

Town & Around O Gwmpas y Dre

March 2022

Quarterly comment & features from the Ruthin & District Civic Association

Our Very Own National Park

Mike Skuse finds encouragement from potential changes afoot

I am sure that most readers will have heard that the Welsh Labour Party manifesto includes a promise that the existing Clwydian Range and Dee Valley (CRDV) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be promoted to become a national park.

Friends of the CRDV recently invited John Harold, who is the Director of the Snowdonia Society, to address them on his experiences working in Eryri.

After telling us how the (very successful) Snowdonia Society tries to keep an eye on everything going on in Eryri, how it works with volunteers and how it tries to do everything in partnership with other groups, he made two most important points.

First, in the Snowdonia National Park it has always been of paramount importance to put farming interests at the top of any landscape policy. After all, he said, farmers were, and are, largely responsible for the landscape we all want to protect, and their co-operation in any schemes to alter and enhance land use was vital, and their help essential. That comes before anything else.

He also made the interesting observation that there is immense prestige to be had from being a national park. Although both designations have equal protection, the truth is that everyone has heard of national parks, but

few know what the initials AONB even stand for! It is a great thing to belong to the UK-wide, European and indeed worldwide family of national parks. To rub shoulders with the Lake District, the Cairngorms, and even Yellowstone, on equal terms, and even to be able to share their conservation knowledge, would be a great thing.



Both designations have equal protection in matters of conservation, but national parks also have a specific duty to promote 'public understanding and enjoyment', in other words to promote leisure activities like walking, cycling, fishing, climbing, sight-seeing, holidaying, tourism, and so on.

This might ring a few alarm bells, but there is a delightful caveat called the Sandford Principle. This states that if there is a conflict between preserving

natural beauty and promoting public enjoyment, priority must be given to the former. I'm not sure who Sandford was, but what a super way to be remembered.

This Labour Party manifesto from Cardiff comes at a time of some radical changes in the way Wales is managed. The document 'Future Wales: the National Plan 2040' seems to divide the country into places where development is encouraged and places where it is not. I suppose it's always been like this but the difference now seems more defined. Do look at it, and see how chunks of land are divided up. It's easy to find online. And important schemes are now called 'Developments of National Significance' and are 'pre-assessed' for suitability by officials in Cardiff rather than being decided by local planning authorities.

If something of 'national significance' is needed in North Wales, let's say an enormous structure to look for enemy rockets and to launch anti-missile weapons, who would get it? The national park or the AONB? The highest designation, or the second best? I think the more protection our hills and valleys get, the better.

As far as planning in our AONB is

Continued on page 7

Small Artefact Big History

Our Chair Anne Roberts writes on the Civic Association's project to restore one of Ruthin's historic artefacts

We've seen it deteriorate for a long time but it all started in earnest in 2019, when a member of the public contacted us to see if there was anything we could do to save the Craft Centre crane. As the last

tangible reminder of the railway, he felt this was a project worth pursuing.

As memories of our railway connection fade, we're glad he wrote in.

Indeed, we weren't alone in raising concerns over the worsening condition of the town's historical artefact, now in the grounds of Ruthin Craft Centre. The crane is a reminder of the town's railway heritage, which in truth is not in the too distant past. Many older residents still remember a time when it was possible to catch a train in Ruthin to the four corners of the UK—well, to Rhyl, Denbigh and Corwen, where you could change trains for the outside world.



Philip Hughes, Ruthin Craft Centre Director; Fiona Gale, Project Co-ordinator; Anne Roberts, RADCA; and Huw Jones, Jones Bros

It is believed that the Crane was used

Continued on page 4

Hope for the High Street

In the same way we rely on farmers to look after our countryside, businesses in town are at the front line of keeping our townscape special.

You certainly sense that the town traders of Ruthin feel that they are at a turning point. In spite of a welcome increase in 2021 summer visitors, this was insufficient to tide shops over into the winter. Longer term, footfall in Ruthin as elsewhere is falling. Traders feel on the precipice.

Something has to be done. But what exactly?

A series of January and February

Council has been instrumental in orienting, with pedestrian signage and in opening The Old Courthouse as a staffed hub.

Fundamental to the town's success continues to be the support of its residents, though. We've said on many occasions that if we value our traders we must use them. We cannot totally rely on tourists. Visitor numbers probably reached a peak in the summer of 2021. This, more will again travel abroad.

In June 2019, we revealed that Ruthin meets only four per cent of our comparison good shopping (i.e. non-grocery). More people from Ruthin buy comparison goods in Rhyl than here in town.

Fuel and general inflationary pressures will have an influence. As Mike Skuse puts it in our lead article, 'By and large, motoring in the future is likely to be short distance' and this might both help and hinder Ruthin. Will Liverpoolians choose Ruthin over longer-distance destinations? Or will they no longer travel here to the same extent?

With this in mind, we need to squeeze out every last opportunity to safeguard our town. Empty shops quickly become eyesores. The role of businesses in protecting our town cannot now be underestimated.

Three Pillars

Successful towns need a comprehensive offer in order to attract and retain visitors.

1. Attractions

These we have in abundance. The Old Gaol will re-open this coming season. There's Nantclwyd y Dre and the Art Trail. We trust opening days & hours will be favourable. We are blessed with Civic Association green plaques around town. And all this is not even mentioning the Craft Centre and the AONB on our doorstep.

2. Townscape

The Square is probably the best street-scape in North East Wales and one of the best in Wales, plus we have Castle Street as views to green hills from Market Street, Clwyd Street and Well Street all dip down from the Square. There are plenty of other buildings of note. We need to ensure that once-in-a-generation Levelling Up fully enhances the Square to its fullest potential & the opportunity not wasted.

3. Service Offer

This is where we need care. A range of independent shops is our strength. Do we support them sufficiently? Are they robust enough? Is the choice right? Is the offer of sufficient quality? Does the right hospitality add to the visitor experience to ensure people stay for the day or longer?

Peers Memorial Update: plans now ready

After almost a year of activity, the plans to restore the Peers Memorial & Town Clock on the Square are now finalised.

As many people are now aware, the town clock was built in 1883 as a memorial to Joseph Peers, a local man who in the mid-19th century was Clerk of the Peace in Denbighshire for over 50 years. It was designed by the prominent Chester architect John Douglas and is now registered with Cadw as a Grade II listed structure. The clock restoration committee has had plans approved by the clock's owner, Denbighshire County Council, and we are now making preparations for funding applications to various sources to get the work done. We have come a long way since February 2021 when the project started, following repeated concerns raised about the condition of the memorial.

The last year has been interesting to say the least. First, the committee of local volunteers was formed, each member with a different expertise, brought together with the sole aim of restoring the structure. Then we had confirmation by Denbighshire County Council of ownership, after many years of doubt, followed by securing the funds for the first part of the project.

