



Quarterly comment & features from the Ruthin & District Civic Association

The Future of Ruthin Gaol

Local historian GARETH EVANS puts forward his views on the future of the Gaol and Archive

Ruthin is blessed with two councils, both playing a role in improving and helping develop the town's future. Currently, one council, Ruthin Town Council, is doing splendid work renovating the lordship courthouse on Saint Peter's Square and turning it into a multi-purpose centre for the community. The other council, Denbighshire County Council, plans to withdraw services from Ruthin gaol, placing at risk the future of the building.

Denbighshire has responsibility for protecting heritage buildings and consequently the future of the 18th/19th century gaol should be a major issue for it.

Its decision to attempt to move the County Archives from the Gaol to a location outside the County, in Flintshire, has certainly raised many eyebrows. They have been located in Ruthin periodically since the 1790s, but the decision to relocate the Archives and join with Flintshire in creating a modern archival centre at Mold is driven mainly by the need to provide additional storage for the ever growing archives of Denbighshire and by the increasing difficulties of working in an old building in constant need of repair.

The gaol is apparently bursting at the seams, with

several kilometres of archival material and there is simply not enough space in the present archival block. For the Archives service, the priority has to be the care and preservation of Denbighshire's archives and there is no doubt that the decision is professionally sound and will contribute greatly to the future safety of the archival material.

There are also trends within the archival world, which may make it less necessary in future for researchers to have direct access to original archival material. Already, the census, many parish registers, military records, electoral rolls and much other material is on-line. Catalogues are increasingly being made available on the county's archives website and this is a process that will continue. Already it is possible to have access to major national collections in the National Library at Aberystwyth and The National Archives at Kew, without leaving one's home.

Significant collections such as most 19th century newspapers, wills and inventories can now be accessed without making the long journey to either Aberystwyth or Kew.

Nevertheless, while these useful trends offer hope for the future, there is a great difference in attitudes between Denbighshire and other counties towards the historic records in their custody. Only relatively recently, the people of Merionethshire lobbied hard to prevent their archives from leaving the old county. Wrexham has battled with great determination to establish an archives in its new county and Conwy has recently commissioned a new records office.

Their attitude is different from Denbighshire's and much more positive. It would be interesting to know what Flintshire's attitude to this new partnership would have been if it had been suggested that the combined archives should be located in Denbighshire.

The collections in Ruthin do not only come from the present county of Denbighshire but from historic Denbighshire as well. The rich collections represent a wide range of historical human activity from Colwyn Bay right across to Wrexham. It's a

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Affordable Housing in the News

by Kathy Daniels

In the wake of the pre-planning consultation and new application for Clwyd Alyn's affordable housing at Glasdir, there's a sense that Ruthin is rehearsing its arguments for the wave of mass housing expansion that the next local development plan might unleash.

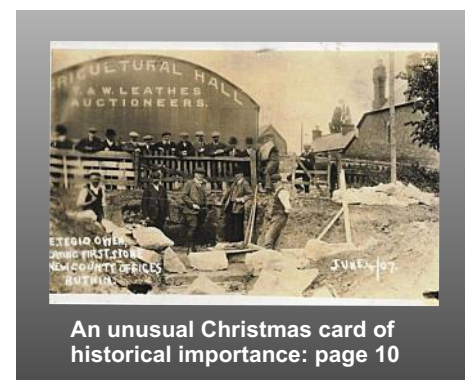
In our September edition, we reckoned that Ruthin might see upward of 650 to 880 additional homes.



What impact will this and the current Clwyd Alyn development have?

First, new housing will support local businesses. Structural changes in society will inevitably result in further reducing town centre footfall, for example, and more people living locally will (presumably) help to mitigate the worst effects of online shopping on our fragile town centre. More houses will help support other businesses, from carpet and furniture sales to decorating products to engineers and craftsmen.

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An unusual Christmas card of historical importance: page 10



Parting of the ways?

The Future of Ruthin Gaol

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huge area and one wonders with all the talk of local government reorganisation whether the council has given adequate consideration to its choice of partner. If Denbighshire is eventually twinned with Conwy, which seems natural, a huge archive of interest mainly to Denbighshire residents would be trapped outside the county and few of the documents have anything to do with Flintshire.

For Ruthin, the situation is much simpler. The County Council seems incapable of finding new use for its heritage buildings. It closed the frontage building of the Gaol on Clwyd Street and has found it

impossible to find a new use for it and now it seems the rest of the gaol is going to go the same way.

For Ruthin the future does look difficult, with an increasing number of large old buildings, some the direct responsibility of the county council being made empty by them.

There doesn't appear to be any evidence of any initiatives by the council to resolve these issues which are of their own making. There is talk of a large museum complex but, with no money being allocated, it seems somewhat fanciful.

For Ruthin, there is a double calamity.

The county council needs to find £2,000,000 to invest in the new Flintshire complex offering additional economic opportunities for Mold.

Our community will have to dig deep into its pockets to make this investment in Flintshire at the expense of jobs and a deterioration of our town centre.

On account of this, if for no other reason, the county needs to sit down & work out whether the spending of this money, which will inevitably be at the expense of the economy of Denbighshire, makes good sense.

An alternative view of the Archive: p12

Now you see it, now you don't



DEREK JONES would like to see more of the Ruthin Craft Centre

I would not like what I have written below to be interpreted as an endorsement of Sheffield City Council's recent policy (now withdrawn) to cut down two hundred trees in residential areas. That was indeed a philistine idea, rightly resisted by many, not only in Sheffield itself, but across the country, following hostile press coverage. The trees have been saved.

I am writing instead about the trees which surround two sides of the Ruthin Craft Centre. Winter has arrived and, for a precious few months, passers by can enjoy, without interruption, a fine example of modern architecture—quirky, unusual, the very opposite of the monotonous box-like sheds which cover industrial estates all over the country.

All too soon, of course, the trees will be in leaf again, and much of the outside of the Craft Centre will be hidden from view.

Like most people, I look forward to spring, summer, and indeed autumn for their changing atmospheres, colours—and warmth!

So, if now, I suggest some radical pruning of the Craft Centre trees, (especially those facing the roundabout), that does not mean that I want the whole lot to be cut down, simply that they should be reduced so that we can see the shape of the Craft Centre outside, just as we can inside.

I grant that it is opposite Tesco, which, if very useful and used, is hardly a paragon of beauty! It was a great pity that the design was let through, not least because it has made it much more difficult to appreciate the contours of the Craft Centre roof. People may remember that the Craft Centre architects, Sergison Bates, designed it to reflect the up and down shape of the Clwydians. I concede that this is a bit of a stretch, but you can, if you look carefully above Tesco, discern the lines of Foel Fenlli.

