

Town & Around O Gwmpas y Dre

Spring 2024

The 'Eyes of Ruthin' since 2003 from the Ruthin & District Civic Association

Old Retail Dead? Not Yet it Isn't

Ruthin has more to offer than meets the eye. Let's not write ourselves off quite yet

We're not sure whether this started with the Daily Post or whether the Daily Post exacerbated it. January's high profile closure of Rachel's Eco Store resulted in the newspaper claiming of Ruthin that 'Old Retail is Dead' and words within such as 'another blow to Ruthin's retail offer'.

Earlier, referring to the closure of Clogau, the Daily Post said that 'retail blues have struck a town centre in Denbighshire with news of another shop closure'. Note the continued use of the word 'another'. Since then, The Salon (Clwyd Street) has also closed. Yes, that's another 'another'.

It would be easy to point to these events as evidence of a declining town centre. Certainly this is what happened on social media.

We all know that town centres are under pressure. Social media narrative seems to be negative. Calls for more convenience shops in the town centre, for example, seem to ignore the fact that with only a few exceptions the centre cannot compete with supermarkets.

This is the landscape we have made for ourselves. It also doesn't help that there's little money around. But we also have the power of influence.

It's time, therefore, to sing the praises of our small town. There's still plenty to come into the town centre for. The more we do, the stronger it will be and as a result the more we can look after our impressive heritage. The continued influence of online retail can support us all if we concentrate on what's *not* on offer in town.

So, let's look at what we actually *have* on offer. The range of goods and services is probably more comprehensive than social media pundits think.

First, the established media do not tend to focus on positive changes. This winter, long-term empty premises on the Square at the former wine merchant is now occupied. An optician has moved from a relatively hidden premises to fill a

glaring gap on Well Street. The Majestic Travel side of the Square is bare but there is much work on-going within. Along its length, a number of premises that have formerly required care are now splendidly refurbished, including a new restaurant at Montecito.

Secondly, a town population of 6,000 still supports over 100 town centre businesses, offices and organisations. In the town centre, we have 10 gift shops; nine beauty salons; eight cafés; seven takeaways; six convenience or food shops including two bakeries and two butchers; five fashion shops; five barbers; five restaurants appealing to various pockets; three DIY, hardware or gardening shops; four places offering accommodation; three solicitors; three accountants;

two haberdashers; two carpet shops; two charity shops; two antiques shops; two estate agents; two pet shops; two laundries; a florist; an indoor market hall; an ethical shop; a toy shop; a bank; an optician; a newsagent; a bookmaker; a computer repairer; a post office and nine other offices.

Now if that isn't a surprising collection of goods and services for a town of 6,000 people, we aren't sure what is.

Compare this to similarly sized Rhuddlan. Our populations are almost identical. Rhuddlan is near to a retail park and to Prestatyn shops. Rhuddlan supports a third of our number of businesses within the heart of the town itself.

Thirdly, there's always been change. There have also been periods when we've seen a higher proportion of empty shops than now.

We're pleased to record that Rachel Ryland is still busy. The Daily Post says that she has reinvented herself as a nascent TikTok online 'influencer', a job title that simply didn't exist when the town's shops first developed or even 10 years ago. It seems that for her it's a case of 'If you can't beat 'em, join 'em'.

Inspiration from a Hidden History

BETHAN HUGHES introduces a Civic Association-supported project inspired by the Welsh Women's Peace Petition 1923-24

A century ago, Wales was central to efforts to find peaceful ways to deal with international disputes and to seek reconciliation between nations after the horrors of the First World War. The League of Nations was in its infancy but the United States of America was reluctant to join. A group of influential and proactive women in Wales saw an opportunity to reach a hand of friendship and solidarity across the ocean in the name of peace.

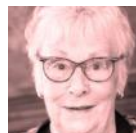


It was decided to collect a petition, or 'The Memorial' as it was known, signed by the women of Wales to present to the women of the US to help them try to influence their own government to join the League of Nations. Through a network of local organisers, within six months in 1923, 390,296 Welsh women (60 per cent of the female population) had signed: a huge achievement in a period with little mass communication. Under the leadership of Annie Hughes-Griffiths, the petition was taken to the US on a ship from Liverpool to New York. It toured across America and on February 19th, 1924 it was formally presented to the women of the United States.

US politics in the 1920s was complex and the country never did join the

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View from the Chair



This has been the subject of significant concern for a long time and the impact of the pandemic has only resulted in an acceleration of the decline of traditional retail led town centres.

One of the main factors in this has been the move (accelerated by the pandemic) to online shopping where whether for beauty products, fashion, or tech goods, online shopping rates have gone from 15-20 per cent share in these sectors to between 50-60 per cent and also where these rates are now being sustained.

The reaction or perhaps lack of it has been simply to lament the decline of town centres or more specifically the retail offer but there hasn't been a collaborative approach to trying to stop the decline, or more realistically to accept the changes that have happened and to ensure that town centres can remain vibrant by recognising a wider range of uses are suitable and are promoted.

The UK Government created a High Street Task Force to begin to try to look at how the situation in town centres could be addressed and mitigated. Welsh Government has created its Town Centre First policy and in both instances there is a role for the planning system to create greater flexibility for development in town centres to be acceptable for a broader range of retail, commercial and leisure

uses. The UK Government's mantra is to seek to 'reinvent' town centres to make vital and multifunctional hub.

This sounds good but in reality it requires a significant level of collaborative effort by all those stakeholders who have or should have an interest in ensuring the vibrancy of their town centres. This particularly includes local authorities who have a significant role in facilitating and enabling positive change and investment. This can be achieved through a range of actions:

- Co-ordinated collaboration of all stakeholder partners and a shared set of goals for each town.
- Leading on securing investment and funding – levelling up funding and Welsh Government town centre regeneration money have been available to address these issues.
- Leading on the development of Place Plans for town centres, that include and action plan for implementing positive change e.g. Enhancing the streetscene; green infrastructure, removing unnecessary signage; revising the approach to business rates, parking charges and planning proposals.
- Develop much more flexible policies in the replacement LDP to allow a greater range of town centre

uses to be considered – both permanent and more temporary, such as pop-up uses and pop-up traders.

- Establish a true partnership that includes occupiers, property owners, businesses, local authority, town council, the third sector, employees, residents and visitors. There has to be commitment from all or change won't happen.
- Researching and sharing best practice from elsewhere, where actions and co-ordination of events have successfully increased footfall for town centre businesses.

The local authority in a Ruthin context can be part of the issue regarding footfall, with its approach to working from home. This results in barely staffed buildings. The County Council could offer a strategic boost for the town centre as they should do.

How good it was, then, to hear that Denbighshire's property review potentially safeguards County Hall. They could assist further by taking the responsibility for getting more people into the town on a daily basis with the resultant benefits that the footfall could bring to trade and activity.

Anne Roberts MBE
Chair of the Civic Association

- What Ruthin has to offer, p1
- County Hall, p3

Of 'Water' Gate...

Town & Around has previously reported on both sides in the debate over new rules surrounding holiday accommodation. Owners of holiday lets occupied for less than 182 days of the year (up from 70) now face council tax premiums of up to 300 per cent above standard rates. The idea was to return under-used accommodation to the property market for local people to rent.

We have over the years also featured the painstaking restoration of mediæval Porth y Dŵr, Clwyd Street. This is a significant building that is now available as self-catering visitor accommodation. It is a unique building that brings visitors to the Ruthin area.

But its owners, who are members of the Civic Association, fear that they cannot meet the Welsh Government's new minimum number of days.