That funding came from the Clocaenog Windfarm Fund, Denbighshire County Council and Ruthin Town Council and enabled the group in May 2021 to appointment a conservation architect, Elinor Gray Williams. She then proceeded to make the plans (aided by a flying drone) to study the clock structure and its defects in detail, preparing a schedule of works as well as getting the restoration plans fully analysed and costed.

Then came the community exhibition in The Old Courthouse and Town Library in September 2021, which showed the draft plans to local residents, as well as information about the memorial's history. As a committee, we were fortunate to have a good group of volunteers to staff



Brian Williams

The previous overhaul of the clock mechanism was in 1993, seen here



Some of the previous Ruthin Marketing Group's material from 2006-2010

trader meetings has developed into a plan. Businesses themselves seem to be taking control of their own destiny. For the first time in over five years, we now have a reconstituted Ruthin tourist and marketing group, known by the phrase Bro Rhuthun. Much of the infrastructure for the group is already in place, if dormant. Bro Rhuthun enjoyed a good relationship with the County Council.

We're promised some easily achievable successes for the coming season, in an effort to promote Ruthin within our traditional visitor catchments. We're promised some very swift decisions and actions. As a result, some of January's pessimism has reversed.

The soon-to-be-apparent efforts of Bro Rhuthun will sit comfortably alongside the work of our councils. It will connect but not compete.

Denbighshire has successfully introduced its 'Ambassador' scheme and regionally promotes North East Wales as a package.

For those who arrive, the Town

the exhibition and gained some really valuable feedback about the plans. Through the people who attended the exhibition, we received a range of old photos of the memorial and the Square, more facts about Joseph Peers, as well being able to locate the clock's old manually wound mechanism (the clock mechanism was electrified in 2012). A fun part was the art competition with amazing drawings of the clock made by local primary school children. The quality of the submissions was incredibly high.

It has been clear from the outset that the clock's stonework had only had limited maintenance. The proposals include the clock's stonework being meticulously treated and repaired, and its electrical supply upgraded to modern standards. The clock's water features will not be restored, since there is no source of mains water inside the clock and there are issues concerning the structure and safety that influenced the decision e.g. legionnaire's disease, owing to standing water.

The committee therefore took the decision to place a wooden bench on the front water trough of the clock. Many people sit on the trough as it is, all year round. Except for this one small alteration, every other element of the work is like-for-like, only repairing areas that have eroded or decayed over time. Stone replacement will be an absolute last resort (and only then with an identically coloured stone), with a variety of methods deployed before then. Owing to this approach, it is expected that the restoration work is unlikely to require listed building consent.

We have tried as a committee to keep the local community informed at every step, with our primary aim to restore the tower as close as possible to its original condition. We are currently in contact with officers at Denbighshire County Council preparing the town's funding bid for the Levelling Up fund, hoping this will provide the capital funds needed to restore the memorial. Hopefully, we can get the work done and give the clock a few more decades in good condition at its prominent location on our town Square.

Use 1883cloc.k@gmail.com (sic) to reach the Peers Memorial Committee.



RADCA Chair and treasurer of the restoration committee, and Fiona Gale

Progress at the Castle

Fiona Gale reports on the survey and repair work starting at the mediæval gatehouse of Ruthin Castle

Most people think of Ruthin Castle Hotel when thinking of Ruthin Castle but, in fact, there are extensive remains of the Castle that were built in the late thirteenth century during Edward I's campaigns into Wales. The site was initially granted to Dafydd, prince of the royal house of Gwynedd, for the purpose of building a defensive stronghold for the English king. But In 1282, Dafydd attacked Edward's troops and thereafter the site was given to the English nobleman Reginald de Grey. He constructed a strong castle here, with a defended town to keep order in the area, and the mighty, twin-towered gatehouse was built as the main entrance.



Mediæval Ruthin Castle, of which much remains, was last used as a military site when Royalist troops held out against the Parliamentarians during the Civil War in the middle of the 17th century. After that conflict was over, the defensive walls and internal buildings were abandoned and fell into disrepair, probably becoming a handy quarry for building stone used throughout Ruthin.

It wasn't until the early nineteenth century, when Harriet Myddleton of Chirk Castle inherited Ruthin Castle that the mansion house was built within the ruins. This was further extended and altered in the 1850s by her nephew Frederick West and fashionable picturesque gardens were laid out within the encircling mediæval walls. It is this mansion house which is now the hotel.

Now, nearly 200 years later, those picturesque ruins are in a perilous state. In 2016 Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust was set up in order to bring about the conservation of these extensive

mediæval remains. In 2017/18, some emergency holding repairs were undertaken on areas of the defensive walls and now, for the first time, work is taking place to record and reconsolidate part of the remains of this magnificent site. It is so exciting to see this work start at the Castle because mediæval Ruthin Castle is so important in the history of North East Wales, recognised as nationally important as a scheduled ancient monument and at last we are starting the process of repair, so that it will be in good order well into the future.

This first phase of work in 2022 involves the careful removal of vegetation from the walls of the gatehouse by an expert company and then this is followed by a complete laser survey of the Gatehouse structure. It is only after this has taken place that reconsolidation and repair of the fragile masonry can begin. Work is funded by Cadw, part of Welsh Government, and without this help no progress could be made.

As of the beginning of February, the vegetation has been cleared from the Mediæval Gatehouse and the full laser survey will have begun by the time Town and Around is printed. It is hoped that specialist contractors will be able to be back on site in March/April to begin to 'stick the ruins back together again'. When that is taking place, the Castle Conservation Trust will be organising some open days and perhaps members of the Civic Association would like appreciate a tour. Already, just by taking out the vegetation, it is possible to see more of the building, to understand that more of the mediæval remains survive than we first thought but also to understand that in the Victorian period parts of the above ground sections of the gatehouse were roofed and plastered. Did someone live in here? We hope that by doing this necessary work we will find out much more about Ruthin Castle and understand it much better.

At all stages, archæologists and ecologists are watching the work to ensure that no damage or disturbance results and everything is recorded for posterity.

Fiona Gale is Chair of the Ruthin Castle Conservation Trust



The vegetation- and ivy-clad structure before and, above, after the gatehouse was stripped

for decades to load and unload coal at Ruthin railway station, which of course was located till the mid-1960s on the site of Old Station Yard Roundabout by the Craft Centre. It was a stop on the Vale of Clwyd line, which ran from Corwen to Rhyl. The line originally went under Well Street, past Railway Terrace, and then through what is now the industrial estate towards Denbigh. The station and line closed under the 'Reshaping of British Railways' report, one of two by Richard Beeching.

The Crane was put in storage by Denbighshire County Council, but then placed in its current position when the Craft Centre was first built in 1982.

The main problem in the past with any restoration works to the crane was the question of the structure's ownership. Readers will recall this vexed question, in previous Town and Arounds. This has now been confirmed without any doubt. Denbighshire County Council own the crane and have accepted liability in full in writing.

With this issue now resolved, the Civic Association in partnership with Phillip Hughes, the Director at Ruthin Craft Centre, plans a project that will restore the crane and share Ruthin's railway history through a series of community events and activities in 2022.