So, as things stand, you have, during the

rest of the year, to work hard to see the Craft Centre roof. Almost certainly, you need to walk, stand at a distance, and take it in, especially when the trees are in full leaf. You need also to do that to appreciate the genius of roofing at the Craft Centre with zinc, rather than conventional tiles; close up and at a distance, it is a fine example of plasticity, covering a building whose exhibits often rewards us with flights of the imagination.

I entitled a recent piece for September's Town and Around 'It's the inside that counts' and nothing I have written here is meant to imply that this also needs to be said about the Craft Centre courtyard. I am merely flying the flag for those who see the outside, either hurrying along the by-pass, and getting in and out of the Tesco car park. I want them, of course, to take a look inside, but I also want them to see—really see—the outside of this prize-winning piece of architecture.

A branch or two less of the trees would make that a little more possible. Now we can see it, but, within a few months, then we can't!

Developments at the Griffin



Harold Jones looks on at the Griffin

For a number of months this year, the residents of Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd along with walkers, runners, cyclists, motorists and other road users travelling through the village have been confronted

by a large stationary lorry trailer parked on the forecourt of the Griffin Inn. It has been obscuring the view of the listed pub and appears to be advertising a butcher in the north east of England (In Passing, June 2019).

There seemed to be no explanation for its presence until, all of a sudden, early in

September, the vehicle was moved to the rear of the pub car park and the area cordoned off. At the same time, new signs appeared at the front of the site signifying good news for the future of The Griffin. It will be re-opening soon with rooms, restaurant and bar. The owner, Sian Jones, includes her mobile number for any enquiries.

Building work is under way and skips are on site. The contractor is Oakwood Property, the company currently transforming Yr Hen Lys in Ruthin. There is a new web site which, like the building itself, is also under construction.

The plan is to transform the ground floor rooms into a social and accessible area with a mixture of modern and traditional décor. Locally produced food will be served ranging from teas, coffee and cake to evening dinners. On the first floor there will be en-suite bedrooms for bed and breakfast guests, and the extensive garden at the rear will be landscaped to include facilities for children.

More information will be appearing on the web site www.griffin.wales

This time last year, the Griffin supporters announced that the previous fund-raising had failed in its attempt to raise the then required £230,000 of community funding.

Church House

by Isabel Stewart

The quiet little village of Derwen has a grade I mediæval church and an even older grade II* preaching cross. Together, this is more than most villages have... but there's even more.

There's also a small two-storey grade II stone house, currently Church House, built into the churchyard boundary wall, thought to have been constructed in the 1600s. This is an exceptionally unusual yet characterful property.

Although there are no actual datable features, its listing suggests it was built at a time when the churchyard ground level was about three feet lower than at present.

It's built of local axe-dressed uncoursed stone. These days, the access to the house is through the churchyard.

Looking at the building from the road, you can see a large arch (now filled in), which would have led into the ground floor and was most likely a hearse house. This may therefore have been a place from which a funeral may have proceeded directly to the church. The ground floor is now a semi-basement.

The upper floor of the house is reached by external stone steps and it has a small fireplace. A slate roof, water supply, kitchen area and electricity are all modern features, some of which perhaps



dates from a 1905 restoration, as shown on Church House's north face. This room may have been used for a vestry, for parish meetings and at one time even as a village school.

Altogether, it's a lovely small building with secrets from time gone by. Its reason for being listed is are because it is a well-preserved church house and for group value with St Mary's church and cross.

It's owned by the Representative Body of the Church in Wales but just sold at auction for a reported £28,000 to a local. The vendor specifies that the building shall not be used for the manufacture, distribution or sale of alcohol; for religious use; for immoral, sacrilegious, offensive or noisy purposes; as a night club; or use associated with the occult.

Leaving aside these stipulations, Church House may nevertheless soon once again come to life, perhaps as a studio flat or as a rather unique and exceptional holiday or Airbnb let.

Ruthin Castle

In our September 2019 edition, we featured the problems and issues at the then for sale Ruthin Castle Hotel. By mid-September, it had sold for £5m. There are reported to be significant plans afoot which, we understand, involve an indoor swimming pool of some sort. The new owners have already made progress.

Of course, we've heard about investment before. From 2004, the Saint Claires invested over £4m. In January 2013, they entered into a voluntary agreement with their creditors and this followed the ambitious upgrade to four-star standards and the addition in 2012 of the Moat Spa. It was in June 2014 that the hotel went into administration.

In July 2014, though, Ruthin Castle Hotel was almost immediately bought by Kepler Capital Ltd, the Prima Hotel Group and its existing management. They, too, promised investment, including bringing 10 more rooms back into use.

One of the issues believed to face the new owners is the previous standard of workmanship. It seems that investment in a building of this size and scope has always proven to be challenging.

Meanwhile, there continues to be the knotty question of the castle walls. In 2016, the owners and others formed a trust to deal with them and in 2017 Cadw stepped in to stabilise the mediæval structure. Since then, the walls have gone into reverse a little and we await the trust's views on that.

Affordable Housing

Continued from page 1

Secondly, the new Clwyd Alyn development promised at Glasdir together with up to 70 houses at Llys Famau and perhaps as many at the former Rhos Street schools site will offer much needed affordable housing. There have been calls for such housing in the past. Clwyd Alyn's development isn't social housing. It's for people who have an income but cannot step onto the property ladder. Isn't this exactly sort of thing that our young people need?

Thirdly, there appears a general view that there isn't a demand for such housing. The waiting list has just 20 people on it, some argue. Clwyd Alyn and Tai Teg reckon differently. They believe there are more than 500, when you combine all known lists. Shouldn't we be supporting the needs of younger families or older people for example needing bungalows?

Fourthly, some argue our infrastructure isn't right for expansion. Some believe schools are nearly full. But are they? It would seem that two classes in one of the three Ruthin primaries are at capacity but that, overall, there is scope to educate more. Between the three developments, there may be 50-60 additional learners spread between three primaries. Ysgol Brynhyfryd is still under-capacity compared to recent years. It can accommodate 1,243 and it has about 1,000 at present.

Doctors and dentists may present a

problem but we do have an opportunity to increase capacity when Mount Street surgery moves to the hospital site.

What's interesting is that if you go back in time, you will hear these same arguments about schools and doctors at each wave or phase of the town's housing development. A parallel to Clwyd Alyn occurred in January 1998, for example, when the town council initially objected to 40 new affordable houses near Maes Hafod, citing exactly the same reasoning—the impact on infrastructure. If services were a constraint on development, then Ruthin currently would likely be no bigger than it was in the 1920s. It's an incremental process.

We need to watch the quality, nature and condition of the houses we build. Beauty and design are in the eye of the beholder but that proposed by the Clwyd Alyn development appears contemporary and fresh. We're promised energy efficient homes which dispense with gas in favour of friendlier air source heat technology that potentially shames the current market housing sector. Clwyd Alyn's Glasdir proposal is not overly dense in nature and appears well laid out, though a better separation of housing and parked cars might improve it.