This has forced them to abandon the visitor accommodation and to offer the building as a dwelling to rent.



This they did in January and this was agreed towards the end of February 2024.

We therefore lose a significant and marketable tourist asset and the tourist income with it. On the other hand, we do gain another property in the difficult-to-find letting market. This will not however appeal to the affordable rental sector as envisioned by the Welsh Government.

Porth y Dŵr offers two bedrooms and loads of character. As a benchmark, a two-bed house on Railway Terrace is £650 and up.

... & 'Ocean' Pearl

A small but potentially controversial planning application has recently been approved by Denbighshire County Council.

The original plans were for the installation of a side window to the former Castle Park Café building, Clwyd Street, most recently Ocean Pearl, intended for use as a takeaway window.

A number of locals recall about 10 years ago that this wall when exposed for repairs had timber framing and wattle and daub. There was concern that the planned changes would not be compatible with the structure. This has been brought to the County Council's attention and it is understood that the Town Council is seeking confirmation from the County as planning authority to ensure that this has been fully considered so that the integrity of the building is not compromised in any way.

The Civic Association fully support the Town Council in this respect.

Subsequently the proposal has been amended to include the removal of disabled car parking spaces on the adjacent Crispin Yard public car park, itself potentially a concern.

County Hall 'Saved'?

Following a review of its core strategic properties, news widely circulating suggests that Denbighshire County Council has decided to vacate its Caledfryn offices in Denbigh and retain County Hall here in Ruthin.

While we understand Denbigh's pain, we also believe there may in future be a new lease of life for Caledfryn, perhaps as part of the Betsi Cadwaladr estate.

Decisions have been difficult for the County Council. The need for office accommodation is strongest in the north of Denbighshire but County Hall in the south was much less marketable.

In September 2023, when we questioned Chief Executive Graham Boase, it was clear that a property review was well under way. Like most white collar local authority and many private sector office jobs, the pandemic

has hastened the inevitable home working. Suddenly, Denbighshire had too much accommodation. Contact in the office now ranges from none at all to two, three or four days a week only.

This is a problem for towns where there is a significant number of local government jobs. It's doubly so where the local government administration is the main 'industry', as in Ruthin.

We shouldn't forget the upsides to home working. Less travel is a significant one. It also frees up people to live in locations more of their choosing. As such, Ruthin is a potential long-term beneficiary and not just for local government jobs. Office jobs in other sectors can also now be home-based. And, those working from home tend to contribute more to their own communities.

Even before Caledfryn is vacated, there are days when the County Hall car park is now almost full. This is the first time since the pandemic. There is already evidence of more staff returning. This will have an



Repair and redecoration work

Denbigh's Loss...

Like County Hall, Caledfryn in Denbigh was a purpose-built office block for the new Denbighshire County Council. On the land was previously the agricultural mart and a redundant shirt factory.

Caledfryn was completed in 1998 and was not without its controversies. It was part of a strategy to spread the economic benefit of the new authority as widely as possible, with offices in Ruthin, Denbigh, Prestatyn and Rhyl. Denbighshire vacated Prestatyn's Tŷ Nant in 2014. Denbighshire is expected to vacate Caledfryn in June but certainly by September this year. Meanwhile, County Hall opened unofficially in 2003 and officially in 2004. It therefore celebrates its official 20th birthday this month.

impact on footfall in town (we trust).

Subject to personnel consultations, when Caledfryn is vacated, will County Hall in principle be able to take more staff, even if some or most of these only travel in on selected days only? We expect so. The County Council's decision should therefore be welcomed.

● In a further positive signal, February 2024 saw almost the conclusion of the County Council's major decorating and repair of the exterior of County Hall. The rendered walls in particular had been looking grubby but are now pearly white. Scaffolding had previously surrounded the building. Left, though, was the algae staining at the Market Street entrance.

Feedback

The most feedback we received on December 2023's Town & Around was on the article on 20 mph (p3).

All felt that the piece was well balanced and broadly reflected the position. Observations tended to be on compliance and that there was still traffic clearly exceeding not just 20 but sometimes 30 mph.

The view that there was now more traffic in town was one that was very much supported.

Whereas the article suggested that crossing the road was now actually more difficult, one member felt that it was much easier. We took a look at this and we think that speed compliance is better on some main roads (e.g. Llanfair Road) than others (e.g. Mold Road, in spite of two schools). Pedestrians cross more easily where traffic speeds are lower.

Several members commended the Civic Association on the article on the lending library. It seems members felt that it was a fair statement of affairs. We subsequently learnt, of course, that Denbighshire's Cabinet reluctantly decided that the proposed cuts should be made.

Perhaps we were trying to be too

'clever' when in 'Seen in Passing...' we quipped that we hadn't spotted any members in the uphill race from Bryn Goodman to Moel Famau (p11). We also said we felt that the runners 'showed disinterest at the top at the jubilee tower'.

How wrong we were on both counts! There was at least one and probably two members who partook of the race and we are confident that they certainly *did* express an interest at the top. Our apologies for our sweeping statements.

Perhaps it's best that 'Seen in Passing...' takes a break for this edition.



Still the Best

As the year-long accolade associated with the Sunday Times' best place to live in Wales draws to a close, we can expect another town to take the 2024 crown.

The Sunday Times isn't abandoning the area completely, though. On January 28th, 2024, its travel section considered 'Seven under-rated beauty spots in the UK'. These in fact were seven of the Sunday Times' favourite AONBs. (There are 86 from which to choose, five of which are in Wales.)

Of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, the newspaper said, 'The 150 square mile Welsh national landscape remains largely off the tourist map' and that it encompasses 'tranquil trails through carpets of heather, Iron Age hillforts, majestic abbeys [well, one] and castle ruins'.

The Civic Association responded to the national parks consultation (which appears to have gone quiet) and in concentrating on that the fact that since November 2023 AONBs now seem re-branded as 'national landscapes' has passed us by. As yet, there doesn't appear to be any evidence of the new name but given the AONB is a bit of a mouthful then the new title would seem appropriate. We nevertheless still look forward to national park status.

Denbighshire's Climate Commitments

The County Council's climate commitments are being reviewed and refreshed

In October 2023, Council Climate Action published a document in which they had marked and scored all UK top tier and unitary councils on a total of 91 possible actions councils could take to reach a net-zero carbon foot print. These covered a wide range of topics.

The Denbighshire assessment considered seven headings, with a percentage score (the higher the better):

Buildings and heating	47%
Transport	15%
Planning and land use	24%
Governance and finance	25%
Bio-diversity	36%
Collaboration/engagement	59%
Waste reduction and food	40%
Overall total score	34%

In more detail, in terms of buildings and heating, the Council had scored well in areas where it was encouraging people to take up home retrofitting using grants and information sharing. There was a lack of information, however, on the costs & plans to retrofit premises and there was no scheme to allow residents to purchase renewable energy cheaply through collective buying.

For transport, it had scored well for its single electric minibus (as used in the Ruthin district), for 20 mph zones and the rolling out of some electric charging points. There was a lack of shared transport schemes, however (including bikes & mobility scooters, as well as cars). The Council also scored low owing to a lack of low emission zones which are operational in city centres but this may not be particularly applicable in Denbighshire.

In relation to planning and land use, scoring recognised high standards for energy & water efficiency and the removal

of minimum parking requirements for new council owned or managed housing. This was the case for identifying & approving new areas for renewable energy. Denbighshire scored zero for expressing the policy in building regulations, not requiring developers to carry out whole life cycle carbon assessments, a lack of 15/20 minute neighbourhood aspirations, avoiding development on the functional flood plains, on-site renewables and approval for carbon intensive energy development.