It has been agreed that the crane's metal work needs sandblasting, welding and repainting, with the wooden boom treated and given a protective layer of paint. The plinth on which the crane stands needs to be re-done, with a new slate cover planned, and there will be a nearby interpretation panel detailing the crane and railway's history in Ruthin. We hope that there will be a series of historical lectures, workshops, activities in local schools and a display at The Old Courthouse as part of the project, to engage with the local community. We also hope to have Zoom sessions open to



Brian Williams

all, to share memories of the railway in Ruthin, with a digital community history book then produced with the history and memories of the railway.

The Civic Association is delighted to have appointed Fiona Gale as project co-ordinator, who will organise the restoration works and the community engagement element and we want as many people from the local community as possible to get involved.

It is hoped the work to the crane will be carried out this spring and summer, alongside the community events and activities which will be publicised widely. This is rather timely, since it is exactly 160 years since the Vale of Clwyd Line was connected to the North Wales Coast Line and 60 years since the line closed to passenger traffic.

The project has already secured funding from various sources. The main funder is the Fifteen Minute Heritage Grants Scheme from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, financed by Cadw and the

Welsh Government's historic environment service, with funding contributions from Ruthin Town Council and Denbighshire Leisure Ltd (who operate Ruthin Craft Centre). Town councillors were effusive in their support. In addition, the project has received a very generous donation of £2,000 from local civil engineering firm Jones Bros. Such support from a company known throughout Wales and the UK for excellence is truly appreciated, and its current Chairman Huw Jones MBE has a personal connection through the company with the site, since Jones Bros cleared the railway buildings and yard in the late 1960s following the railway's closure.

The project will conserve the railway crane for future generations, while the community engagement element will remind the town of its railway past.

The railway had a lasting impact on the town's development and layout, and it's about time this rich heritage is remembered.

A New Town Council

On May 5th, we shall be asked to lend our votes to candidates for the County, Town and Community Council elections—subject to there being a contest.

The current Town Council was returned unopposed in 2017: there was no election, as there were 15 candidates for 15 seats.

It's also fair to say that of all the Town Councils, that between 2017 & 2022 has seen the most torrid of times. It's no coincidence this has occurred alongside the 'maturity' of social media. The Town Council has struggled to defend its position. There's been criticism, often unjustly, sometimes verging on the unacceptable, towards individuals who are, after all, volunteers.

Since 2020, meetings have moved online. These attract more observers than the one or two who previously turned up in person. This gives more of us an opportunity to make informed decisions

based on councillors' performances. It also results in more inappropriateness.

Most recently, the electorate has requested a by-election for the latest vacant seat, rather than the usual co-opted councillor. The by-election was in April 2021, with six candidates for two seats. Each by-election, however, costs some £6,000.

Previously, three of the 15 had been co-opted and a total we think of seven had never actually been elected at all.

Does all this point to a greater interest and translate into a contest, this spring? We would certainly hope so, because isn't a contest the lifeblood of our democracy?

The last full election in May 2012 saw 18 candidates for the 15 seats. Six are still with us on the 2017-2022 Town Council.

The 2017-2022 Town Council has achieved much. 'Ruthin Future' events,



new pedestrian signage and tree planting come to mind. It has set the seeds for a velodrome. Above all, they have delivered a major project to safeguard, convert & open The Old Courthouse.

All this is above & beyond what the average town might expect of its council. Ours exceeded the business as usual of hanging baskets & Christmas lights. For the next Town Council, we need a choice of candidates that can develop this further. Time to put up.

~~Omicron~~ Coronavirus Chronicles Part 8

As pandemic may just be changing to endemic, dare we suggest that this is the last entry in our 'Coronavirus Chronicles' series—at least till the next variant?

November 9th was the day of the first reports of the omicron variant of SARS-Cov-2. Just 18 days later and it was reported for the first time in the UK.

Meanwhile, on December 9th, Ysgol Brynhyfryd closed for the afternoon, as a member of the catering staff tested positive for covid-19. All caterers had to go home pending tests.

The first omicron case reported in Wales was on December 10th. The Welsh Government moved to weekly reviews, rather than every three weeks.

Two days later, and the UK Prime Minister declared an omicron emergency. 15 cases were now reported in Wales.

There was by now a general return to

the March 2020 sense of our own vulnerability & unease, as the nation considered whether Christmas 2021 would follow that of 2020 and be cancelled. Ruthin had tended to comply with face covering regulations but there were nevertheless fewer people now without them. There was a feeling that we had been here before and we wondered how much of this we could take.

December 13th saw the first reported case of omicron in Denbighshire. This was the day that the UK reported its first omicron-related death.

As Wales was asked to test before making contact with others, also on December 13th, Boot's the Chemist temporarily ran out of lateral flow test kits.

On December 14th, Wales' Health Minister stated 'nothing is off the table'. The following day, people who had covid-19 would already have their Christmases spoilt, owing to self-isolation rules.

December 15th and in response to pleas to be triple vaccinated, queues formed outside the Well Street Pharmacy and Boot's for those eager to receive their booster jab.

Cases continued to climb sharply with the R number for omicron now at 3-5.

December 16th and Frank Atherton was back explaining that we needed to consider our priorities as Christmas approached: family or social contacts.

On December 20th, Betsi Cadwaladr announced it was cancelling all outpatient clinics, to concentrate on the vaccine roll out. New restrictions were now 'inevitable', the First Minister said the following day.

Christmas Day and the pop-up testing centre at County Hall was busy. On 25th, it opened in the morning only (as it also did on Boxing Day and New Year's Day).

December 26th and hospitality and the number of people permitted to gather moved to alert level two. Large events were stopped, with a maximum of 30 indoors and 500 outdoors. Singing in chapels and churches again ceased. Pubs and cafés reintroduced table service, contact tracing, masks in common areas and 'the rule of six'. The 2m rule was again required throughout



and not simply as guidance. All sporting fixtures were now to take place behind closed doors. Working from home, where possible, was now mandatory.

Welsh Government rules resulted in Ruthin Town Football Club suspended all matches (see left).

January 15th and Wales had reduced to alert level zero and outdoor events could now accommodate up to 500 and this restriction was lifted a week later, on January 22nd.

Also on 15th, indoor hospitality returned to pre-Boxing Day conditions.

All remainder Boxing Day limits were lifted on January 28th. Working from home was now simply advisable.

February 28th, and masks were mandatory only in shops, on public transport and in health & care settings. Individual schools themselves determined whether masks were required.



Ruthin Town FC and Omicron Restrictions

Ruthin Town FC played its last 'pre-omicron restriction' game at home on the December 18th, *writes Alan Jones, Chairman of Ruthin Town Football Club*. This was a decisive 4-2 victory over Colwyn Bay, in front of a crowd of almost 400. As a result, Ruthin moved to fourth in the JD Cymru North table.