Part of Clwyd Alyn's two- and three-bed houses and 2-bed bungalows, at Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd, under construction. There are 38 units available, in total



We must also watch exactly where we build and the number of new properties we are building, that's for sure. Nothing should threaten the best of our market town. But Glasdir is an ideal place to develop at present because it's:

- Impact on other housing is low
- Within the current and proposed LDPs
- Within walking distance of town, with new and improved active travel links, and
- Abutting to an existing development.

There'll presumably be a supermarket around the corner (unless Aldi has cold feet) and existing & proposed employment land is nearby. Indeed, building there gives the existing market housing at Glasdir some sort of cohesiveness with the town, for an existing estate that otherwise simply appears to have been plonked down.

Behind the Statistics

It's understandable that headline writers concentrated on the most deprived communities in Wales, upon the publication on November 27th of the 2019 Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) figures. But what about the opposite end of the scale? The WIMD ranks 1,909 lower super output community areas (LSOAs). Ruthin is divided into three.

Ruthin 3 broadly covers Parc Brynhyfryd, Erw Goch, Dro Deg, Maes Cantaba, Castle Park & Llanrhydd. In 2019, it was ranked as the 23rd least deprived in Wales out of 1909. This is an improvement over 60th place in 2014 and 34th in 2011. Ruthin 3 equated to the 6th least deprived area in North Wales, out of 423, an improvement over 2014 when

Ruthin 3 was 8th.

In 2019, Ruthin 3 was again the highest-ranking LSOA in Denbighshire out of 58. In 2019 Denbighshire, behind it came Denbigh Lower 1 (2nd in Denbighshire and 40th in Wales); Prestatyn East 2 (3rd/146th); Denbigh Lower 2 (4th/180th); and Llanbedr DC/Llangynhafal (5th/303rd). The ranking positions were identical in Denbighshire in 2019 to 2014.

Ruthin 2 broadly covers Bryn Eryl, Greenfield Road, Haulfryn, Central, Lon Parcŵr, Canol y Dre, Glasdir and Bryn Goodman. Ruthin 2 was ranked 463rd in Wales, compared to 317th in 2014 and 228th in 2011. This nevertheless placed Ruthin 2 and 3 within the 2019 top quartile in Wales. Ruthin 2 was 12th in Denbighshire, slipping a little from 8th in 2014.

Ruthin 1 is comparable to Llanfawr Urban (Cae Seren, Porth y Dre, Maes Hafod and Llawr y Dyffryn, etc). In 2019, this was ranked as 869th in Wales, compared to 850th in 2014. In 2019, Ruthin 1 was ranked 27th in Denbighshire. It could therefore be said that Ruthin 1 is typically average in terms of both the country and

the county.

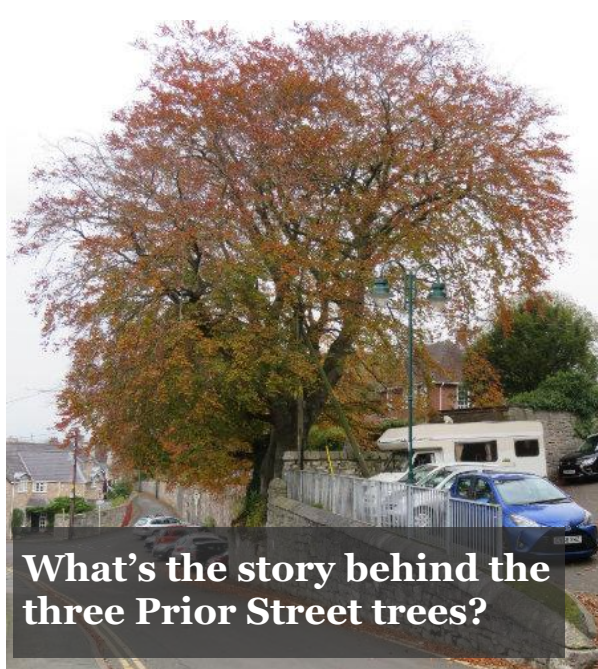
The village areas within Ruthin's hinterland scored as follows, with Llanbedr DC/Llangynhafal already mentioned, above, at 303rd in Wales. Llanarmon yn Iâl/Llandegla was ranked 402nd in Wales; Efenechtyd 576th; Llandyrnog 657th; Llanfair DC/Gwyddelwern 755th; and Llanrhaeadr yng Nghinmeirch 787th. Two were in the top quartile. In 2014, all but two found themselves in that division.

What, then, does all this say about Ruthin and its villages? Ruthin is relatively prosperous when compared to Wales, North Wales and Denbighshire. But, some things have changed. Ruthin 3's relative position has improved but Ruthin 2's has not. Ruthin 1 is about the same. In 2014, what tended to let Ruthin down was its lack of access to services. In 2019, for Ruthin 3, this appears to have improved markedly. The housing score in Ruthin 2 and 1 appears to have had more of an influence this time. In 2014, Ruthin 3 was ranked 7th in Wales in terms of its physical environment—in 2019, Ruthin 3 was relegated to 148th in terms of its environment, yet we are not aware of any degradation.

It's not surprising that Ruthin's villages all scored very well in terms of their physical

Continued opposite





What's the story behind the three Prior Street trees?

"Everyone must leave something behind when he dies, my grandfather said... something your hand touched some way... and when people look at that tree you planted, you're there". So said science fiction writer Ray Bradbury in one of his novels.

A legal notice dated October 9th, 2019 condemned three prominent Prior Street beech trees to firewood. The axe has yet to fall.

Most people recognise the trees as being of some significance. But what is their story? When people look at them, who did they think of? As Bradbury's fictional grandfather might've said, who was there?

First, some modern-day context. The trees threaten the safety of road users. Their shallow roots continue to push against their retaining wall (which, itself, has been repaired on several occasions). Damage is evident, from dislodged and displaced stones to cracking to wall joints. While the three are on private land, it is nevertheless incumbent upon the highways authority to take action.

Behind the Statistics, from page 4

environment and community safety but more poorly for access to services. Such is the trade-off residents need to make when living in these communities. But a significant reason why there has been a worsening of ranked positions is because of a consistent fall in the housing score.

Profiling Places

Meanwhile, the easy-to-use "profiling places" web tool launched this autumn, giving a view of Ruthin as a whole. Here, we consider Ruthin against our nearest neighbour, Denbigh, other towns in Denbighshire and near neighbour Mold.

Between 2011 and 2017, Ruthin's population grew quickly. Ruthin saw the highest change in population, by 3.8 per cent, to 5,666. The average locally was

The trees stand on a small purpose-built enclosure between St Peter's cemetery and Prior Street. Many assumed this is church property. Not so.