For governance and finance areas, Denbighshire scored well or above the average for a climate change risk register, carbon emission reduction, putting climate emissions at the heart of decision making, having a lead cabinet member for this responsibility and for external funding. It scored zero for not expressing net zero and climate emissions in corporate and financial plans, not reporting on its own emissions, not embedding the policy in the procurement process, staff resourcing, training and developer contributions and divestment.

In terms of biodiversity, Denbighshire has done well with its mowing practices and having an ecologist scrutinising its planning as well as reducing energy used for street lighting.

However, because the County Council had not banned the use of pesticides or had no policy on the use of peat free compost and because they had not produced a target to increase tree cover in the county, they lost points in this section.

Finally, Denbighshire scored well on its kerbside recycling but improvements could be made by reducing single use plastics in its buildings and at events, looking at ways to support food distribution and creating a sustainable food strategy.

The score card system is designed to hold a local authority to account and to press for improvements. In November 2023, the County Council held a meeting inviting the public to consult with them on a review and refresh of the Council's work in



relation to their commitments in declaring a climate and ecological emergency. Some suggestions put forward by the Denbighshire Environmental Alliance (a group of organisations across Denbighshire to which the Civic Association belongs) were to:

- Ask the council to implement net zero targets into its policies around climate change.
- Ask it to ban the purchase and use of certain compost.
- Create targets to increase tree cover in its tree management plan.
- Ask the council to prioritise insulating their buildings and rented accommodation.
- Ban the use of pesticides.
- Review its net zero and climate & negative ecological policies and to expand on its remit beyond the council's own estates.
- Ask the Council to divest from fossil fuels in its pension fund.

Denbighshire also needed to be more transparent in its processes and involve the community more in the difficult decisions that need to be made in the future, both economically and in terms of the climate & ecological emergency.

We now wait to see what is put into practice!



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)

Local Listing: of interest to us all

CHRIS EVANS explains what it is and how we can all be involved

'Local listing' is when a local planning authority sets up an inventory of historic assets of special local interest that recognise and celebrate local distinctiveness.

Currently very few local authorities in Wales have local lists (including Denbighshire) but this is something Cadw encourages and is something Denbighshire County Council aspires to do in the future, subject to finance and resources being available.

Currently only recognised assets such as listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered historic parks & gardens and conservation areas have protection. Alongside these is valued local heritage which is often cherished by the community and contributes greatly to the character but has no formal recognition or protection.



ironmongers and have their names on them etc.

The problem is these type of items could disappear overnight and be lost forever but they do add significant local value and character that have been part of the fabric of the area for long periods of time. At least by adding them to a local list it would afford some degree of protection, as they could not just be removed without consent.

When preparing a local list the community and third part sectors will play a big part in the consultation process working, alongside the local authority, because their local knowledge will be crucial to identify items to be included.

To develop the list there will be an overarching statement of significance which describes the local historic character that makes it distinctive. Clear criteria will be set out for public consultation, with the following subjects being included:

- Aesthetic interest (architecture and designed landscapes)
- Archaeological interest
- Historic interest
- Historical association (assets with association with people, events or movements important to the area)
- Group value
- Social & communal value,
- Age and rarity.

The assets will be identified by systematic survey which will bring together interested stakeholders and encourage community interest and involvement.

As well as the public, I am certain there are groups in Ruthin who would like to get involved, as the

publishing of this magazine highlights there is strong local community interest in the historic built environment within



the area.

As Conservation Officer for Denbighshire County Council I shall be pushing for a local list to be implemented in the County as soon as resources are available. I believe it is an important tool to preserve the special character of an area. Once these assets are gone they are lost forever and irreplaceable.

■ The Civic Association is delighted at the news of possible local listing and will of course be glad to partner in this venture.



The type of asset that could be included are buildings that are not quite reaching the threshold for listing but do have architectural and historic value. They may have played a part in a community over a long period of time. Such an example in Ruthin is the former Rhos Street School which is currently under threat.

In a Mediæval market town like Ruthin and its surrounding area, I am sure there are quite a few buildings and structures of value the community would like some protection on that add character and local distinctiveness.

But it is not just buildings that can be included, as there are lots of other items of local interest that could be considered. These include cast iron sign posts, stone milk churn stands outside farms, stone stiles and gate posts, cast iron or historic street name plates i.e. the blue and white metal name plates around Ruthin, milestones, post boxes and even manhole covers that were made by local



Rhos Street School



Mechanism for Clock Restoration Engagement

HEATHER WILLIAMS ensures that Civic Association members will not be behind the times

The Committee overseeing the restoration of the Peers Memorial and clock was formed in spring 2021. It comprises a group of eight members of the local community.

The restoration project was split into two phases: the first was to commission a conservation architect to complete full architectural plans and drawings of the structure, as well as creating a full schedule and plans of required restoration works and cost projections. Some will remember the September 2021 community consultation that included exhibitions in the Old Courthouse and Ruthin Library and an art competition for children, as well as talks to schools and groups.

The second phase was during the winter 2021/22, when the committee started to look for capital funding sources to begin the repair and restoration works to the clock tower.

After contact with Denbighshire County Council, the project was then included in the town's wider bid to the Levelling Up Fund alongside other projects.

In January 2023 came news that LUF bid of £10.95m was successful. Among the 10 projects in the greater Ruthin area was the Peers memorial. The original timetable for the delivery of all these projects was anticipated to be by March 2025. The timetable for the projects has subsequently been extended to spring 2026 for projects such as St Peter's Square and Cae Ddol. It is anticipated, however, that the renovation and repair of memorial and clock will be one of the earliest projects completed which should be by the end of 2024.

With the capital funds for the project at the time secured, the committee then applied for funding for a community heritage project to run alongside the restoration of the works to the clock tower. Funding was obtained from the Clocaenog Windfarm Fund, with a contribution from Ruthin Town Council.

The community engagement project will involve a series of community events and activities during 2024, working with Ruthin Town Council and other local groups such as the Ruthin and District Civic Association, Ruthin Local History Society and even Ruthin Festival.

Proposed activities include talks to both adults and school children about the clock's history and two people associated with it. One of those is Joseph Peers, Clerk of the Peace, whose image is on the memorial. He was a Ruthin solicitor to whom the

memorial tower is dedicated ('Who Was Joseph Peers', Town and Around, March 2021).

The other person is the architect, John Douglas.

Talks & guided tour visits will also take place to explain about the restoration practices being used in carrying out work on the clock tower. There will also be an opportunity for a few students in secondary schools to have work experience and shadow the conservation architect and project manager during the work on the structure.

There will be an opportunity for adults and children to take part in craft activities (e.g. art, pottery, as well as a quilting competition inspired by the clock tower).

An opportunity to see historical documents relating to the clock tower and Joseph Peers's work as the Clerk of the Peace will also be shown at an event in the Archives at Ruthin Gaol, which will include correspondence, diaries and articles from the Denbighshire Free Press. It will also provide a step by step guide for people who have not used the archives before.

There will be an exhibition about the clock project and its history in the Old Courthouse, building on and providing additional information from the previous exhibition in 2021.

A cleaning and tidying up of Joseph Peers's gravestone has started at St Mwrog's Church, Llanfwrog.

Finally, a short booklet will be produced about the history of the memorial that will include the story of the restoration project.