The next scheduled home game was to be December 27th, against Buckley Town. Matches held immediately after Christmas are traditionally played alongside one of the team's nearest local rivals (e.g. Denbigh or Corwen, before both were relegated). It draws the biggest crowd of the season.

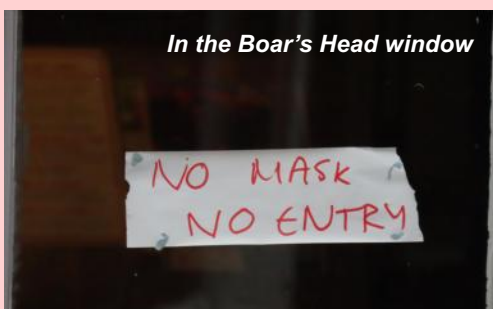
As the Welsh Government rules from Boxing Day dictated that matches had to be played behind closed doors, the teams in Ruthin's league decided to suspend football until this restriction was eased. This was because clubs could not afford to host matches without the gate income to offset match overheads that would still need to be met.

Ruthin Town FC estimates the club lost approx. £1,500 to £1,750 by not being able to host the 27th match.

Spectators were allowed to return on January 22nd but the match day income was greatly reduced, as the restrictions with regard to table service and social distancing in the clubhouse were still in force.

Details of support for grass root sports as provisionally announced by Welsh Government are awaited.

In the Boar's Head window



Seasonal Hospitality

Pub trade on Black Friday (December 17th) was as busy as an ordinary pre-virus Friday, without the usual seasonal packed-to-bursting levels. Numbers tailed off markedly by the end of the night. Most people were sensible.

New Year's Eve and most pubs could be said to be 'comfortable' in terms of numbers, with full tables but little crowding in common areas.

A mild 14°C saw people sat outside, where space was available.

The streets were quiet till about 11.50 p.m. The cut down gathering on the Square was smaller than usual and dominated by teenagers, few of whom were wearing masks in pubs, claiming mass exemptions.

This year, the Ruthin Castle restarted its 10 minutes' worth of fireworks, at midnight.

A Glance into the Future of Housing

by Peter Daniels

It's understandable that many people in Ruthin will have preconceptions about the new affordable housing under construction since March 2021 adjacent to the new Glasdir primary schools. For one thing, near neighbours didn't want it. This is an understandable and almost universal reaction. For another, the town felt that it already had enough new housing, thanks to Taylor Wimpey next door. And, in some eyes, being 'affordable', as these are, translated as somewhat akin to Pete Seeger's 1963 song referring to 'little boxes made of ticky-tacky'.

Any visit to the building site will shake off these notions.

Builders Williams Homes (Bala) Ltd specialises in construction for the affordable sector. They work across north and mid Wales for all major housing associations. The Ruthin build is on behalf of client Clwyd Alyn.

Williams builds timber-framed properties. These not only rival their market housing counterparts but it would now seem exceed that which is available new on the open market.

Take running costs. Next month, we are all likely to see utility bills rocket and fuel

poverty rise. Williams's commercial director, Tony Hughes, explains that the site's fortunate tenants will enjoy homes designed to be nett zero in use. High wood fibre insulation and triple glazing result in low air loss. Flush with the roof photovoltaic panels for each unit minimise the pull from the electricity grid and store excess electricity in batteries for later use. Air source heat pumps are a given, of course, but to a more advanced higher temperature design than currently the norm. Each home will have a built-in, ready to use electric vehicle charging point. Footpaths connect to the existing active travel routes to town and elsewhere.

Garden sizes are a generous 430 sq

ft and, by today's rather hemmed-in standard, distances between blocks are ample. This allows more generous gardens than for like-for-like market housing, giving occupiers if they chose a further environmentally sound opportunity to grow their own food. Even the roads within the estate will be completed to more generous (i.e. wider) adoptable standards, something that was not part of the Taylor Wimpey estate design. Indeed, working with Lôn Parcwr's Lewis & Hunter, the site roads will in part replace fossil fuels in tarmac with recycled single-use plastics.

The modular timber framed approach

means the units are advancing rapidly. Many of us will raise an eyebrow at this type of construction and the speed of build. Surely, such methods are inferior to the more familiar brick construction with which we are more comfortable. We're told that the homes will last as long as traditional ones. Apparently, there are timber-

framed homes in Scandinavian between 300 and 400 years old. The silicon-based rendering is particular hard-wearing. Above all, the construction as well as use is design to be carbon nett zero.

Timber, apparently, is a good building product. It's efficient and above all sustainable. Williams is using Welsh timber otherwise grown for low grade uses. This supports the national economy and reduces freight from northern Europe.

The initial planning application sought permission for 77 homes. The designs were similar to the recently completed 38-unit Clwyd Alyn/Williams Homes estate at Llanbedr. Stuart Hughes, project

development manager for Clwyd Alyn explained that the planning committee rejected the develop, because it was out of character locally and some units were too close to the new schools. Consequently, the site was thinned to 63. Importantly, there was a change of design and it's fair to say that, once the hoardings are removed, the stone faced and rendered homes will have a real presence.

Community benefits include a proportion of



locally recruits within the 70-strong workforce and targeted training. There is an apprenticeship scheme, including a local apprentice working towards his HNC by day release. Williams has recently supported Ruthin Town Youth FC.

You cannot consider housing at Glasdir without mentioning flooding. The site is said to be able to withstand a one in 1,000 year event, something that next door required post-construction mitigation to achieve, following the floods 10 years ago.

Williams has constructed below-ground attenuation reservoirs that if needed will gradually release excess water back into the river system. These are complemented by a series of above-ground swales or valley-like depressions that can progressively fill as required. The site's paving is permeable. Modelling means Williams is highly confident that the site can fare better than the adjacent Taylor Wimpey development.

Credentials

Glasdir secured funding from the Welsh Government's Innovate Housing Programme. This has enabled Clwyd Alyn and Williams Homes to exceed established standards, embrace new technology and to build ultra-low carbon homes for residents. Projects like this play an important role in reducing fuel poverty, while helping employment opportunities to support the local economy. The housing will contribute to the Welsh Government's 2050 target for zero carbon homes.

Who will these homes be for?

The homes when released are likely to be for rent.

Clwyd Alyn will offer the homes to people on the single access route to housing register and tai teg (affordable homes register), who live and work in the area. This is not to say that others may be excluded. Someone on the register may, for example, have a connection with the area (e.g. grown up children, moving back to the area to offer family support).



Ruthin's Most Famous Family

While many know of William and Patsy, Colin Edwards considers one of their children, who married into royalty

The story of the Cornwallis-Wests of Ruthin Castle has always fascinated me. When I visit the Castle, I try to imagine what their life must have been like, back in the Victorian and Edwardian eras.

I shall begin this story in 1827, when Frederick Richard had married Theresa Cornwallis Whitby. They had a son, William, born in 1835, who married Mary,



(known as Patsy) Fitzpatrick, daughter of the Revd Frederick and Olivia.