The reason for the legal notice was that the highways department undertaking the work could not ascertain to whom the small parcel of land belongs. Records showed that it is unregistered.

Local historian Gareth Evans felt that it was possibly once part of the residual manor of Ruthin but that is not confirmed. If so, it is actually believed to have passed to Denbighshire County Council. St Peter's verger, Ken Hawkins, also thought that the land once belonged to the Castle.

What makes these trees special is who was believed to have planted them. Many years ago, Hawkins was told that it was the Cornwallis-Wests who in the 19th century undertook significant tree planting around and about the Castle. Could it therefore have been George Cornwallis West MP himself? It's possible that the three trees were significant in that they are in memory of three sisters, presumably relatives, presumably Cornwallis-Wests.

Some also say that the three were planted by frequent Castle visitor, the energetic Edward, prince of Wales, the future king Edward VII. If not Edward, he was believed to have been in the party at the time of the planting, at least according to the photograph of the event in Ruthin Castle. If so, this dates the ceremony to between 1841 and 1900. Edward succeeded queen Victoria as king in January 1901.

Either way, the three on Prior Street are quite probably trees of some significance and antiquity. Irrespective of any royal connection, they're nevertheless only trees, after all. They would have had a finite lifespan. And trees can be replaced. Indeed, an enterprising Civic Association

just over one per cent. Denbigh's population fell by over one per cent, to 8,416. It seems that Ruthin and Denbigh's populations are converging.

Currently, Ruthin sees the lowest percentage locally of the working population on employment benefit, at seven per cent. The average is 10 per cent. If you exclude Rhyl and Prestatyn, the average is 8½ per cent. Denbigh's percentage is 10.

68 per cent of Ruthin's pupils achieved the level 2 threshold at GCSE key stage 4 including Welsh, English and maths. Ruthin is bettered by scholars living in St Asaph and, just, Llangollen. The average was 62 per cent. Denbigh's percentage figure was 58.

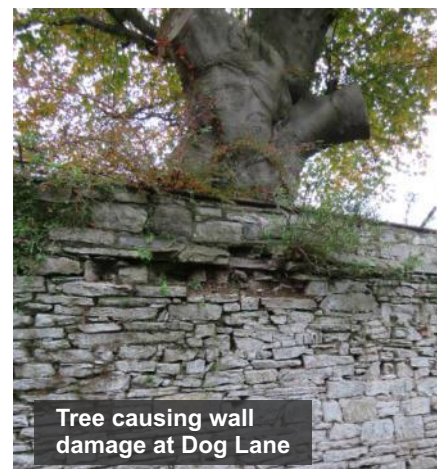
If high car ownership is an indicator of wealth, 82 per cent of Ruthin's households had access to a private motor



committee member had already collected a quantity of beech nuts from the three trees in the hope that at least one will germinate (though this is hard); and uprooted several small saplings under the existing three before any application of herbicide to the residual stumps. That way, the royal trees—if that's what they are—will not be forgotten... assuming their offspring propagate.

Perhaps future generations—like Bradbury's grandfather—might again look on the trees' successors and wonder who planted the originals and who was there.

There are other wall-hugging trees that at some point will undoubtedly need to be felled. Several on the Castle side of the Cuning Green and lower down the Castle wall are weakening their adjacent structures. There's a similar situation with a large beech next to the wall on Dog Lane, also on land in private ownership.



Tree causing wall damage at Dog Lane

vehicle, equalled only by St Asaph. The average was 78 per cent.

Ruthin's death rate was the lowest of any of the local towns, at 883 per 100,000 population. Mold's figure came very close but, otherwise, the average was 1,034 per 100,000. Denbigh's was 1,080.

Ruthin is the safest town locally. It came top in five indicators and second in the sixth.

So, for example, the level of recorded burglary was 0.46 per 100 buildings, whereas the average was 0.84. The figure for Denbigh was 1.05. In Ruthin, the rate of anti-social behaviour incidents per 100 population was 2.69. The average locally was 3.69 and Denbigh's was 4.19. There were 1.04 recorded violent crimes in Ruthin per 100 residents compared locally to an average of 1.86. Denbigh's figure was 1.78.

Old Courthouse Update

**By the Town Council's
KATE HARCUS**

It has been a busy couple of months. You may have noticed a lot of activity taking place at The Old Courthouse throughout September and October.

Oakwood Property and their contractors have done a marvellous job of ripping out the remaining parts of the bank fittings that we didn't need or want and in bringing the interior into the 21st Century. If you have been following the progress on the Town Council's Facebook page, you will have seen that there is now a beautiful Berwyn Slate floor, striking radiators (which are now working, after being reconnected to the gas main by November 10th), modern kitchen, smart internal and external lighting, new toilets, including an accessible one, baby change unit,



security system and audio-visual equipment. There are still a few tasks to complete, but we have taken delivery of chairs and tables, crockery and glasses. So, we are ready to welcome some groups in to use the Old Courthouse for test events, which will help us develop our operational procedures and systems. And, of course, we are really looking forward to having the Ruthin Town Council meetings in our new home.

Our new manager, Kate Harcus, started in October 2019. Until the office space has access to the internet (by all accounts an essential these days), she has been working at home, in the library and taking the opportunity to meet with some

volunteers, traders and councillors. She will be the main point of contact for the Old Courthouse and, once we have the



IT system in place, we will share her contact details. In the meantime, for those who support Facebook, she can be contacted via the Town Council page.

As mentioned, there will be a number of events taking place in the Old Courthouse over the next four months, and we will be officially opening in late February/early March. We have some fun plans for the opening ceremony, which we look forward to sharing with you in the New Year.

A Modern Masterpiece

DEREK JONES hails the award of the Stirling Prize to an estate of council homes

For this edition I am stretching the meaning of the word 'Around' in our masthead to include a celebration of a prestigious architectural award to Goldsmith Street, Norwich, quite some distance away from Ruthin. It is the first time the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize has been awarded to a council estate, not before time.

With the building of environmentally-friendly social housing at Llanbedr and more proposed adjacent to Glasdir plus the prospect of new council housing in Denbighshire for the first time in nearly 40 years, I am taking it for granted that members would be interested in the Norfolk development, however distant it may be.

I have lived and worked in council estates during a good part of a very varied career, including one of the first, Becontree, Essex, population 100,000, built between the two world wars of the last century. It was far from being the worst, and many former 'Eastenders' thought the world of it. On the other hand, few today would be happy at the thought of roads driven on straight lines, numbered from 1 to 2000, across the Essex marshes.

A hundred years after the Housing and the Working Classes Act of 1919, things have moved on quite a lot. Whatever the need, few local councils would now even think of building on such a scale. Interestingly, Denbighshire is an exception. And, of course, the Thatcher government's policy of the 'right to buy' has, to some extent, altered people's perceptions of social housing.