Initial dates for your diaries:

7.30pm - 9.00pm

Wednesday 17th April:

'Peers Memorial Clock Tower, Ruthin: the story behind the clock and the man it commemorates', Old Courthouse.

10.00am-12.00noon Tuesday 30th April: Peers Memorial Clock Tower, Ruthin: take a tour of the archives and discover fascinating documents, Ruthin Gaol Archives.

Both events have limited capacity. If you are interested, to book a free place please contact Heather Williams htnw@btinternet.com 01824 704998.

● 'Who Was Joseph Peers', Town & Around, March 2021, available at v.gd/radca

Time to Discover Douglas

HEATHER WILLIAMS has researched local architect John Douglas

You will probably be familiar with the clock in Eastgate Street in Chester that after 'Big Ben' is said to be the second most photographed clock in Britain. The Diamond Jubilee Memorial Clock was commissioned by Chester councillors to celebrate 60 years of the reign of Queen Victoria in 1897. The designer chosen was a well-known local architect, John Douglas (1830-1911) who lived in Dee Banks, Walmoor Hill overlooking the River Dee in Chester.

This, however, wasn't the only town clock which John Douglas designed to commemorate a person. He was also responsible for two other clock towers in Wales: one in Llangefni, Anglesey, and one here in Ruthin.

The clock tower in Ruthin is in a

prominent location directly facing the Old Courthouse on St Peter's Square. In a catalogue of Douglas's works, it is described as the Peers Memorial Fountain and Clock Tower. In the Listed Building description (it was only listed in 2005) it is referred to as the Peers Monument or Joseph Peers Memorial Clock Tower, there being no functioning fountain now. It is often referred to as



tower' for short.

The clock tower was erected in 1883 on the site of the former town hall. The tower was funded by public subscription to commemorate the life and work of Joseph Peers. He was a Ruthin solicitor who had served 50 years as the Clerk of the Peace (the legal advisor) for Denbighshire.

The other clock tower in Llangefni is the Rayner Memorial Clock Tower, more often known as Llangefni Town Clock. This is also in the heart of the town, opposite the town hall. It was erected in 1902 in memory of George Pritchard Rayner of Trecawen, who died in Blomfontein Hospital, South Africa in July



John Douglas

Committee, chaired by the Duke of Westminster, which probably influenced the choice of John Douglas as architect.

John Douglas also designed a number of buildings in the centre of Chester, which include the Entrance Lodge and Billy Hobby's Well house in Grosvenor Park (1865-1867), shop premises on the east side of St Werburgh Street (1895-87), public baths on Union Street (1898-1901) including the exotically named Atlantic Pool (still in use) and the adjoining houses on Bath Street.

In Ruthin, most likely owing to his connection with William Cornwallis-West of Ruthin Castle, John Douglas was not only responsible for designing the Joseph Peers Memorial Clock Tower, but also two houses at the bottom of Bryn Goodman (1886) and Ruthin School (1889-1892). Interestingly enough, Douglas used a very similar design (a bit like on the Blue Peter programme: 'here's one I made earlier!') for a competition he won in 1888 for the Friars School, Bangor which was opened in 1900.

Douglas's architectural style was varied. It encompassed High Victorian Gothic, Germanic, Elizabethan and Vernacular styles. The High Victorian style, popular between 1850 to 1870, included features such as steep sloping roofs, coloured roof slates, bold geometric shapes and patterned &

painted brickwork. Later he used Germanic designs which were inspired by the high steeped roofs, turret towers, chimney stacks and timberwork that is found in the Rhine and Moselle areas of Germany. Ruthin and Friars Schools are typical buildings constructed in the Elizabethan style.

Finally the Vernacular style, based on using traditional materials and resources from the area where the building is located, was significantly used by John Douglas.

In particular, Douglas was influenced by the black and white revival in Chester. Many of his buildings are half timbered, as can be seen in the row of buildings in St

Ruthin School



Werburgh Street (there is a blue plaque in recognition of John Douglas's work on these buildings). Others have decorative brick work, high chimney stacks or detailed wood carvings.

Maybe this article has whetted your appetite to discover more about the architect, John Douglas. Hopefully during this year there will be opportunities to learn more about the structures designed by Douglas, particularly those in Ruthin, and maybe further afield. There's even a John Douglas Heritage Centre in the iconic Over United Reformed Church in Winsford (see leaflet JDHC-DL-Ver5.pdf (winsfordurc.org.uk) which members might like to have a group outing to, or maybe to have a tour around Chester city centre. If you're interested contact Heather Williams on 01824 704998 or htnw@btinternet.com.

1900.

John Douglas designed a lot more than three clock towers. During his lifetime he designed more than 500 buildings in North Wales, Cheshire and other parts of mainly north-west England. Significantly, the Grosvenor family of Eaton Hall became his patrons, so John Douglas designed many buildings on their estate, such as farmhouses, cottages, lodges and churches.

One of the buildings that you may be familiar with is St Deniol's Library, Hawarden (1899-1908), also known as the Gladstone Library, Britain's only prime ministerial library. The building was commissioned after the death of William Gladstone to accommodate his significant library collection. The committee set up to administer it was the Gladstone National Memorial

Chester



Like Sand through the Hourglass

The Peers Memorial levelling up project is reported to be over-budget by as much as £30,000. As a result, it is unlikely to start in April, as previously planned.

The team may need to agree revisions and deletions of areas previously deemed essential. This has not found favour with the organising committee. An expensive asbestos survey is also needed.

We can expect fresh grant applications. Once these issues are resolved, it is anticipated that the project and most of the anticipated engagement activities will run between July and October 2024. October was always set aside as a contingency and this is the very last month that the work can take place, before winter sets in.

One benefit, however, is that the Ruthin Festival's Top Dre Saturday music event may now continue unhindered & unchanged. With delayed works, the clock stage can be now still be installed in its usual place.

● 2024 is the Festival's 30th anniversary this year.

A New Wave at Pool Park

ROB PRICE surfs in to meet the company behind an exciting project for this long-neglected mansion—that could eventually become a restored hospitality site

No doubt many people in the Ruthin saw the article in the Daily Post on January 26th, 2024 about the recent acquisition and plans for Pool Park. This is the mansion, buildings, walled garden and grounds which are located approximately two miles outside Ruthin (not far from the B5105 road towards Clawddnewydd). As someone who lives near the site, it definitely gained my interest.

While the site has been occupied far before then (with a previous mansion), Pool Park was rebuilt in 1826-29 by William Bagot (1773-1856), second Lord Bagot, to the designs of John Buckler, and assisted by local architect Benjamin Gummow.

There is speculation that the area was once the deer park for Ruthin Castle, so Pool Park might have started its existence as a hunting lodge. The Bagot family chose to live at Blithfield Hall in Staffordshire, often renting Pool Park to tenants. These included George Richards Elkington, a Birmingham electro-plater, Robert Bleazard, a Liverpool brewer, and Sir Ernest Tate, president of sugar refiners Tate and Lyle.

It was sold in 1928, no doubt anticipating the purchase by the North Wales Counties Mental Hospital Committee, who were looking for an overflow for the Denbigh Mental Hospital. They purchased Pool Park in 1932 (for £12,000) but it wasn't until 1937 that the hospital annex actually opened.

The building and adjacent grounds were used as a camp in the Second World War, and then in use as a wing of Denbigh Mental Hospital until 1989 when the building closed. It was then sold in 1992. Since 1992 the building has

been vacant and unused. While there was talk at one time of a country hotel and more recently a care village (in around 2012, with planning permission granted for 38 homes and 60 apartments) the house and buildings remained unaltered and, sadly, continued to deteriorate as time went on.

