



Quarterly comment & features from the Ruthin & District Civic Association

## In Support of Walking



Ruthin's oldest conservation & heritage organisation is asking Ruthinians please to reserve judgement on the new pedestrian-friendly changes to Well Street and Market Street till people have thoroughly tried and got used to it.

The Ruthin & District Civic Association welcomes the improvements that make walking around Ruthin that little bit safer.

There has been some negativity towards the scheme, principally from motorists (rather than walkers) who preferred the old two-way traffic system. Opinions certainly remain divided. Most of the 'noise' is on social media but this certainly doesn't mean that the majority of residents believe it to be a bad idea. Some may like it and others may have no strong preference.

Let's not forget that it's designed to make life safer in a virus-laden world. Its feature is to increase the reservoir space for pedestrians to allow us all to distance from our fellow walkers.

After all, we all have to get out of our cars at

some time and actually walk around town and, as such, there's an immediate benefit from the measures. Beforehand, pedestrians had to hop from pavement to pavement if they wished to avoid other people and this resulted in a choice of brushing up against someone or facing motorists with little inclination to give way.



*Continued on page 2*

## Coronavirus Chronicles Part 3

Parts 1 (June 2020) & 2 (Sept 2020) available at [v.gd/radca](http://v.gd/radca)

### September 3rd

Schools return on a staggered basis. Ysgol Brynhyfryd, for example, welcomes all years back concurrently from September 8th.

### September 10th

Costa reopens as one of the last businesses to do so after lockdown 1.

### September 14th

It is mandatory to wear face masks in confined spaces such as shops.

### September 24th

The launch of the NHS tracking app results in several Ruthin businesses pinning up QR codes to assist.

### September 25th

Tesco announces that certain of its lines will be rationed.

### September 26th

Pubs, restaurants and shops are unable to serve alcohol after 10 p.m.

### October 1st

One Ruthin pub is forced to display an improvement notice under coronavirus health protection regs.

### October 2nd

Denbighshire enters a more restrictive local health protection zone.

### October 8th

The Lord's Garden opens free of charge for local residents.

### October 19th

Work begins on pedestrian priority one-way traffic systems along Market & Well Streets. This takes three weeks and at its conclusion also sees some additional dropped kerbs to help disabled people.

### October 23rd

From 6 p.m. we enter the lockdown 2 'fire-break', where non-essential services are required to close for just over two weeks. Tesco and Co-op prevent the

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## Walking

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It's certainly clear that some people don't fully understand some of the issues. There are a few myths to bust:

**No one has removed any on-street parking.** People who visit Market Street or Well Street are not disadvantaged any more than they were before. Nothing's changed on that score. Neither street had any (lawful) on-street parking during business hours. Market Street car park is yards from The Square and Costa. Dog Lane is yards from Well Street. Both regularly have spaces and if they do not there are alternatives. There's no shortage of close town centre parking. The distances are certainly nothing compared to Broughton Park or Chester or Wrexham.

**The temporary nature of the barriers, planters and poles is deliberate.** This is a temporary measure to gauge reaction and to test it out. It would be unthinkable to spend huge sums only to find that the system has to change (there are going to be tweaks) or even come out altogether. If or when this becomes permanent, we should hope and expect a decently designed scheme. What we have is better than orange cones and battered red signs

as in some town centres.

**This isn't pedestrianisation** but it does try to make the pedestrian area better and safer for us all. We all have to leave our cars at some point. We should be considering pedestrian priority in town, especially across the Square, but the current scheme is neither that nor full pedestrianisation.

For those motorists who feel their freedoms are restricted, we should perhaps remember bus users, usually older & much more vulnerable, who for years have managed to access the whole town quite well and with few complaints from two central bus stops outside County Hall.

Chair of the Ruthin & District Civic Association, Anne Roberts MBE, said,

"This is a trial and one that is aimed at improving the lot of pedestrians walking around town. There is a concern that the views of some will set back the aspiration to make parts of the town including the Square pedestrian friendly. During all Market Town of the Future exercises, the majority view certainly was to improve pedestrian movements in the town and RADCA has held a long-standing aspiration to do so".

P.D.



Market Street's pedestrian & cycle lane extends into the Square, allowing easier crossing. Could we have more of these?

## Still Available to View: Virtual Open Doors 2020

by Heather Williams

Coronavirus meant that this year's event went online. 27 videos were available to see, streamed live on Saturday 26 September at intervals during the day.

They're still available on Youtube at <https://bitly.lk/VF1bh>.

The mayor opened the event with a speech on St Peter's Square, followed by traditional folk musicians, Pibau, playing in the Old Courthouse to welcome people to the first online event.