Yet the prejudice remains, and there are still some appalling examples of 'jerry-built' council houses in many parts of the country. That is why we should celebrate when a socially conscious architect, Mikhail Riches, should design and build a small estate where anyone, rich or poor, would be glad to live. RIBA has called Goldsmith Street 'a modern masterpiece'.

There are 105 ultra low-energy houses (45 houses and 60 flats), where fuel bills are expected to be 70 per cent below the average cost. The bricks are of warm creamy clay, the houses have curved corners and include brick porches. Each flat has its own front door at ground level, all of them painted in different colours to emphasise individuality. No effort has



been spared to introduce small but important features such as letter boxes built on to external porches to avoid draughts in the houses.

The Goldsmith streetscape is designed to promote small and safe children's play areas. There are several communal gardens, and curved walkways running perpendicularly through the middle of the estate. Car parking is pushed to the outer edge. There are generous lobby spaces for bikes.

The designer, David Mikhail, has said: 'It is not often we are appointed to work on a project so clearly aligned with what we believe matters: buildings people love which have a low impact on their surroundings'. Alan Jones of the RIBA has commented, 'Faced with the worst housing crisis for generations and crippling local authority cuts, Goldsmith Street is a beacon of hope'.

It's a long way from Norwich, but I can't help feeling that, as the need for council housing has re-emerged everywhere in the UK, this new award-winning project might strike a few local bells, and not just at affordable or social housing sites such as Llanbedr or Glasdir but in inspiring the new wave of market housing to come.

Planning Proposals 2018/19



In the year that has passed since the last Annual General Meeting of the Ruthin and District Civic Association in October 2018, Denbighshire County Council has received a wide range of planning applications that were submitted for approval. The variety reflects the diverse nature of the proposed schemes that individuals, businesses and developers wish to build in our area. Planning is a regular item on the Committee's agenda for its monthly meetings and we regularly scrutinise the planning applications that are submitted in our postal addresses.

One of the Civic Association's aims is to support high standards of planning and architecture in our area and we will make constructive and supportive comments as necessary, as well as objecting to proposals that could be considered inappropriate or insensitive.

The majority of applications submitted during the last year have been received positively and the following gives a flavour of the schemes that were being proposed.

Small Scale Domestic Extensions and Alterations

Many were considering improving their dwellings and submissions were received from residents in Ruthin, Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd, Llangynhafal, Gellifor, Graigadwywynt, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Clawddnewydd, Pentre Celyn, Rhewl, Llanellidan, Efenectyd, Cyffylliog, Galltegfa and Pwllglas.

New Dwellings

A number of applications were submitted for new houses, or small groups of new houses, in the area including at Cyffylliog, Llanfwrog, Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd, Ruthin, Pentre Celyn, Gellifor, Galltegfa, Clawddnewydd, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Rhewl, Clocaenog and Llanellidan.

Larger housing schemes included 38 dwellings at Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd

(Clwyd Alyn), 77 homes at Glasdir, Ruthin (Clwyd Alyn) and 35 extra care apartments at Llys Awelon, Ruthin (Grwp Cynefin). These major developments were the subject of pre-application consultation in accordance with the Planning Act Wales 2015.

Agricultural Buildings

New farm storage buildings were proposed at Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Pentre Celyn, Llanellidan, Pentre Coch, Clocaenog, Llanfwrog, Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd, Gellifor and Llanrhaedr.

In Llanfwrog, applications were also submitted for dairy buildings, a slurry lagoon and an agricultural silage clamp.

Education

At Ruthin School, applications were submitted for the siting of five portable classrooms and the demolition of the refectory block. Coleg Cambria wish to build a community building at Coleg Llysfas. A safety fence was proposed at Ysgol Brynhyfryd.

Trees

Work to trees subject to TPOs were proposed at Glasfryn Ruthin, Llanfair Road Ruthin, and at Scott House Ruthin. Also in Ruthin crown reduction of trees on St Peter's Square and removal of trees at Tabernacl Chapel. Work to trees was required at Llanfair Church and the felling of eight trees at St Dyfnog's Well Llanrhaedr.

Listed Building Applications

Applications were made to carry out work to Yr Hen Lys Ruthin, Tyddyn Tlodion Llanbedr, Bryn Ffynnon Ruthin and Manor Plas Isaf Llanbedr.

Tourism

Approval was sought for a static caravan for holiday use at Llanbedr, siting of four

glamping pods in Llanfair, four holiday pods in Cyffylliog, five holiday pods at Llanellidan and conversion of farm outbuildings to form holiday let in Llanbedr.

Miscellaneous

Several other schemes were being proposed including an ice cream production unit in Llanfyllan, extensions to service station in Ruthin, four light industrial units in Ruthin, new build at Ruthin Waste Water Treatment Works, change of use from retail to coffee shop on St Peter's Square Ruthin, change of use from shop to yoga studio on Market Street Ruthin, new extension for GP facilities at Ruthin Community Hospital, new Aldi store in Ruthin and new buildings at Craig y Ddywart Quarry in Rhewl.

Concerns

Not all applications were viewed favourably, however, and the Committee objected to the proposed egg production unit at Galltegfa on environmental grounds (Town and Around, March 2019).

Concern was expressed at the impact the proposed Clwyd Alyn housing scheme at Glasdir will have on the town's infrastructure particularly as other housing schemes are being considered in Ruthin.

The new Aldi store also caused some debate. It was agreed, however, that there would be no specific Civic Association response to these projects.

Local Development Plan

In August 2018, Denbighshire County Council called for Candidate Sites for the forthcoming LDP. Landowners, developers and any others with interest in land in the county were invited to submit suggested sites for future development, but submitting a site was not a guarantee of inclusion in the LDP. When the Draft Replacement LDP appeared, the committee responded broadly as detailed in the September 2019 issue of Town and Around. Concern was expressed about the periodic waterlogging of the land between the Corwen and Wrexham roads in Ruthin. In addition, it was felt that housing developments in Ruthin would not necessarily keep step with employment opportunities despite the new units proposed at Aldi. Housing at the former Rhos Street schools site could result in homes for the elderly or commuters, none of whom would necessarily contribute to the local economy.

Viewing Planning Applications

Planning applications can be viewed on Denbighshire County Council's web site where a weekly list of validated planning applications can be seen. Applications can also be examined by visiting the Caledfryn offices in Denbigh. In addition, the Denbighshire Free Press publishes a weekly list of submitted applications.

Cornucopia

Clement (perfect?) weather, a significant boost in participants, new venues and businesses reporting a financial fillip—this September's Open Doors was one of our best. Here, we look at some of 2019's new offerings

State of Distress

Open to the general public for the first time was London House's cellars, currently and recently occupied by State of Distress. Theirs are believed to be one of the oldest red-brick cellars in Wales. State of Distress uses it for pottery workshops.