Unfortunately in the last few years, the site had become an object of interest from among ghost hunters and urban explorers, who at times caused considerable damage to the property to gain entry.

Talk of the building and site being sold started to circulate a few months ago, and then came the Daily Post article.

It has to be a good thing that a local firm that has taken on the site. They have an understanding of the area. They are the Godfrey Group, who are currently based in Denbigh. Godfrey Group provides facility services to a number of companies in the leisure, housing and education sectors, including Adra, Grŵp Cynefin, Center Parcs and local authorities.

The plan is to redevelop the whole site for leisure and hospitality purposes, which will potentially include holiday lets.

Even initial contact with Godfrey Group made clear their passion and zeal for the project. They have clearly already undertaken a good amount of research into the Pool Park's history, but they want to find out even more about the history of the building and the estate.

However, their priority is clearing the site of overgrown vegetation, ensuring the safety of the site and buildings, and making the site ready for the large restoration works that will at some point take place.

They are working with Chris Evans (Denbighshire's Conservation Surveyor). They have already stated they will do everything possible to respect and preserve original features such as the quality

The site is now substantially cleared, giving this view of the mansion, right, and outbuildings, left



Georgian workmanship. They hope to have their offices at Pool Park in the coming months, moved from their current site in Denbigh into one of the buildings adjacent to the main house.

Given the state of the house, adjoining buildings and grounds, the work ahead will be very much a long-term project. They have a five year plan.

The site at present is strictly off limits to the general public but when further along Godfrey Group want to engage with the local community. There is a possibility of an event being planned at a venue in Ruthin this summer about the history of the house and estate (details to be arranged).

I suppose the main question is this: do locals now have a reason to be hopeful for the future of Pool Park? After many years of disappointment, I think the answer now is 'yes'.

We have been overwhelmed at the support from the local community. It's been wonderful to hear from people who are thrilled that the building is to be saved, as well as people who have connections to Pool Park. We would like to thank everyone for their kind messages, they are very much appreciated.

"I'd like to say also how grateful we are to the local authority in Denbighshire for their advice and guidance with this project so far. We know that Denbighshire officers are as keen as we are to see the site saved and restored so that it can be appreciated for generations to come. We are also working with ecologists and Cadw to ensure that we follow correct procedures in the restoration process."

Louisa Godfrey, Godfrey Group



Denbighshire Environmental Alliance

GRAHAM STEEL has been one of those behind this new alliance

The idea for a county environmental network arose when Ruthin Friends of the Earth considered the 2022 report into the health of the voluntary sector commissioned after the pandemic by the Denbighshire Council for Voluntary Services.

This identified the lack of networking and co-ordination among and between groups in all sectors as being a major weakness. Ruthin FOE felt that establishing a county wide network could bring several benefits:

- ♻ Increase influence among decision makers and influencers such as the County Council and Natural Resources Wales.
- ♻ Enhance the benefits of networking and economies of scale, for example by co-ordinating and supporting funding applications.

♻ Maximise our commitment to meet the challenges of the climate and ecological emergencies.

Building on existing contacts, FOE identified 80 organisations, community interest companies, 'green' businesses and interested individuals. There was an inaugural meeting at the Old Court House on September 7th, 2023. 21 representatives from 17 organisations attended.

The meeting agreed that encouraging and co-ordinating responses to DCC's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy review would be its first activity.

Ruthin FOE also circulated information about and supported training for Climate Action Wales' Local Authority Scorecards. This work ensured a good turnout at a public engagement event in November 2023 and resulted in well informed written submissions to the Denbighshire Council review expected to be considered at County Hall May 2024.

Currently, the Alliance is seeking views on the depth of support for an

such an alliance and a survey to determine important issues. Climate change, pressures on biodiversity and educational activities are the current hot topics. The interface with the planning system has also been raised in respect of influencing the emerging Local Development Plan and responding to applications through for example the assessment of Environmental Statements.

Responding to climate change and having the environment at the centre of the 2024 general election is likely to be the next work stream.

The alliance is an evolving project and issues of governance, management, finance and formal membership will need to be settled soon.

If you would like to know more or get involved, please contact grahamsteel2509@btinternet.com.

● The Civic Association is a founding member of the Denbighshire Environmental Alliance

● Denbighshire Score Card, p9

Siop Nain Goldmine

The Davies ran Siop Nain, Well Street, for over 40 years and since the mid-1970s. Even after they retired over 10 years ago, they continued to live above the shop. Upon Mr Davies's recent death, Mrs Jill Davies has moved out. Here we look at two artefacts found in their flat.

'Into the New Millennium: History of the Rotary Club of Ruthin 1992-2005' (2006) by former Civic Association chairman John Astles

This offers a snapshot of Ruthin at the turn of the century.

During each year the 1990s, this publication listed all Rotary members and it read rather like a veritable Who's Who of Ruthin menfolk at the time. Astles himself was the 1994-1995 president and the district governor 2001-2002. The membership fee in 1992 was £47. Jill Davies was 1996-1997 president of the associated women's Inner Wheel.

Unsurprisingly, the Christmas float featured throughout the history. It was interesting to note that in 1995 there were actually too many volunteers for it, something that seems strange today. That year, the volunteers bagged 1,350 mini-chocolate bars and 2,700 pieces of fruit for the street collections in town and the district. Long gone Slater's filling station (the Well Street forecourt of Rightway Bevan's) donated fuel for the generator and towing vehicles. They raised £1,859 nett but it was in 1996 that they exceeded £2,000.

Till 1997, the Rotary met in Ruthin Castle. That year, the venue changed to Ye Olde Anchor, now closed.

Rotary-organised Donkey Derbies were once also a popular feature. Crowds flocked in during good weather. 2000's foot

and mouth disease resulted not in a donkey but a bicycle derby. It was not popular. In 2004, there was a problem with insurance that prevented donkey races and instead the Rotary offered rides.

The 2003-04 president was former farmer & Siop Elfair founder Elfed Evans. He was also active in setting up the Ruthin Tourism Group which produced literature about the town.

In 1998, The Rotary replaced 'the normal rather stilted dinner and dance' with a sumptuous sit down meal at Da Vinci's restaurant (now also long closed but above Leonardo's).

In 1999, the Rotary pledged £1,000 in support of the Awelon Community Centre refurbishment (now torn down).

Also that year came a resolution 'that the club shall no longer be limited to members of one gender'. It had been for about 10 years that women were permitted but it seems Ruthin's decision was late. This was carried 22 votes to 10. At least two members resigned as a result.

There was the first annual children's sports event in 2001.

In 2004-2005, dress code amendments allowed members to discard ties & jackets. This was taken at a 'slightly controversial meeting with the approval of the majority but displeasing others'.

Also that year, the Rotary locally collected £4,500 by 'shaking tins' four days after the Indonesian Boxing Day earthquake.

'A Twist of Lennon' by Cynthia Lennon (W H Allen & Co Ltd)

The Davies had this long out of print paperback. Cynthia Lennon published it in 1978 while proprietress of the Manor House, Well Street.

In 'A Twist', she is open about her relationship with John and the other Beatles. She admits, 'I really wasn't on [John's]

wavelength as much as he would've liked'. She felt that his principals, behaviour and actions were 'born of panic' and the period during Lennon's relationship with Yoko Ono made Cynthia 'very ill both in mind and body'. She writes, 'I can only thank God for giving me enough inner strength too survive and overcome the shock and disappointment in a marriage which was to say the least 'very interesting'.