Video presentations included Roger in colour at [www.ruthincivic.org](http://www.ruthincivic.org)

Edwards's talk in Nantclwyd y Dre about the history of Ruthin; Fiona Gale talking about her & her husband's Wynnstay House restoration; an illustrated talk about Ruthin Castle and in particular the colourful Cornwallis-West family given by Julie Masters; tours of the Old Courthouse and Manorhaus by Gavin Harris; and a walk around Ruthin with Rosie Jones, pointing out the various buildings of interest.

Outside Ruthin, there were contributions which included a guided tour of some historic buildings in Corwen by Wendy Philips.

The event was very well received and the statistics show that the event reached 8,168 people on the day. There were 3,790 views of the videos. Our thanks to Shelly Barrett & volunteers who put the event together. We hope to be able to host 'proper' Open Doors in September 2021.

December 2020

## Social Media Watch

Facebook is like owning a car. On a personal level, we all enjoy the freedoms our motor brings us but we all know that mass car usage is an environmental disaster, possibly contributing long-term to our own demise.



Fans of Ruthin  
Private group · 1.6k members

So it is with Facebook. On an individual level, we all like to post and receive pictures of cute, cuddly kittens. Collectively, Facebook can become a cesspool of fomented discord that can be unpleasant and even poisonous.

The three recent issues dominating Facebook have been the pedestrian priority in Market Street and Well Street (also known as the new one-way system, which came into being to facilitate more space for pedestrians); the sighting of a pop-up covid-19 testing facility at Crispin Yard; and Tesco's car park. All three brought out the worst in many (though not all) people.

Whatever happened to consideration and respect?

On the one hand, we see posts on Ruthin's communal Facebook sites welcoming newcomers and commending the town as such a friendly place in which to live. Which it is. On the other, we see little other than vitriol and hostility. Aren't Facebook commenters supposed to be *fans* of Ruthin? We know of people who are put off making contributions for the fear of the rash retort that they will receive.

One commenter put it well on Facebook when, during the debate on pedestrian improvements, she said that Ruthin is 'fast becoming one of the most negative towns I know'. There is certainly an emerging view that Ruthin has achieved a reputation as something of a 'moany' sort of town.

In terms of the pedestrian improvements, we had to do something and perhaps we should just try to live with it. As far as we know, this scheme isn't the end of the world.

[townandaround.org.uk](http://townandaround.org.uk)

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# Planning Proposals Submitted During 2019/20

by Harold Jones

Since the October 2019 AGM of the Ruthin and District Civic Association, a wide variety of planning applications have been submitted in our area. Despite the restrictions that the coronavirus has placed on us all, we have seen a steady flow of applications every month throughout the year.

These reflect the diverse schemes that individuals, businesses and organisations have put forward for consideration by Denbighshire County Council.

## New Dwellings

A number of proposals were for new houses or small groups of new houses in Clawddnewydd, Graigfechan, Ruthin, Cyffylliog and Gellifor.

The affordable housing at Glasdir in Ruthin proposed by Clwyd Alyn (as featured in the March 2020 edition of Town & Around) was rejected just before the lockdown. There is a second submission, with 63 rather than 77 dwellings, with revisions to layouts, access, design, materials and flood mitigation measures (see Town and Around September 2020).

and erection of a reception shop and café at caravan park Llanebwch Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd.

## Miscellaneous

A variety of other schemes proposed included:

The use of a dwelling in Bontuchel for residential care accommodation for young males with complex needs, repairs to the war memorial in Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, change of use from offices to architects studio at The Gallery 1-3 Park Road Ruthin, storage unit at the Yard Brickfield Lane Ruthin, four light



*Clwyd Alyn's second Glasdir 2 proposal*

Denbighshire County Council issued guidance on coronavirus and the planning process. Electronic applications are accepted but not hard copy till further notice. Low risk site visits are carried out where social distancing can be achieved but full on-site assessments may not be possible in all cases. Extensions of time may be needed in dealing with applications. A virtual planning committee meets on a monthly cycle.

The Civic Association seeks to support high standards of planning & architecture and the Committee will make constructive and supportive comments as appropriate, as well as objecting to proposals that may be of concern or insensitive.

Planning is a regular item on the committee's agenda in its monthly meetings.

The pandemic has meant that the Committee has not met since early in 2020 but, nevertheless, we have kept a close eye on applications.

There has been little of concern during the year and the following gives a flavour of the applications made:

## Small Scale Domestic Extensions and Alterations

Applications were received for properties in Graigadwywynt, Pentre Coch, Gellifor, Ruthin, Clocaenog, Rhewl, Llanfwrog, Bontuchel, Graigfechan, Pwllglas, Galltegefa, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Pentrecelyn, Clawddnewydd, Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd and Llangynhafal.