The cellar itself extends under neighbour Bar Laeth.

Beneath the cellar is a well which it is believed serviced the former public water pump on St Peter's Square.

In more recent times, the site was occupied by an off-licence and the last incarnation closed in January 2017. It was then "under refurbishment" or should we say reefer-bishment. For the cellar then became the site of a £3m cannabis farm till in June 2017 the police busted it. To this day, there remains evidence of

Unlocking the Asylum

For Open Doors, the Denbighshire Archive opened its material, displays and media presentations on "Unlocking the Asylum" of the former North Wales Hospital.

Among the material offered was a glimpse as to why people between 1842 and 1918 were admitted to the Denbigh hospital.

They presented with such "symptoms" as mischievousness; excitability; religious excitement; intemperance; puberty; love affairs including seduction; love disappointments; post natal depression; war anxiety (worry about relatives fighting in the Great War); imbecility; and idiocy.

plant production, thanks to green staining on one cellar wall.

Bells of St Peter's

Apart from marking the hour, St Peter's church bells have been largely silent since the 1970s.



The £98,000 project to restore the bells—the biggest single project at that time—only concluded during the last week of August, when the bells again sounded. A week later, two days before Open Doors, and the soft furnishings in the bell room were finished.



The Open Doors weekend was therefore the first real test of the newly refurbished bells. Ringing repeatedly for those who ventured to the bell room, they greatly added to the atmosphere in town.



Tŷ Cerrig, Llanfwrog

Dating from the fifteenth century, this cruck framed house was once home to four families who worked at Ruthin Castle. It was reportedly used as a laundry for the Castle. It was bought dilapidated by its current owner and extended in 2013.

Tŷ Cerrig is built on porous limestone. During the height of the flooding in the early years of the 21st century, parts of the

property were flooded and this included fountains of water under pressure, within the house.

Visitors were able to see the witch marks on the fireplace. See p11 of September 2018's Town and Around for more information on them, at ruthincivic.org/publications/town-and-around/archive/

St Dyfnog's Well, Llanrhaeadr

Much has been written in the local newspaper and social media on on-going he work at the well.

The archæological project aimed to identify whether the well had indeed been of importance during Georgian times, as had been thought and whether the popularity of the site in mediæval times had indeed funded the church's Jesse window. At the time of Open Doors, this seemed inconclusive.

A number of artefacts were revealed during the dig but other than flint nothing was especially old.

Open Doors '19 by Robin Hill

Autumn air strikes a morning chill
Prompting to don a coat,
Though days can be quite sunny still,
This is weather that gets my vote.

Such 'twas both weekends for Open Doors
Annual festival of delights,
As historic buildings one explores,
Or feasts eyes on other sights.

St Peter's bells and registers
On display to hear and see,
Rehuing, retuned, fresh spirit stirs
For those seeking past family.

The fine Old Court House on the Square,
Where Owain struck a match,
Undergoing more than just repair
For Ruthin's community quite a catch.

The Wynnstay—once the Foxes Crossed,
Sadly now split asunder,
But major work disregarding cost
Has uncovered former wonder.

Tŷ Coch Barn at Moel Famau's foot
Cruck timbered, again stands proud,
Not just saved, restored to boot,
With new business use endowed.

For fifteen centuries St Saeran's
Llanfor
At the heart of Clwyd's Vale,
Has survived its battle to endure
Spiritual pilgrims to regale.

It must be said this annual feast
Is a cultural shot-in-arm,
As awareness of heritage has increased
Of the wealth of Ruthin's charm.

Masonic Hall

Never before open to the general public, the hall was situated in the church cloisters. The entrance was via a stairway with some ornately carved wood.

Wynnstay House

At least 400 people took advantage of seeing the Wynnstay. This was our first opportunity to do so since the pub closed nearly 10 years ago. We were able to see the refurbishment that began in January this year. On display were pieces of the Wynnstay frieze believed to be early 17th century, together with other finds such as Ruthin bottles, beam pins, handmade brick and even a brick with cat paw marks.

Tŷ Coch Barn, Llangynhafal

Another restored cruck framed property, believed to date from c.1430, this time let as a business. Till the second Open Doors weekend, who even knew of its existence?

Jones Bros Leading the Way

HEATHER WILLIAMS asks what do we know about a successful local business whose vehicles we regularly see on the roads in North Wales

In September, we had an interesting visit to the Clocaenog area, where Jones Bros was at the final stages of completing the installation of turbines for the new wind farm.

Founded in the 1950s by brothers Glyn and Elwyn Jones, Jones Bros is unique in having the in-house expertise to take on some of the UK's biggest civil engineering projects, while maintaining the flexibility and personable approach of a family business. Operating from its head office at Tŷ Glyn, the former ADAS and Denbighshire building off Park Road, Jones Bros now also has regional offices in Swansea, Oxford, Inverness and Edinburgh.

The key areas in which the company specialises are renewables and energy, construction of waste management facilities and landfill engineering, flood and coastal protection, marine infrastructure, quarrying and aggregate production, highways and surfacing, and also infrastructure and plant hire. Typically, Jones Bros works on joint ventures with other companies to undertake more complex contracts—particularly in relation to wind farms and highway construction projects.

Renewables and Energy

In the 1970s, having established techniques for constructing forestry access tracks, Jones Bros was in an ideal position to help with the challenging development of wind farms which involved the construction of access roads to accommodate abnormal loads, turbine foundations, substations and electrical infrastructure for on-shore wind farms.

Its largest contract to date involved 76 turbines at Pen y Cymoedd in South Wales, as well as others in the UK, and in particular in Scotland. The Jones Bros website (jones-bros.com) provides details of the location of these sites and the dates when the sites were developed, as well as contract values.

The company also provides infrastructure and ground preparation for solar farms.

Construction of waste management facilities and landfill engineering

From being a leading contractor for the construction of landfill sites, Jones Bros has become a specialist in the construction of waste management facilities and waste recycling plants. A local example of this is in Wrexham, where Jones Bros has developed plant extracts recyclable material from

domestic refuse and transforms the residue into fuel for multi-fuel power generation facilities.

Flood/coastal protection and marina infrastructure

Jones Bros has tackled projects along the Welsh coast, to improve the coastal protection, some of which have involved shoring up the sea defences with rocks, such as the Tywyn coastal defence scheme. Other projects have included the Deganwy marina construction, Llanddulas jetty demolition and the

Terminal 3 development at Holyhead.

Quarrying and aggregate production

Jones Bros extracts and processes aggregates on site, reducing the need to import materials required for highway and infrastructure work. It has one of the largest heavy plant fleets companies in the UK.

Highways and surfacing

The company has worked on many major road contracts which have included construction of by-passes, which have included the A5 Tŷ Nant to Dinmael rock cutting remedial work, the A487 Porthmadog by-pass, and they are currently working on the construction of the Caernarfon to Bontnewydd by-pass.