In spite of everything, she was very grateful for the support of Paul McCartney. And also defensive of the Beatles in general. 'I can only sum up my story by appealing to people's understanding when judging the actions, feelings, successes and inevitable mistakes which were made by four very young men who at an age when they would have been learning how to cope with life...found the world at their feet.'

A Ruthin Priest's Hole?

One upstairs discovery at Siop Nain through two awkward 4ft sq vertical access-ways above the first floor was what has already been ascribed the term 'priest's hole'.

A priest hole is a secret entrance or compartment used to conceal Roman Catholic priests who during the persecution of the Elizabethan period feared for their lives.

It would be great if someone could undertake some research to determine whether this was actually a priest's hole.

Till then, we must be sceptical. Was the house of sufficient status? Was the owners at the time Catholic? Were they recusant (i.e. did the household refuse to worship within the Anglican church)?

Above all, the access leads to less of a hiding place than large roof space. We aren't convinced the access was sufficiently invisible.

40 Years Ago

COLIN EDWARDS

recalls a 700th anniversary royal visit at Ruthin School in the era of single sex education and red caps



Courtesy of Ann Roberts, Prior St

On March 18th, 1984, the late Queen and late Duke of Edinburgh visited Ruthin School for its 700th anniversary celebrations.

The couple drove to Ruthin from St Asaph, where they had visited the cathedral. They were driven to school via Denbigh Road, Clwyd Street, St Peter's Square, Well Street and Rhos Street. Although it was a cold, grey day, hundreds of local people cheered Her Majesty and His Royal Highness, who responded by waving and smiling.

On arrival at the school, they were accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant, who presented the Chairman of Glyndŵr District Council and her husband, the Chief Executive of Glyndŵr, the Mayor of Ruthin (the late Cllr Trevor Field and the late Mrs Field), the Town Clerk of Ruthin (the late Mr R Jones), the MP for Clwyd South West (Robert Harvey and Mrs Harvey), the Chairman of the Board of Governors (Mr M D Harvey and Mrs Harvey) and Headmaster (Mr A Hill and Mrs Hill).

Following other presentations, the Queen and the Duke visited the Headmaster's study to view documents of interest, including a copy of the 1284 Deed of Foundation. Pre-luncheon drinks were then served to the royal couple and members of their household, and to guests who were to be seated at the tables of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness.

Lunch was then served in the main hall, which consisted of melon, roast Welsh lamb, apple crumble, cheese & biscuits, and coffee.

After the royal toast, the Chairman of the Governors asked the head boy, Robert Talog Davies, to welcome the royal party and present them with a commemorative gift. The head boy

then asked permission for March 18th to be instituted in perpetuity as the Queen's Day Holiday.

The royal couple escorted by Chairman of Governors and Headmaster left the main hall. A posy of flowers created by Neville Williams, florist, was presented to the Queen by the youngest boy.

Later, the royal party visited the Library, where they viewed the Deed of Endowment and portraits of Queen Elizabeth I and Dean Goodman of Westminster Abbey. While in the Library, the Queen and Duke signed the visitors' book and unveiled photographs.

They then met officials of the Parents & Friends of Ruthin School and in the new foyer the following international sportsmen were presented: Old Boys R W Barker (cricket), M Roberts (rugby) and Mr Saunders-Griffiths (hockey); and present pupil Mr A Bill (swimming). Outside the new foyer, the Queen and Duke viewed the Uganda/Kilimanjaro exhibition with teacher Mr B M Cockell and boys. His Royal Highness was patron of the exhibition.

At the Clock Tower officers present were President H G Williams, Chairman of Governors, I H Aington, Secretary, R B Aldrich, treasure and D H Cokes. Ysgol Brynhyfrd pupils were among those assembled in the Ruthin School grounds.

Her Majesty then unveiled the clock and plaque presented to mark the 700th anniversary of the school.

She and the Duke were then escorted to their car by the Chairman of the Governors and Headmaster and Her Majesty told them how much they had enjoyed their visit and thanked them for their warm reception.

They drove away to three cheers from staff and pupils.

50 Years Ago

Local government aficionado

PETER DANIELS looks back to the events of March and April 1974

April 1st, 1974 was a critical day for Ruthin and district. It was vesting day for the new Clwyd County Council.

Clwyd replaced the historic counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire. Clwyd also subsumed a small but significant part of the former Merionethshire (sic), the former Edeirion District Council area.

The former Denbighshire (popn. 182,860) was head-quartered in Ruthin. As such, March 31st, 1974 was the very last day that Ruthin could call itself a county town—for almost a quarter of a century.

During the approach to the change and for quite some after, this simple fact was a source of some rancour. Against the

population and then industry of the Holywell-Flint-Deeside-Wrexham axis and the tourist economy of the Rhos on Sea to Prestatyn coast, a resentful Ruthin and district considered itself somewhat forgotten or side-lined.

Alongside Clwyd (popn c.400,000) came the new Glyndŵr District Council, replacing a plethora of small second-tier authorities, including Ruthin Borough (popn 4,180) and Ruthin Rural District Councils (popn 9,120). The Borough Council's offices were in the Town Hall and those of the Rural District in Well Street. Glyndŵr rented Denbighshire's former headquarters (called County Offices till March 1974, then Council Offices and now County Hall).

In population terms, Glyndŵr was still one of the smallest districts in Wales

(popn. c.40,000).

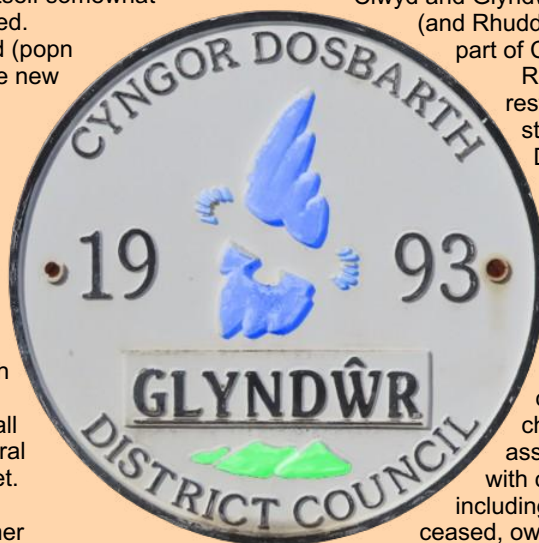
On April 1st, 1996, all this changed again. In came the the new unitary authority of Denbighshire, sweeping aside

Clwyd and Glyndŵr District Councils (and Rhuddlan Borough and a part of Colwyn Borough).

Ruthin was thus restored to county town status, albeit for a Denbighshire (popn 96,000) that no longer included Wrexham, Llanrwst, Abergele, Colwyn Bay or Rhos on Sea.

Meanwhile, pre-dating the 1974 council administration changes, the court of assize long associated with county towns including Ruthin had already ceased, owing to the 1972

shake up of the courts. This was the first blow for Ruthin. The principal court was now the crown court in Mold. In 1974, the county town of Clwyd would move there also.



Benchmarking Ruthin

FIONA GALE finds much is hidden in plain sight

I have always loved maps and particularly those produced by the Ordnance Survey. Some of the early maps are beautiful things in themselves but also tell us a lot about how places have changed and what in the past was where.

My background is as an archaeologist and in the dim distant days when I first started in that career things like trig points and benchmarks were really important, as they helped you work out exactly where you were in Britain, in 3D. Nowadays, they are redundant and all is worked out with satellites and global positioning systems.