William and Patsy married in 1872. He was 37 and she 17, a 20 year age gap. The wonderful portrait of her, which hangs in the Castle, was painted at about the time of their marriage.

They had three children, Daisy born in 1873, George in 1874 and Shelagh in 1878. The lives of the three siblings were eventful, full of happiness and sadness.

In 1891, at the age of 18, Daisy married Hans Heinrich, the wealthy heir to the Prince of Pless in Silesia in central Europe. Daisy's mother Patsy was very manipulative and was determined that her daughters married very wealthy young men.

Daisy and Hans were married at St Margaret's, Westminster, on December 8th, 1891, spent their honeymoon in Paris, before arriving in Pless. The marriage was not entirely happy, as Daisy found the German aristocratic life very different from the British equivalent. She did not have a particularly warm relationship with her new relatives, with the exception of her father-in-law and also with Kaiser Wilhelm.

In due course, Daisy became extremely popular for her charity work. Her personal life, however, continued to be unhappy. Edward, prince of Wales, known as Bertie, who was still involved in an affair with Patsy (he often visited Ruthin Castle!) attempted to help Daisy to settle in to her new life by asking his

sister, Victoria, the Dowager Empress of Prussia, to befriend Daisy.

Daisy and Hans had three sons, Hans Heinrich in 1900, Alexander in 1905 and Bolko in 1910. Bolko who suffered from ill health throughout his life and died aged 26 in 1936.

Daisy's life was traumatic and very sad. She experienced many personal problems. She and Hans were divorced in 1923, after 32 years of a difficult marriage. She spent the remaining 28 years of her life ill and cared for by devoted friend Dolly Crowther. During the late 1930s, Daisy was almost totally paralysed, suffering from the cruel progressive disease multiple sclerosis. She died in July 1943, aged 70 and was buried in the family tomb at Fürstenstein.

At the end of the war, the tomb was stripped by vandals for valuable. The local people took her body and reburied it where Daisy had always wanted, among the trees and flowers of the local fields.

The beautiful Daisy who had lived through times which took her from the highest echelons of society to poverty and illness in her later years, finally rested in peace.

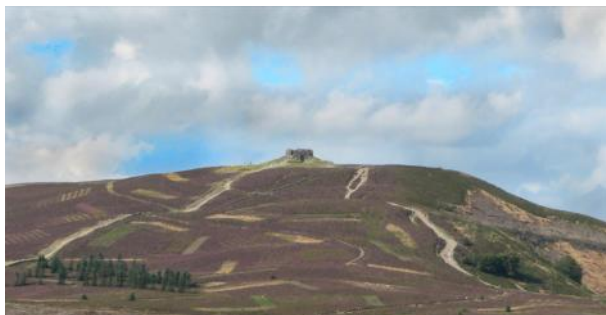
To be continued

Readers may be interested to know that Colin Edwards will hold an exhibition of over 100 of his photos as a tribute to the queen's platinum jubilee in St Peters June 6th-18th

National Park, from p1

concerned, applications for development, except those mentioned above, are decided by the planning committees in the three local authorities which have land within the AONB, namely Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. This is really not the best way to do it. National parks have formally appointed authorities which look after the management of their parks including deciding planning applications themselves. A clearly better arrangement, I believe.

At our meeting, questions were asked about increased pressure from visitors, especially at places that are already often under pressure, like the Iron Gate car park at Pen Barras, and the car park overlooking the Horseshoe Falls near Llangollen. Harold's general feeling, however, was that while local people from Wrexham, Mold, Buckley, Chester, Birkenhead would continue to visit our locality, people from farther away would not often make a special trip here, but would continue to take their leisure and pursue their activities in places they know, i.e. the Lakes, the Peak District



and, of course, Snowdonia. By and large, motoring in the future is likely to be short distance, and this may lead to less pressure on 'honeypot' sites here and elsewhere.

I have not mentioned the important subject of funding. National parks are funded in Wales directly by the Welsh Government and are very generous compared with funds available to the AONBs. Cardiff understands the prestige of a national park. The AONB staff here

are always hard up for money and I think there is little doubt that money would become less of a problem with a promotion in our title.

We are at the early stages of a very long conversation about this. It is the most important thing to have happened since our AONB was designated in 1985. There will be public consultations, various interest groups will be consulted and there will surely be arguments along the way.

Our little society, Friends of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley, hopes to take a leading part in all these discussions, and we certainly hope that we might be invited to work with, and

draw inspiration from, the members of RADCA and other local groups as we move slowly ahead towards the promised manifesto decision.

On the Other Hand...

RADCA supports the formation of a national park but there will nevertheless be some concerns.

Honeypots will continue to bare the brunt of soil erosion and damage to vegetation; and will likely see increases in traffic. These are all currently well managed, but what of the future? Visitors and benefits need to be spread over a much wider area, including to Ruthin and district.

The current AONB would probably be too small to be efficient and may therefore expand to include Hiraethog and parts of Conwy and other parts of Wrexham. Incorporating Hiraethog would be seen to be an advantage.

None of the current AONB has significant industrial or commercial development but any new such development would be difficult in the future.

House prices in a national park could increase at a greater rate than in areas outside of it. There is a possibility that a national park will become associated with second homes.

Two Questions

Library Signage

Appeared late December outside the library was new signage, advising that the parking bays were reserved for library-using disabled drivers or their passengers. Fair enough, we say. What did surprise us was the nature and size of the signs in front of one of Ruthin's finest and most distinguished buildings, accorded Grade II* listed status in 1950.

The library, of course, was the building that housed public records and the assizes court. Attractively set back from Record Street, 'Slow Walks' suggests it was constructed in 1785, with its handsome portico added in the 1860s.



We questioned the size and even colour of the signage, wondering whether something a little more in-keeping with the frontage might be better. Indeed, did they need to be so brash, given that the parking spaces are on private ground, rather than directly on the highway. We thought gold on black might've been more harmonious, no higher than the lip of the stonework.

A County Council spokeswoman commented that the signs 'are designed to be clear and visible to all who would be using the public building. The height of the signs is set so they are visible through both the front windscreen and rear window of a vehicle which may be reversing into the parking bay.'

We're nevertheless pleased to report that in mid-February the signage was removed pending listed building consent.

Brynhyfryd Lodge



On the other hand, we received no response from the County Council on the state of the lodge at the entrance to Ysgol Brynhyfryd. This of course may be because it is the school's rather than the County Council's responsibility.

Two years ago, we were pleased to see work start on the lodge in an effort to tidy up this once run down building that motorists would see as they entered the town.

This winter, though, the repairs have been somewhat undone, we assume by storm damage.

Castle Street Plan

There is a current planning application for a detached dwelling off Castle Street on the sensitive site next to The Lord's Garden, Nantclwyd y Dre.

The Civic Association's view is that this patch of land to the rear of the former Conservative Club needs significant tidying up. Even the planning application calls the old tennis court and former bowling green 'somewhat of an eyesore'. We view the plot as a suitable one for development, provided that it is sympathetic to Nantclwyd y Dre and is of no detriment to the view from The Lord's Garden gazebo.

