time of the Cornwallis West family.

The shoe, which came from behind 17th century panelling at Porth y Dŵr, Clwyd Street, was probably placed as a good luck charm to ward off evil spirits (a practice that dates back to the medieval period). Porth y Dŵr is also situated close to Crispin Yard – St Crispin being the patron saint of shoemakers. The leather industry was very important in Ruthin - dating back to the medieval period.

The water bottling industry was important in Ruthin in the 19th and early 20th century. Both the Ellis and Son and

Cambrian companies drilled boreholes to extract the water, which is naturally fizzy, and is filtered through the red sandstone on which Ruthin is built. The torpedo bottle (so named because of its shape) had a round bottom and was kept flat. The soda kept in contact with the cork which meant that the cork would not shrink and the contents would remain fizzy.

The consensus was that the shoe, the bottles (in particular the torpedo bottle) and the menu were the most special and distinctive objects which highlight the heritage of Ruthin.

These items included a ticket for a Meat tea in the Drill Hall to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee

"The Foundations of Ruthin, 1100 – 1800"

by David Gareth Evans

Gwynne Morris finds much to enjoy between these leaves

Before the book was even opened I was very intrigued with its cover which I later discovered was based on the first ever illustration of the town by J. Ellis and entitled 'Ruthin, 1715'. Can you find St. Peter's Church prior to the addition of its steeple?

Over time, several learned articles by eminent historians have been written on aspects of the town's development. Other books/booklets have been written on Ruthin's past from William Davis's 'Handbook for the Vale of Clwyd' with its 'Topographical and Historical Description of the Town of Ruthin' (and others) through Rhuddenfab's 'Handbook to 'Ruthin and Neighbourhood'. Many of these are based on recollections and written material by previous authors. The most recent authoritative 'History of Ruthin' of whom the author of 'Foundations of Ruthin' was a major contributor and co-editor was based on written historical evidence.

The main differences between 'The Foundations of Ruthin' and 'History of Ruthin' are the inclusion of an evidence base so that readers can see where the history has been derived, the provision of an index so that the knowledge is made more accessible and the compilation of a time-line so that the main events during the seven centuries covered by the book are all available on just over two pages. In addition, each of the six sections from 'An Early Welsh Town' to the very interesting and authoritative 'Georgian Ruthin' has its own 'research notes.' 'Georgian Ruthin' alone has references of 477 Notes!! Readers can now see where the new facts in 'History of Ruthin' came from and, if they wish, seek out the original document and judge for themselves whether it has been accurately dealt with. Readers can also see the many publications, which have included aspects of Ruthin's history especially in medieval times and which include eminent scholars among their authors.

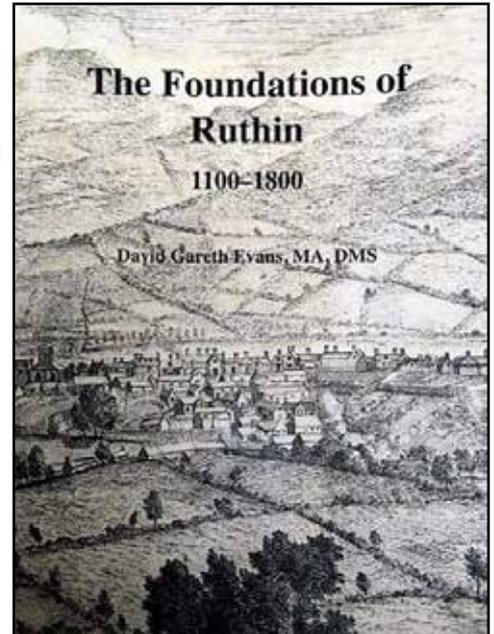
Eminent Historians who are referred to include Sir Ifor Williams, as far back as 1939 explained the derivation of the name Ruthin – which is contrary to the one often mentioned by other writers. You will be left to decide. Another, an eminent present day historian is extensively quoted on his work is Dr Matthew Stevens of Swansea on 'Ethnicity, Gender and Economy in Ruthin, 1282-1343'.

Fresh research has allowed the incorporation of sections on an Elizabethan tavern the oldest building description to survive in Ruthin from 1580; the first town hall dating from the early years of the seventeenth century; Christmas church services and most importantly, the North-nave roof of St Peter's where, in view of its importance, a special and very comprehensive appendix has been provided.

The evidence base also has additional text which allows a deeper knowledge of some historical areas. Principal among these are the boundaries of Little Park, the massive rise in parish rates through the eighteenth century, Georgian poor relief, an early eighteenth century political riot, eighteenth century travel and eighteenth century shops including a detailed walk with the valuers through Ruthin's largest shop.

Adding illustrations usually enhance any book of this nature. Due to the years covered by this work they will naturally be very few available. However we do have two very interesting ones- both dated 1826. The first entitled 'Medieval Ruthin' is an excellent one showing the east to west configuration of the early settlement and the second, showing more detail following the 'Georgian Ruthin' section certainly adds interest.

I venture to state that never before has there been such a deep seated study of the roots of Ruthin with such scholarly and readable detail, which will not only educate those of us with an interest in our locality but also



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to the more professional historians nationwide. This short review cannot possibly do the work justice – only your reading of it will do that.

Dare I ask what the author will discover for the post 1800 years and when will we see the follow up?