Trig points are generally on tops of hills (like nearby Moel Famau and Moel Gyw) and were used to work out the shape of the country and benchmarks were used to work out the height above sea level. Years ago, when working near Stonehenge, I remember having to sight through a theodolite from the road side to a trig point about three miles away and through a 'dumpy level' (an optical instrument used to establish levels) to the nearest benchmark. That way we could work out exactly where the excavation was!



Benchmarks are marked physically onto buildings by a line and an arrow below. They can be carved into stones, cast in bronze, impressed into bricks (we have all of these in Ruthin!) and are generally at low levels in structures so that they can be seen and so that it was easy to sight through the dumpy level to them. The height above sea level of each one is known. First edition OS maps, especially to the 6 inch and 25 inch scale, show the locations of the

benchmarks and even, on the 25 inch, give the height above sea level.

I have a beautiful coloured photocopy of the first edition map of the centre of Ruthin which was published in 1874 and it shows the benchmarks in the town. I have always liked finding these and knew of some already but since thinking about writing this short article have found a couple more, hiding in plain sight. Not all of those marked on the first edition map survive, some appear to have been on



buildings which have changed since 1874 and others, like one which was on the bridge over the River Clwyd at Porth y Dŵr, have most probable been covered up. I knew of one at the end of Railway Terrace, at the junction with Well Street, and one on the Post Office building as well as one on the Victorian gatehouse to the Castle.

Since starting this, I have found one on the front wall of the Old Gaol on Clwyd Street (very hard to see) and one on the southern corner of the Castle walled garden, Corwen Road. The most interesting, I think, is at the bottom of the wall of Wayfarer Wool shop on Well Street, to the right of the

shop entrance. This one is impressed into a brick.

We have to imagine the surveyors from the Ordnance Survey using the benchmarks to help them accurately map our town.

If you would like to try to find these, or others which I will have missed in Ruthin, all early OS maps can be viewed online via the National Library of Scotland's website at maps.nls.uk/os/. Needless to say, there is a website for benchmarks across Britain and you will find some of the Ruthin examples on this site: bench-marks.org.uk. This notes one on the Drill Hall which I have not yet been to see. It would be a great walk around the town looking out for these easily missed features. I suspect most of us have been into the Post Office, but many will not have seen the rather lovely cast bronze benchmark.

Hidden History, from p1

League of Nations. And the entire story of the Welsh Women's Peace Petition was forgotten on both sides of the Atlantic, as is sadly the case with much of both women's history and peace history.

In recent years, however, thanks to the efforts of volunteer researchers and Academi Heddwch Cymru (Wales Centre for International Affairs' Peace Academy), the story has been unearthed and is now being retold. Contact was made with the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, and the Petition, still in its original bespoke oak chest, was located in its stores. In 2023, on its centenary, it was returned, or 'rematriated', to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. A major digitisation project is under way to scan each page and to transcribe each individual name and address and soon we will all be able to use this rich new source of family and local history, searching for our great grandmothers, or the residents of our homes a century ago.

As I learnt more about the petition and its remarkable story, I was inspired to respond creatively. I am particularly inspired by the women's handwriting: it

would have been a rare opportunity to sign a document in their own name in their own hand. From this grew the idea of creating a new petition for peace in 2024, a petition in stitch and called Edefyn Heddwch or Thread of Peace. With the support of Academi Heddwch Cymru, Ruthin Craft Centre, where I've been artist in residence, and the Civic Association, the project has begun and contributors have been attending stitch sessions to add their names to the petition. I will be bringing them altogether into a complete artwork which will be displayed for the first time at the Dory Gallery in Llangollen in early July to coincide with the International Eisteddfod. There will be an opportunity to see it in Ruthin soon after. To see the work in progress, pop into my residency studio in the Craft Centre.

At the time of writing, we are still waiting for the petition pages collected in Rhuthun to be photographed and made available to view online. Once they are available, I am planning to run a second creative project over the summer, focussing on the women in Rhuthun and the surrounding area and unearthing some of their stories.

Who was the youngest woman in Rhuthun to sign, or the oldest? Did the

residents of Rhuthun's significant buildings sign? If you would like to get involved in this new project, either by helping with researching the local history or helping to create the stitched textile pieces I have planned, please get in touch with me through Town and Around or via the Craft Centre.

The Petition called on the women of America to join with the women of Wales 'to aid in the effort to hand down to the generations which come after us, the proud heritage of a warless world.' It would be so easy to feel anger and despair as we watch images of the horror of war around the world on the news, and to lose any hope of peaceful solutions to end the hate. The story of the women of the Peace Petition of 1924 can inspire us all to do something, to raise our voice, to create in stitch, and to express our desire for peace.

● **The Civic Association is pleased to partner this project in the application for grant funding.**

Further information: Yr Apel/The Appeal 1923-24 (bilingual) edited by Jenny Mathers & Mererid Hopwood library.wales/peacepetition wcia.org.uk/academiheddwch/peacepetition on/

Ysbrydoliaeth o Hanes Cudd

Mae BETHAN M. HUGHES yn cyflwyno prosiect a gefnogir gan Gymdeithas Ddinesig a ysbrydolwyd gan Ddeiseb Heddwch Menywod Cymru 1923-24

Ganrif union yn ôl roedd Cymru yn ganolog yn yr ymdrechion i ddod o hyd i ddulliau heddychlon i ddatrys anghydfod rhwng gwledydd ac i ddarganfod dulliau cymod wedi erchyllterau'r Rhyfel Mawr. Y bwriad oedd i sefydlu Cyngheiriau y Cenhedloedd ond roedd yr Unol Daleithiau yn gyndyn i ymuno. I un criw o ferched dylanwadol a phenderfynol yng Nghymru, roedd yn gyfle i estyn llaw o gyfeillgarwch ar draws y cefnfor er mwyn heddwch.

Penderfynwyd i gasglu deiseb, Yr Apêl, gan ferched Cymru at ferched yr Unol Daleithiau i'w hannog i ddylanwadu ar eu llywodraeth nhw i ymuno. Trwy rwydwaith o drefnwyr lleol, o fewn cwta chwe mis yn 1923, roedd 390,296 o ferched Cymru (tua 60% o'r boblogaeth fenywaidd) wedi arwyddo – camp aruthrol mewn cyfnod heb gyfathrebu torfol. Dan arweiniad Annie Hughes-Griffiths, aethpwyd â'r Ddeiseb i'r Unol Daleithiau, lle aeth ar daith ar draws y wlad cyn cael ei gyflwyno'n ffurfiol i ferched yr Unol Daleithiau ar Chwefror 19eg 1924.

Roedd gwleidyddiaeth y 1920au yn America yn gymhleth ac ni wnaethant ymuno â'r Gynghrair – ac aeth yr holl stori ryfeddol hon yn angof, fel oedd yn digwydd yn aml gyda hanes merched a hanes heddwch.

Yn ddiweddar, fodd bynnag, diolch i ymdrechion ymchwilwyr gwirfoddol ac Academi Heddwch Cymru, mae'r stori wedi ail-ymddangos ac yn cael ei hail-adrodd. Llwyddwyd i ail-ddarganfod y ddeiseb, dal yn y gist derw, yn storfa Amgueddfa'r Smithsonian yn Washington, ac fe ddaeth adref i Gymru y llynedd. Erbyn hyn mae'n cael ei ddigideiddio a'i drawsgrifio yn y Llyfrgell Genedlaethol ac yn fuan bydd modd i ni i gyd chwilota am ein hen-neiniau neu am drigolion ein tai ganrif yn ôl.