Planning permission when previously sought in 2019 for the three-storey dwelling (right) was completely out of scale with regard to The Lord's Garden. It was refused, including upon appeal.



The current proposal reduces the roofline slope significantly to something more in-keeping with its surroundings and is not expected to rise significantly above The Lord's Garden wall. If so, the Civic



Association would be content to see the development improve the parcel of land.

The Civic Association still needs someone who can consider and comment upon local planning applications. An interest in such matters is an advantage. Contact the Secretary (see p12)

Book Review: On Badon Field

It's not every day you find a novel featuring Ruthin. The idea was appealing. Within, you have a snapshot of 1985 Ruthin life from a young person's perspective that may resonate with an older demographic who will remember life back then. That young person is an upper sixth former at Ysgol Brynhyfryd ('the local comp'). There were multiple references to shops current and lost, streets and busy pubs of its time. There were bobbies on the beat. Even the 'pointy houses' of Maes Cantaba get a mention. The author made it easy and enjoyable to relive in your mind's eye walking around Ruthin as it was 40 years ago, 'an architect's paradise, a complete mix of styles and periods' just as it is now.

The main protagonist is 18 year old Tim, who, it seems, is based on real life Martin Kaye's experiences and his love of archaeology. Kaye's parents were either pliable enough or daft enough or just disinterested enough to permit Kaye to dig an archaeological trench on their Ruthin back lawn.



Kaye found nothing other than oyster shells on bedrock. In the novel, Tim does the same.

More importantly, Tim also finds an intriguing, carved stone at a nearby tumulus and thus begins the story in both 1985 and against the backdrop of an advancing 6th century army of Angles & Saxons threatening Pax Romana in Ruhtin and its warrior, Arth. Kaye uses the evidence of Edmund Waddelove's excavations some years later, even though the 1985 characters would not yet have known of this. Kaye includes a picture of a Romano-British settlement of 'a small hamlet of people eking out an existence from the ruins of an old auxiliary fort'.

Most of the action takes place in 1985 Ruthin but what I also liked was the intertwining of 6th century Britannica with the present. Popular writers of historical fiction such as Ken Follett and Robert Harris tend to concentrate on eras or events for which their researchers have access to much source material; for Kaye, the 6th century yields very little of that. Kaye freely

admits his novel is 'a flight of complete fantasy' but so is most fiction. What he writes is just pure reverie but what if it were true. What if historically significant Badon Field really were in Ruthin?

There are some loose ends, such as events along a footpath (Bryn Glas?) and the girl Philomena. Perhaps these'll be explained in a second volume. The finale and postscript both offer some surprises.

It says more about me than the author when I say that I sometimes struggled to follow the thread of the 6th century storyline. It isn't immediately clear that the 1985 characters were reincarnated versions of those in the 6th century. That, I think, is something the author intends and, as the story develops, this becomes clearer. My suggestion before taking on the book would be to skip to the appendix at the rear and read the first page of it and this clears up any misunderstanding between past and present personæ.

Published 2021 by the Baboon Press in paperback at £8.99. At the time of writing, available on Amazon Kindle at £3.32. Also available on loan from Ruthin library. 259 pp.

KD

Mae Jim Bryan yn gobeithio am amseroedd gwell yn 2022 a gŵyl gyntaf y dref ers 2019

Dyma ni rwan yn 2022. Yn dilyn gaeaf o fwy o gyfyngiadau a twf enfawr yn yr amrywiolyn Omicron, dwi yn meddwl fod pawb yn gobeithio am well 2022. Gyda gwyl y dref wedi ei gohirio yn 2020 a 2021, mae pwyllgor gwirfoddol yr ŵyl yn edrych ymlaen yn fawr i gynnal yr wythnos arferol o ddigwyddiadau yn 2022. Bydd wythnos yr ŵyl gobeithio yn rhedeg o'r 25ain o Fehefin tan y 3ydd o Orffennaf, gyda'r digwyddiad Top Dre poblogaidd yn cael ei gynllunio ar gyfer Dydd Sadwrn yr 2il o Orffennaf. Tra rydym bellach yn gobeithio fod y gwaethaf o Covid y tu ôl i ni, mae trefnu digwyddiad misoedd o flaen llaw yn sialens i ddweud y lleiaf heb y gallu i ragweld y dyfodol. Mae'r cwestiwn mawr dal yn bodoli fel flwyddyn diwethaf a'r flwyddyn cynt, pryd ddylem ni wneud penderfyniad i yrru ymlaen neu ohirio? Be fyddai y prif ffactorau yn ein harwain? Dyma rai ohonynt.

Dim ond 12 ohonom sydd ar bwyllgor yr ŵyl, a tra mae gennym dîm hynod o ffyddlon ac ymroddgar o wirfoddolwyr o wahanol sefydliadau, mae yna ffactorau i'w cysidro o ran y digwyddiad Top Dre yn unig. Mewn lle cyhoeddus fel Sgwar San Pedr gyda ei wahanol fynedfeydd/allfeydd, byddai sicrhau fod pawb sy'n myned y digwyddiad efo tystiolaeth o bigiad dwbl a/neu tystiolaeth o brawf llif ochrol negatiff yn dasg enfawr. Yn y gobaith ei fod fod yn anhebygol y bydd cyfyngiadau yn yr Haf, byddai gorfodi peller cymdeithasol rhwng y cyhoedd yn mynychu yn amhosib. Gan fod yr ŵyl yn cael ei sgwar wedi ei drwyddedu am y diwrnod, yna bydd disgwyl iddym ni orfodi unrhyw reolau Covid yn yr union run ffordd a thafarn neu glwb nos, ac ei wneud ein hunain. Mae'r gallu i gynllunio ymlaen hefyd yn cael ei rwystro gan y diffyg canllawiau hir dymor gan Llywodraeth Cymru o ran digwyddiadau, ond mae rhagfynegi dyfodol y pandemig hwn yn anodd iddynt i ddweud y lleiaf.

Iechyd a diogelwch y cyhoedd a pawb ynghlwm efo'r digwyddiad yw ein blaenoriaeth gyntaf fel pwyllgor bob

blwyddyn, ac os awn ymlaen yn 2022, hyn fydd ar flaen ein meddwl. Nid y ffactorau uchod yw'r unig rai y byddwn yn cymryd fewn i ystyriaeth pan yn gwneud penderfyniad, ond efallai yn egluro rhai y bydd pobl hefyd feddwl amdanynt. Wrth gwrs, fe fyddwn yn cael ein harwain gan yr ymateb yn cael ei gymryd gan ddigwyddiadau a gwyliau eraill ar draws Cymru.