Strength in Numbers

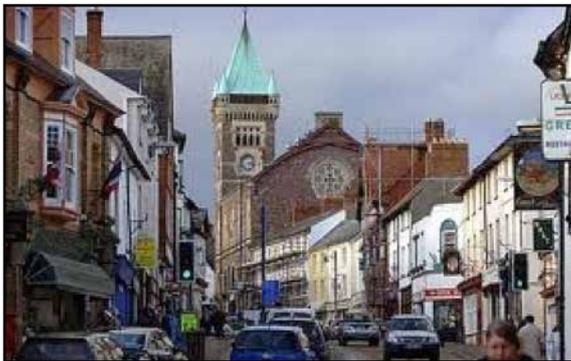
Derek Jones is concerned at the death of Civic Trust Cymru, but suggests that all may not yet be lost

Civic Trust Cymru (formerly known as the Civic Trust for Wales), to which Ruthin and District Civic Association was affiliated, closed its doors for the last time in early December.

First the bad news: Civic Trust Cymru (formerly known as the Civic Trust for Wales), to which Ruthin and District Civic Association was affiliated, closed its doors for the last time in early December. It seems that there was a serious problem with the pension fund, and that the trustees had no alternative.

I feel a particular concern at the news, because I was the vice chairman for the Civic Trust for Wales for several years, coupling that with the chairmanship of the Ruthin Association. The Welsh body was by no means perfect, but it did demonstrate, by its very existence, that civic societies could learn from each other, and that local groups need not be parochial, interested only in their own affairs. It was, after all, the Civic Trust for Wales which initiated Open Doors, now so widely practiced; Ruthin was one of its pioneers.

Doors will, I think, continue to open. They are now firmly part of local life all over Wales, and need only small amounts of public money, so long as enough people are ready to give time, energy and new ideas to this festival of townscape and buildings.



But there are wider senses of the word 'open', which I hope may be considered, both in Ruthin and elsewhere in Wales. Might Civic Societies be open to an extension of their aims now that all sorts of cultural organisations, public and private, are being threatened by lack of money? Think of the fate of Walsall a major town in the English West Midlands, which, following cuts, now has only one public library!

It couldn't happen in Wales with its strong tradition of reading, the arts, and continuing education – or could it? Are we open to offering support to any cultural organisation under this kind of threat, and might that be added to our constitution? I very much hope so. There is strength in

numbers.

Meanwhile, I gather, there was a meeting in Abergavenny on 11th March for those who wanted to resurrect Civic Trust Cymru, even if it may not be able to offer all that its predecessor did. As Town and Around went to press, I have no further information, but have a suggestion for an innovative way forward, based on my experience of writing for About Wales, the quarterly journal for the Civic Trust for Wales.

I undertook to visit civic trusts within reach to listen to their ideas and concerns and to write my assessment of the nature and character of the towns they served: Bangor, Colwyn Bay, Deeside, Denbigh, Holyhead, Llandudno, Mold, St Asaph and Wrexham. I still have these articles in my computer, and they have given rise to a new thought for the continuance of the idea of Civic Trust Cymru: a civic society of the equivalent of town twinning.

Ruthin is already twinned with Briec, I know. Long may that continue and extend itself, despite Brexit! But why not set up, perhaps at first informally, special relationships with a variety of other societies, some rural, some suburban, some major towns, to open our eyes to other places, cultures and problems. As a matter of fact, Abergavenny once invited me to speak to an open meeting on my impressions of their town and how similar or different it was to Ruthin. The speech went ahead, but neither of us followed it up. Perhaps now we could – and perhaps other civic societies might also find the idea of twinning of some interest.

But why not set up, perhaps at first informally, special relationships with a variety of other societies, some rural, some suburban, some major towns, to open our eyes to other places, cultures and problems

Planning - recent changes and how they affect us

Heather Williams reports

I recently attended an event where a presentation was given by Planning Aid Wales (PAW) - an organisation which supports community engagement with planning.

To achieve this it provides:-

- members of the public and community groups with information, advice or support on specific planning matters (a free helpline 02920 625000)
- training to local and community councils and also to local groups e.g. how the planning system works; how to respond to planning applications and Local Development Plans.
- help to planning authorities to engage with local communities

The presentation by PAW highlighted the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 which introduced some new features into the planning system.

National Planning Policy



Strategic Development Plans

(NEW – will only apply to areas of greater than local significance eg. A55 corridor. Issues covered could include transport infrastructure, housing provision)



Local Development Plans



Place Plans

(NEW –will be community led plan, based on what

the community want to see improved, promoted and enhanced)



Supplementary Planning Guidance

At present we have a Ruthin Town Plan (2012-2020) which was a plan produced by Denbighshire County Council following consultations with County Council Councillors and services, ward members, town/ community councils, businesses, schools and the wider community. <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/strategies-plans-and-policies/ruthin-town-and-area-plan-en-v6.pdf>

This plan had a wide range of actions proposed and target dates for completion. The last date for any action, however, is December 2017, so it is perhaps timely to review this plan in the context of the Welsh Government encouraging local planning authorities to work with communities to create Place Plans.

Another significant new feature is that now there is mandatory pre-application consultation for 'major' developments. 'Major' development includes 10 or more houses and development of a site of one hectare or more. Consultation will include owners/occupiers of land adjoining the application site and 'community' consultees. Copies of the draft planning application have to be available for public viewing. (Some of you may have noticed in the front entrance to Ruthin Library copies of proposed housing developments in surrounding villages eg. Llanbedr and Llanfair). At the end of the pre-consultation period, the developer also has to produce a consultation report which is submitted as part of the planning application.

Events and Diary dates for the coming months

First, on Wednesday, 19th April there will be a joint event with Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley at 7.00pm at Loggerheads Country Park meeting room – "Farming in NE Wales," by Gwyn Rowlands of Cadwyn Clwd.

Due to limited space please book places with Neville Howell, Friends Events Secretary - 01244 535173 or 07850 921295, nevjhow@gmail.com

We are anticipating holding an interesting evening with Angela Loftus on the subject of 'Housing' – look out for details..

Open Doors, 2017 for Ruthin Town will be 2nd and 3rd September and for Ruthin District it will be 9th and 10th September.

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

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

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