North Wales Hospital

In partnership with the North Wales Building Preservation Trust, Jones Bros is the preferred developer for the North Wales Hospital site, in Denbigh.

Training & career development

Finally, the company offers supportive training and career development opportunities. Rhys Roberts, the Site Agent who gave a presentation to members of RADCA at the Clocaenog Forest wind farm site is an excellent example. He joined Jones Bros in 2007

having been offered an apprenticeship after doing work experience with the company while completing his A levels. After graduating from the Civil Engineering Training Scheme, he has built up significant experience while working on a number of renewable energy projects. In 2015 Rhys completed his registration as an Engineering Technician (EngTech) with the Institution of Civil Engineering (ICE).



Rhys Roberts

He said "Jones Bros has given me plenty of opportunities to build up my skills and experience. I am responsible for a number of duties on site, including the design and assessment of site tracks and helping with controlling plant across site.

"I really enjoy my job, and love putting site plans into place so that you can see visible progress on the project as the weeks pass by."

So, in conclusion, it has to be said that we are most fortunate to have this forward-looking company based here, which certainly is providing a sustainable future in the civil engineering field.

The Clocaenog Windfarm...

Covers 4,000 hectares

Originally was planned for 32 turbines but this was reduced to 27

Project has taken 10 years with planning permission granted in 2014

Construction work on site started in March 2018

Was originally due to complete on 5/9/19 but is now 2/12/19. Too much wind was main problem in meeting the original date!

Project involved developing site compound, construction of 5 miles of roads, blasting stone from local quarry, construction of concrete plant used for turbine foundations (72ft wide x 11½ ft deep) and electricity substation

Steel for cables is from Ireland

Turbines are from Denmark and transported by sea to Ellesmere Port thence by road

Blades are 167ft in length

Is shut down if wind speed is more than 55mph!

Electricity substation on site links to Scottish Power then National Grid at St Asaph

employed 1,200 people overall —75% of them being local

An Unusual Christmas Card of Historic Importance

by D Gwynne Morris

The Christmas card, dated 1929, is significant in that it is the only one known to have survived showing the laying of the first foundation stone of the new building for the Denbighshire County Offices just 110 years ago on land donated by the Ruthin Borough Council. It is also unusual to use this sort of card for Christmas greetings!

At the time, this land directly opposite which was then the Agricultural Hall, now the town car park and at the corner of Market Street and Wynnstay Road was tenanted by R. James Jones, a stonemason and a local councillor.

The laying of the stone was carried out by Edward Roberts of Brymbo, the Chairman of the County Council, in the presence of local dignitaries, on June 4th, 1907.

As shown by the note on the card, right, the photographer may have been E. Tegid Owen (or he may have been in the ceremonial party). At the time, he was very well known in the area as the owner of the prestigious 'Castle Hotel' on St Peter's Square and a prominent Ruthin borough councillor.

His had been a very successful business but owing to the then wartime troubles in 1919, things were not going as well as he had hoped. He decided to sell and took over the White Lion in Cerrigydrudion, (Gwesty'r Llew Gwyn on the back of the card, below, with Cerrig spelt Cerrig y Druidion), where his wife had family connections.

On the completion of the building work, which had cost £6,500, the Denbighshire Free Press on March 27th, 1909, under the heading "New County Offices, Ruthin" had this interesting account.

"The building is built of tooled local limestone facings with dressings of Runcorn stone. The main entrance is



flanked on either side by polished emerald pearl granite columns 22ft high, the steps of Idle (near Bradford) stone and the roofs covered with grey slates."

"The local limestone mentioned was from the Eyarth Quarry generously placed at the disposal of the county council by the Ruthin council."

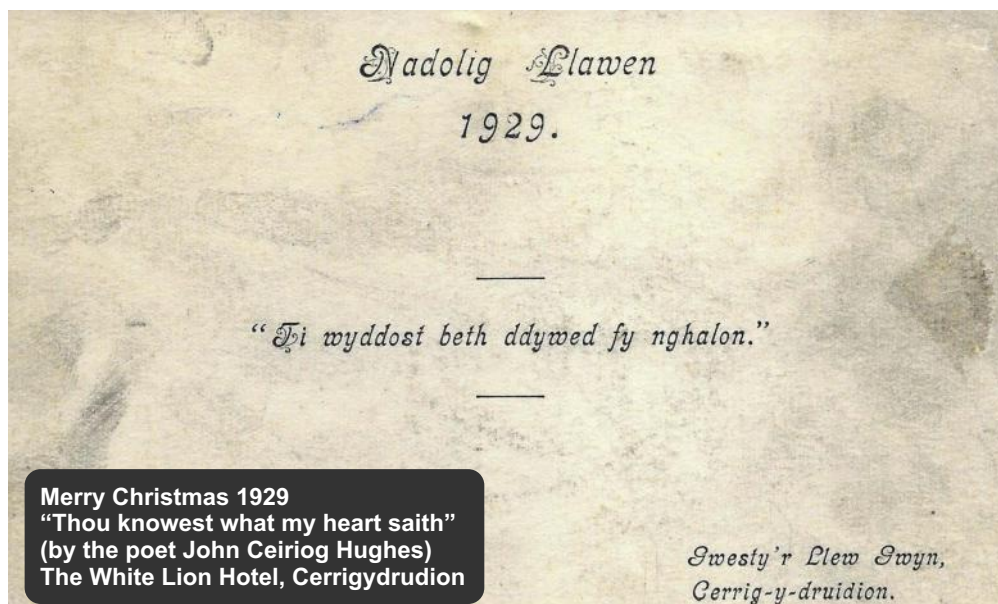
The account ends with the statement, "It may be of interest to our readers to know that the red stone for ashlar dressings was obtained from the Runcorn quarries. The same stone is now being obtained from for the Liverpool Cathedral."

Another interesting piece of information appeared in the Free Press of Saturday November 23rd, 1907, which stated that "... on Wednesday. The men were placing, with the help of a crane, the massive pillars on the two sides of the main entrance into position. The pillars are in sections, each portion weighing about 2ton 18cwt. One portion had been safely hoisted at the right

hand side, and it was whilst holding another section aloft, preparatory to fixing it on the other side of the entrance, that the crane broke, with a resounding crash, the pillar section, together with the long arm of the crane, fell."

The same account stated that "Two stone tablets, with gilt inscriptions in English and Welsh, were yesterday placed on either side of the main entrance."

How many of our readers have noticed them and how many know the number of sections there are on each pillar?



More by Gwynne Morris at townandaround.org.uk/historic

Seen in Passing...



The long-standing Jan's Cards, Well Street, closed on November 3rd for Jan's retirement. It's hard to imagine lower Well Street without her. She was there as Jan's Cards for some 40 years and, before that, had previously sold cards in the same shop for others, for 15 years. An end of an era. Expect the row of shops with accommodation above to go on the open market.