Nid yw pwyllgor yr ŵyl wedi bod yn segur yn ystod cyfnod y pandemig Covid. Rydym wedi bod yn ffodus i sicrhau grant gan Gronfa Fferm Melin Wynt Clocaenog tuag at brynu offer newydd ar gyfer digwyddiad Top Dre, a hefyd gwella marchnata yr ŵyl gan gynnwys gwefan a nwyddau gwerthu newydd. Fe gawsom hefyd arddangosfa o archif yr ŵyl o hen raglenni a lluniau yn yr Hen Lys yn Mehefin 2021 yn be fyddai wedi wybod yn wythnos yr ŵyl. Rydym hefyd wedi cydweithio efo'r cyngor tref ar gais i Gronfa Isadeiledd Digwyddiadau Cyngor Sir Ddinbych i wella y cyflenwad trydan yng Nghloc y Dref a'r Hen Lys ar gyfer y llwyfannau ar Top Dre, ond hefyd unrhyw ddigwyddiadau eraill a gynhelir ar sgwar y dref. Rydym heb gwrrd fel pwyllgor mor aml ag arfer, ond mae camau fel y rhai uchod wedi cael eu gwneud i wneud yr ŵyl yn fwy cynaliadwy a sicrhau ei llwyddiant yn y dyfodol.

Rydym yn gwbod fod angen am yr ŵyl. Mae pobl lleol yn gweld colled amdani. Mae busnesau yn y dref yn enwedig mewn lletygarwch wedi mynd drwy gyfnod hynod o anodd, a mae amryw ohonynt wedi dweud eu bod eisiau yr ŵyl nôl cyn gynted a phosib i ddarparu hwb sydd wir ei angen. Ar ôl y 2 flynedd diwethaf, rwyf yn credu fod pawb yn y dref eisiau dod at ei gilydd fel cymuned i fwynhau eu hunain, a'r ŵyl yn y blynyddoedd a fu sydd wedi bod y prif gyfle i wneud hyn. Gadewch i ni obeithio am y gorau. Bydd yr ŵyl yn ôl.

Jim Bryan yw Is-gadeirydd, Pwyllgor Gŵyl Rhuthun



County Hall Revealed as Wealth Indicator?

January 2022 research by Birmingham-based estate agent Barrows and Forrester has revealed which local councils are sitting at the top of their respective housing markets, when it comes to the value of their head offices versus their wider area. The estate agents analysed current market values across each postcode that was home to a council head office, to reveal which councils have the most exclusive property portfolio. They expressed the 'council office house price premium' as a percentage.



The research showed that no less than 40 per cent of local councils had their main offices located in postcode areas with more expensive property prices than the wider local authority. This was probably not a surprise, given the location of these buildings often in city centres. Another factor will be the value of the buildings themselves. According to the research, Denbighshire came second highest in the whole of the UK. With County Hall located within the LL15 1 postcode, the average housing property price was said to be £300,241, 56 per cent more valuable than the average across the wider local authority area. This, of course, was a fairly academic exercise, whether in Denbighshire or for 'winner' Durham (a whopping 94 per cent). Other local councils beaten by Denbighshire but still sitting at the top of their local property markets included West Northamptonshire (52%), Ceredigion (48%), City of Westminster (44%), New Forest (43%), Lincoln (40%), East Ayrshire (40%), City of London (40%), and West Lancashire (39%). Sitting on a property pile might be one thing but its value is only really apparent if it is realisable.

A Thriving Farming Business

Heather Williams reports on a fascinating insight into farming life on the outskirts of Ruthin

Just before Christmas, I spotted in the paper that there was a programme on S4C on a Ruthin farm. The programme Cefn Gwlad (Countryside) was visiting Bathafarn Farm, situated on the eastern outskirts of Ruthin, which is owned by the Lloyd family. When in 2001 the programme had last visited the farm, the three brothers, Wyn, Edgar and Harold ran the farm but the younger generation has now taken charge.

Harold's son, Alyn and his wife, Ffion, are now run in charge and some things have changed. They don't use pitchforks any more! They have around 300 dairy cows and 1,000 sheep, and grow most of the fodder for them, rather than buying it in.

They have a contract to rear heifers, which come to the farm when they are between three to six months old, to graze and fatten on the rich fertile land during the summer months. They then go back to their own farms in November, about two months before calving.

In order to lighten their load, Alyn and Ffion have been experimenting with the sheep that they breed on the Clwydian Range. Their main breed is Exlana that they call 'easy care sheep'. The reason is they shed their wool, so don't need to be sheared, are easy to rear and lambing is not problematic. They cross breed them with Texel, Beltex and Sussex sheep and keep some of the

cross-breeds to fatten up.

The Lloyd family's passion for horses is in their blood, with Edgar once involved in breeding racehorses. Alyn has been brought up with horses, having seen the great-grandmother of one of the present racing horses being born. Two horses which were reared at Bathafarn Farm are presently trained at Helshaw Grange stables, Market Drayton, Shropshire. They have gone to this pre-training yard to get fit before undergoing training to race all over the country, which the family enjoy following. Alyn and Ffion's daughters Leia and Ceri compete in riding clubs, the highlight being the Pony Club Championships in Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.



Edgar, although now in his 80s, is still active, having developed some brilliant technology to help farmers. Sometimes farmers suffer from bad injuries when dealing with their animals. About 25

years ago, on a visit to New Zealand, Edgar came across a crush which helped to manage cows and bulls when treating them. After initially importing crushers, he designed and developed his own hydraulic crush, the Clwydian Crush Big 8, with the help of a local Ruthin company, G L Jones Welding and Fabrication. Edgar even still drives all around the country to deliver them.

Hopefully, if you missed the programme you will have a bit more of an insight into one of the farms in this beautiful Vale of Clwyd, famed for its fertile land. And, for some readers of Town and Aroud, you may be tempted to go for a walk along the driveway/footpath which leads up to the Clwydian Range past the farm.

Can't win 'em all

News this January that St Asaph and Denbigh will this spring benefit from brown tourist signage pointing directly off the A55 was welcomed in the Vale of Clwyd. The \$64,000 question, however, was this: why not Ruthin, as well?

It's true that Ruthin has long requested such prominent A55 tourist signage but it transpires the trunk road rules will preclude Ruthin from being included.

How so? First, brown signage off a dual carriageway trunk road is limited to attractions within 10 miles of that road. Ruthin misses out by two to three miles.

If that weren't enough, it's only permissible under trunk road rules to install brown tourist signage off the nearest trunk road to the destination.

Important though they are, there are few trunk roads in North Wales. There's the A55, A5 and A470 but the nearest to



Ruthin actually goes through Ruthin and that's the Dolgellau to South of Birkenhead A494. This effectively disqualifies Ruthin from brown tourist signage at a distance. But, we must be thankful that summer traffic on the A494 heading towards the Gwynedd coast does pass through Ruthin and that at least some may be tempted to stop.

Back to the A55, we can only hope that when people find their way off the A55 to Denbigh they pick up local signage and head eight miles farther south to visit Ruthin. Perhaps we could have more local brown signs on the A525 to help.

Seen in Passing...