Wrth i mi ddysgu mwy am yr hanes, roeddwn yn awyddus i ymateb iddo yn greadigol. Fe'm ysbrydolwyd yn arbennig gan lawysgrifen y merched

– efallai y tro cyntaf iddynt arwyddo dogfen yn eu henwau eu hunain yn eu llawysgrifen eu hunain. Ac felly fe ddatblygodd y syniad o greu deiseb newydd ar gyfer 2024, fel modd i fynegi dyhead heddiw am heddwch a chymod. Deiseb mewn pwyth y tro yma, dan yr enw Edefyn Heddwch. Gyda chefnogaeth Academi Heddwch Cymru a



Chanolfan Grefft Rhuthun, mae'r prosiect ar droed a nifer o bobl eisoes wedi mynychu gweithdy i bwytho eu enwau ar ddefnydd. Byddaf i yn cyfuno'r enwau i gyd i mewn i un gwaith creadigol cyflawn, i'w arddangos yn gyhoeddus am y tro cyntaf yn Oriel Dory, Llangollen dros gyfnod yr Eisteddfod Ryngwladol yno fis Gorffennaf. Bydd cyfle i'w weld yn Rhuthun rhywbryd hefyd. Os am weld y gwaith yn datblygu, galwch heibio fy stiwdio preswyl yn y Ganolfan Grefft.

Ar amser ysgrifennu hwn, rydym dal i aros am dudalennau Rhuthun y Ddeiseb gael eu sganio a'u gosod arlein i'w gweld. Unwaith maent ar gael rwy'n bwriadu cynnal ail brosiect creadigol dros yr haf gan ganolbwyntio ar y merched a lofnododd y Ddeiseb yma yn Rhuthun a'r fro, a chreu ymateb creadigol newydd. Pwy tybed oedd y ferch ieuengaf i arwyddo, neu'r hynaf? Wnaeth trigolion adeiladau amlwg y dref arwyddo? Os fyddai gennych chi ddiddordeb mewn bod yn rhan o'r prosiect hwn, trwy gynorthwyo hefo'r ymchwil i'r hanes lleol neu trwy helpu hefo'r pwytho a'r creu, cysylltwch gyda mi trwy'r cylchlythyr yma neu trwy'r Ganolfan Grefft.

Mae'r Ddeiseb yn galw ar ferched America i ymuno gyda merched Cymru "i'n cynorthwyo yn ein hymdrech i drosglwyddo i'r oesau a ddêl fydd di-ryfel yn dreftadaeth dragywydd." Mae'n hawdd teimlo'n rhwystredig ac yn ddiymadferth wrth wyllo'r newyddion am erchyllterau rhyfel o gwmpas y byd, a cholli gobaith am unrhyw fath o ddatrysiad heddychlon i roi diwedd ar y casineb. Gall hanes merched y Ddeiseb Heddwch 1924 ein hysbrydoli ni i gyd i wneud rhywbeth, i godi'n llais, i greu pwyth, i fynegi ein dyhead am heddwch.

● Mae'r Gymdeithas Ddinesig yn falch o fod yn bartner i'r prosiect hwn yn y cais am gyllid grant.

Am ragor o wybodaeth am y Ddeiseb:

Yr Apêl / The Appeal 1923-24 gol. Jenny Mathers a Mererid Hopwood, Y Lolfa 2023 (ISBN 9781800993822)
<https://www.llyfrgell.cymru/deisebheddwc>
<https://www.wcia.org.uk/cy/academi-heddwc-cymru/deisebheddwc/>



A Resource to be Reckoned With

Inspired to help disabled people into the workplace, to champion sustainability and even in supporting local artists, KATHY DANIELS reflects on Resource, the important work they do, including even encouraging visitors into town

There is more to the Resource shop than meets the eye. Scratch the surface and you will find humanity, consideration and compassion for our fellow human beings. Resource may be most visible in the former Barclay's Bank building, opened in the autumn 2022. There is much more to it, though. Resource manages 'From the Earth' café on Well Street; the Borrow Bus; Cae Dai (Denbigh) and a storage facility at Lôn Parcwr.

Resource is the inspiration of local Janine Cusworth. Her aim was to set up adaptable, flexible volunteering opportunities and create employment for socially disadvantaged people. Resource allows people with learning disabilities or with mental health challenges the opportunity to gain useful skills and confidence. Flexibility is key and volunteers are all able to change location to find the environment in which they feel most comfortable and safe. Janine believes that everyone has something to offer.

Janine started her crusade in Cae Dai. This was a stepping stone, a place for trying new things. Covid struck. Its outdoor gardening continued during lockdown. Otherwise, Janine kept in contact via Zoom, readying volunteers to return to the community and to work alongside those who had lost their voluntary roles.

Janine had experience of a scrap store where she had previously lived. The site at Barclay's was empty but regarded as too expensive. Still available two years later, she took a leap of faith. It turned out to be self-sustaining from day one. Up to 90 per cent of the shop's stock is donated. You are encouraged only to buy what you need. Available for purchase are plastics otherwise destined for landfill melted and remoulded at Cae Dai.

From businesses, Resource regularly received offcuts of card, fabric remnants, cardboard tubes and rolls and even whole rolls of fabric of the pattern is misprinted in some way. There is a new requirement for businesses to separate recycled waste and Resource is best placed to tap into that stream.

The Resource shop also supports local artists. There's a makers' room that showcases the work of local people who live within a seven-mile radius of Ruthin. Shelf space is free, although Resource does charge a commission. Resource is therefore a good place to buy locally



handmade and unique items and doing so supports the circular economy. At the time of writing, there are 22 makers displaying their crafts. These vary from clothes, pictures, jewellery, soaps, bunting and baskets.

On the first floor over winter there was a rail of clothes, hats, scarves and blankets. You were able to take what you needed for free. Meanwhile, on the top floor you can find loose parts of play items and scrap fabrics.

Downstairs there is 'Vintage in the Vaults': household items and clothing. There is a room available for hire for community groups or for custom workshops.

Word of mouth and inevitably social media have ensured that locals have learnt about the scrap store. Alongside its regulars come customers from as far away as Chester and Liverpool.

Beyond the shop is Bws Benthg, the Borrow Bus. The concept is simple. Don't buy an expensive tool which you will use only once. By borrowing it instead to save resources and money. This is true local sustainability. During tough times, it's cheaper to borrow than buy. The list of items available is truly comprehensive. The first year's operation acted as a pilot and business case for successfully securing funding for three further years of operation. The bus visits local communities rather than bussing you to Ruthin. The aim after three years is sustainability.

Finally, there's the café. It may look like just another town centre eatery. Behind its ordinary façade, From the Earth partners with Tesco and 'fairshare'. All menu items use waste food. There's an opportunity to 'pay forward' to offer a beverage or simple meal for those who can least afford one. Given that the menu is reasonably priced this is not onerous. Anyone who needs a meal can get one, no questions asked. At Christmas, From the Earth provided a number of free meals. During school holidays, it has hosted pizza making workshops, teaching young people to cook but also providing the food they use for free.

Looking ahead, Resource will appear as a pop up at Tŷ Pawb (Wrexham)

market and Mold's market. This will promote Resource to a wider audience but importantly offer paid employment opportunities.

If Resource were viewed as a tapestry (using recycled materials, of course) you can see many threads of kindness running through it.



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

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