Appeared alongside Cyril Arnold accountants in Caste Street is this set of reclaimed cast iron railings, which probably date from the mid-19th century. A casual glance and you'd think that they were always there. In fact, the originals were removed for the war effort. The "new" railings enhance the property, while lending it some defensible space for the resident occupying the remainder of the Cyril Arnold building.



October 24th saw an automatic speed display appear on seemingly private land in Pentre Llanrhaeadr. It is official, though, and is reported to have had a tremendous impact on motorists who otherwise were ignoring or disregarding the posted 30mph limit. Might there be a role for these elsewhere? The limit through the village was first set to 30 in April 2015.

No sooner had we reported in the September 2019 edition of In Passing... that gentlemen's barbers in Ruthin had hit an all time high of five, a sixth appeared in early October, this time in the former beauty parlour next to Aydin's chippy, Wernfechan.



Appearing overnight on the doors of both County Hall and the Town Hall on September 6th/7th were warning notices from Extinction Rebellion. Was Ruthin to feature in one of its campaigns, perhaps? Apparently, not. The posters were soon removed.

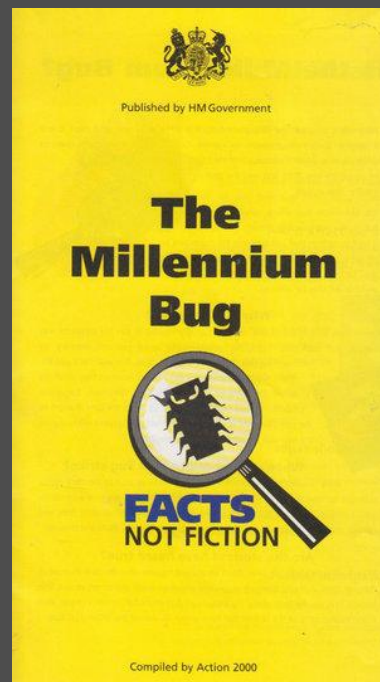


Other walls than featured on p7 treated this autumn include at Prior Street/Park Road and that opposite the Memorial, finished before Remembrance Day.



20 Years Ago

RU Y2K OK? As December 31st 1999 approached, the potential damage caused by a two- rather than four-digit computer system year field was thought to result in computers resetting 01-01-00 not as January 2000 but January 1900.



This had potentially serious consequences. In the autumn of 1999, press adverts began to appear to try to motivate a sceptical general public at the time by no means *au fait* with computers. In order to try to convince us, the UK government, via Action 2000, would spend £10m. Was all this a waste of effort? Or did it avert disaster?

In one campaign, they said, "In the last few years, a very powerful little creature has emerged that, according to media reports, is capable of causing planes to fall out of the sky while simultaneously creating havoc with our financial records and including the humble microwave".

The UK government expected all public organisations to prepare. Preparations for this so-called "millennium bug" on what were then called "microchip-linked systems" had started in 1997. All councils took the bug seriously. So, for example, during 1999, County Hall staff here in Ruthin were testing over 1,300 desktop PCs in offices and schools; 300 computer systems; over 2,500 other pieces of equipment, including heating systems, alarms, traffic lights, lifts and CCTV; and contacting over 7,000 suppliers to ensure they would continue to provide services.

The then Head of Finance warned county councillors that there was no perfect solution. "You would have to close all your schools and services to achieve that", said Nigel Thomas.

Another View

KATHY DANIELS looks on the bright side regarding the Archive's potential move to Mold

There are no plans to close our libraries. That much we know from the blueprints to relocate our Archive to Mold. That's because each of Denbighshire's eight libraries will have a role to play in linking to the new Mold-based central Archive, on a "hub-and-spoke" principle. This could significantly widen the appeal of the archive for all local residents. Some good news, then, if this helps safeguard a valuable public service, our libraries; and extend the appeal of another, the Archive.

The architects of the proposal to move the Archive to Mold were able to reassure us that there were other benefits for archive researchers, not least a larger pool of staff, extended opening and more space to receive & store materials (the Gaol is running out). Denbighshire has the equivalent of 3¼ staff and opens for three days it used to be 2½). Denbighshire would have access to Flintshire's conservation archivists, too.

The resources will also be able to increase the combined archive's digital records, enabling a single point of access online. This will mean that more records will be accessible from researchers' homes as well as from libraries.

We also know that the number of visits to Denbighshire's archive last year was just 792 and that was surprisingly low. About half the visitors are Denbighshire residents and we would assume that their economic impact on the town was minimal. The other half, potentially, could

contribute more to Ruthin's economy but, even so, the number equates to barely 2½ visits per opening day.

Now, the more concerning news. Moving the Archive to Mold will result in 70 per cent of the Old Gaol being emptied. What impact will this have on a heritage building brought back to life following considerable grants? The last thing we need is a question mark hanging over another of our heritage buildings.

Even here, though, there are positives. There's an opportunity to reinvigorate the Old Gaol, however challenging this may prove to be. There are apparently many stored artefacts that could go on display in an "expanded" Old Gaol, when and if space becomes available. Anything that will enhance the appeal of this visitor attraction should be grabbed.

There's even talk (again) of some sort of tie-in with the National Trust and we're told there are discussions. Including Nantclwyd y Dre, enabling a partnership with the NT has the benefit of wider marketing and increased footfall. If that can be pulled off, we can expect both Nantclwyd y Dre and the Old Gaol to take off. This will also be challenging but wouldn't that be wonderful. You need only use imagination to wonder what else could be achieved by linking Nantclwyd y Dre, the Old Gaol with the Old Courthouse and Ruthin Castle walls.

Given that few of us in Denbighshire seem to bother to use the Archive, perhaps it simply won't matter where documents are held, so long as they are well curated. But, when you consider the arbitrary way in which the former Clwyd archive was split, stitching most of it back together in a purpose-built, state of the art building with staff aplenty and better opening hours is perhaps no bad thing. It's certainly a shame that Ruthin will miss out on a multi-million-pound investment. We're told that this would be impossible in

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

Please send them to the Secretary at cymru@clwyd.org or

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The deadline for the next edition is February 15th, 2019

Thanks are due to this quarter's contributors: Kathy Daniels, Peter Daniels, Gareth Evans, Kate Marcus, Robin Hill, Derek Jones, Harold Jones, Gwynne Morris, Isabel Stewart, Heather Williams; and with the help of Roger Edwards, Fiona Gale, Ken Hawkins, Dorinda Kostravenglis & Helen Vaughan-Evans.

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

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Ruthin. So, if not Ruthin, then it's probably better near Mold than in some desolate corrugated shed only accessible by car and at the back end of some forlorn industrial estate where facilities are few.

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.

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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)