We wonder whether former Clawdd-newydd resident Francesca Reece's first novel 'Voyeur' (published 2021) is semi-autobiographical. Her female lead refers to 'Summers at home had been ones of binge drinking in the Tesco car park or in a farmer's field; of sweet, synthetic, fluorescent ice lollies eaten in the bus shelter to avoid the rain'. Perhaps in 150 years when her works are fully appreciated we might put up a green plaque in her honour on the bus shelter at Clawdd.



The Market Hall reopened on January 20th, 2022, on selected days towards the back of each week. January is perhaps an ambitious month to do this. The previous markets including the W/ Country Market took a break over January. The number of stallholders is nevertheless steadily increasing. It's also noticeably much warmer within. The previous general market there closed in June 2019.

From Mace to Morrison's. Porth y Dre Stores has become a Morrison's Daily. This is a wholesale agreement with owners McColl's and is a so-called 'fascia change' rather than one of ownership. It passed from a Spar to Alldays in the late 1990s and when Alldays sold to the Co-op in 2002 it eventually was re-branded 'Co-operative' then 'Co-op' before it and other such convenience stores passed to McColl's in 2017. It lost its post office way back in 2008.



We understand that Castle land at Cae Ddol and Crispin Yard has changed hands. Much needed work on the wall alongside Cae Ddol is now complete and there's been work to the wooded area, with reports of access to it to be available, at some point.



In spite of the encouraging progress at the mediæval gateway to the entrance to Ruthin castle (p3), the more modern gatehouse next to the arch is still a cause of concern, particularly its coping stones and its window overlooking Castle Street.



RADCA Vice-chair and 2021/22 town mayor Heather Williams's mayoral aim is to see more trees planted in Ruthin. She is seen at Cae Ddol during the February tree planting session. There are also trees and hedges newly planted at Llanrhydd, at the former school site.

With two thirds of dwellings currently on the housing market now sold subject to contract, we're actually running out of homes to buy. At the time of writing, there are just 20 available in town. The position is similar in our villages. 'Agincourt' on Denbigh Road, as featured in September 2021's Town & Around, is now complete, following a major refurbishment from pastiche mediæval folly to modern as-new home.

Initially on the market to let but now also available to purchase is Plas Coch. This is the former Conservative Club. It's one of our oldest frontages. All three floors and large car park are available to buy at £550,000 which, when compared to a five bed house at Cae Castan at £500,000, makes Plas Coch a snip. But, factor in the conversion costs.



Against the backdrop of the new housing under construction at Glasdir (p6) is this lonesome and toothless rotting bench, probably the last tangible reminder of the long-defunct Ruthin Monday Club, a charity established in the 1970s to offer recreation and holidays for disabled people locally. Is anyone able to replace the bench?

in colour at www.ruthincivic.org

Migratory Patterns of *Receptaculum rubrum*

Flown in over lockdown is this rare pair of greater spotted red wheelie bins (*Receptaculum rubrum*) which are currently adorning and adding colour to the conservation area that is the Square.

The two have become quite a topic of conversation among locals, as they debate and discuss the pair's worth in what is a public space. Bin enthusiasts are even arriving from all over Wales to debate about and see this previously unusual and now common sight.

Once on the Square, the migratory patterns have proven to be of interest, as noted by the following photographs of their movements, taken from temporary hides. Experts are watching these unusual activities with concern.

We also wonder whether, like other migratory species, they will at some point simply disappear—and whether they will then return. We aren't sure of the protected status of *Receptaculum rubrum* but we sincerely hope that this isn't a breeding pair. We all know what happened over 20 years ago once the dreaded herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) took hold in Ruthin...

Will *Receptacula rubrum* in time threaten the indigenous species in the *Receptaculum* genus: *Receptaculum nigrum*, *Receptaculum sapphirus* and *Receptaculum viridi* (the common black, common blue and greater spotted green wheelie bins, respectively).

The pest control authority (County Council) has been informed but has made no comment.



Reports in January that Llyn Brenig vigilantes had culled the pair leaving them for dead were exaggerated



Nesting as they first arrived in the central area of the Square



Tacking advantage of the short-lived parklet platforms



Neither out of sight nor out of mind

Traffic 'Levels' on the Square

Members and readers who wish to express an interest in and comment on the 'Levelling Up' proposals can make their views known during the series of events comprising this spring's 'Ruthin Future' programme.

This includes about of month of exhibitions and activities at The Old Courthouse, which concludes on March 17th. There will be plans and designs to view and for comment.

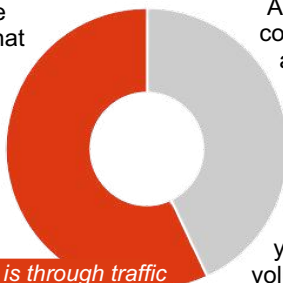
Of the three principal Ruthin Futures to date, this one is particularly important if we are to see improvements to the Square, thanks to Levelling Up funding. Plans could include a preference for pedestrian movements across the Square, removal of the roundabout and a fitting setting for our historic streetscape. We are potentially being offered a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve what is our single biggest heritage asset, the most significant draw that brings people into our town. The Square is what defines Ruthin. It's the jewel in our crown. It's like a prized possession or family heirloom that is irreplaceable.

The backdrop of the eastern side of the Square (that with the



Myddelton Arms and Castle Hotel) is world class. The vista changes building-by-building, from the HSBC to the Church and Post Office. It may be small in scale but it is, as they say, perfectly formed. Are the proposals fitting? Do they balance all the competing priorities? Are they ambitious enough?

Also available are sessions considering the heart of town and green spaces; the popular Photo-marathon; a Bro Rhuthun business evening; and a coffee morning for existing and potential new volunteers at The Old Courthouse. Could you perhaps consider volunteering?



We think 57% of traffic in the centre is through traffic

Quayle Award 2021

Members & readers will be aware that for most of the previous 30 years, the Civic Association presents a commemorative plaque (the Quayle Award) to the owners of a building or project within the town or surrounding area which has, in our judgement, improved and enriched the

town or village environment aesthetically by a good new design or through sensitive restoration.

We are currently in search of nominations for 2021. We are therefore asking members & readers for their suggestions in Ruthin or our villages. Please contact the Secretary (details opposite).



Cymdeithas Ddinesig Rhuthun a'r Cylch
Ruthin and District Civic Association

Town & Around is published quarterly by the Ruthin & District Civic Association. It is available from Ruthin Library (when fully open) and on townandaround.org.uk. It is delivered free to Civic Association members

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

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

The deadline for the next edition is May 18th, 2022

Thanks are due to this quarter's contributors: Jim Bryan, Kathy Daniels, Peter Daniels, Colin Edwards, Fiona Gale, Alan Jones, Anne Roberts, Mike Skuse and Heather Williams; and with the help of Emma Hanson, Stuart Hughes, Tony Hughes, Dorinda Kostravenglis and Rob Price

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

© March 2022
Ruthin & District Civic Association



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). If you are not sure if you are a paid up member, please check with the Treasurer.

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)