## Agricultural Buildings

New agricultural storage buildings were proposed at Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd, Gellifor, Bontuchel, Llanellidan, Rhewl, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Llanrhaedr and Llanfwrog.

## Trees

A number of approvals were sought for work to trees within conservation areas or subject to TPOs, at Awelon Ruthin, Tan y Llan Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd, Ruthin Castle Wood, St Peter's Square Ruthin, Maes Clwyd Park Road Ruthin, The Vicarage Wrexham Road Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd, Bro Deg Ruthin, Greenfield Road Ruthin and Cae Castan Ruthin.

## Listed Building Applications

Changes noted were to 3 Cae Seren Clocaenog, a two storey extension to 10 Railway Terrace Ruthin, re-rendering of external façade at Plas y Ward Farm Rhewl, and alterations to Mococo St. Peter's Square Ruthin to form Clogau Gold shop.

## Tourism

Approval was sought for the conversion of outbuildings at Fachlwyd Farm Cyffylliog to form holiday units, two shepherd huts at Nant Uchaf Llanellidan, four holiday units at Tan y Graig Pentre Celyn, four holiday pods adjacent to Nant Isaf Cyffylliog, four shepherds huts with site office and septic tank at Bryn Rhedyn Farm Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd

industrial units at Birch House Business Centre Ruthin, twelve solar photo voltaic ground mounted panels at the Forestry Office Clawddnewydd, alterations at The Feathers Ruthin to form a restaurant decking area and kitchen extension, storage building at Ruthin Rugby Club, change of use of Wern Veterinary Surgery in Ruthin to optician, change of use from barbers to hot food takeaway at 9 Clwyd Street Ruthin.

## Local Development Plan 2018-2033

During the consultation period for the LDP, Denbighshire County Council received many additional candidate sites for consideration and comments were asked for.

This was not an opportunity to submit comments on the draft Preferred Strategy, nor was it an invitation to submit further candidate sites. The closing date for submission of comments on these additional sites was 13 March 2020.

The committee had concerns particularly on the number of housing sites that could be approved and the effect that it would have on Ruthin and the surrounding villages. Our comments were detailed in the March 2020 issue of Town and Around.

## Viewing Planning Applications

Planning applications can be viewed on Denbighshire County Council's web site and also at its Caledfryn offices (when open to the public). The Denbighshire Free Press also publishes a weekly list of submitted applications.

# Back to the Eighties: housing

by Peter Daniels

It may sound counter intuitive but people are generally happier in urban areas than they are in villages. Built up areas allow for interaction, for contact and for the use of shared infrastructure.

Then, along comes a deadly defect to disrupt this norm. Alongside people, there's now a virus. Suddenly, cities and social distancing become something of a contradiction in terms. This has resulted in some people rethinking where they wish to live. Then, there's this whole cultural shift called working from home. What, then, are the consequences for the local housing market and for us?

One measure of an urban area's success in economic terms is its property prices. Other things being equal, Ruthin's tend to be higher for like-for-like dwellings than its neighbouring towns (and Llandbedr even more so).

This summer & autumn, the local housing market has been heated, according to an estate agent boss. After the easing of lockdown, the market really took off. This, I was told, was because of a number of factors: there was pent-up demand constrained by lockdown; people became bored with their homes during lockdown; and some houses were seen as unfit for working from home. The market is currently undergoing a change in buyers' requirements, away from ultra-modern kitchens and bathrooms (though these are obviously important) to a general requirement for more space and more land or at least somewhere near open spaces.

Over the summer and into the autumn, houses in the sub-£250,000 category were flying off the shelves, helped by a reduction in Wales' version of stamp duty. As at the beginning of November 2020, in town, two-thirds of such homes were under offer. It has helped vendors that the supply was relatively low. Asking prices seemed to be holding up.

This had a knock-on effect on middle-market homes, together with people wishing to move to what they felt were better locations. Ruthin was one such: you don't need us to remind you why the town and its villages are so attractive an area in which to live. Perhaps it melds the advantages

of urban living on a scale that is now much more acceptable. The sluggishness elsewhere regarding middle-market homes was therefore not usually the case in Ruthin, with nearly half under offer at the beginning of November. Working from home and commuting less certainly offer more freedom in terms of location. Ruthin is probably as far west of Merseyside and Manchester you wish to go, doable if only once, twice or thrice a week. Ruthin benefits from being slightly out of view, beyond Offa's Dyke and, above all, it sees fewer of the crowded streets associated with larger settlements. An ideal hideaway, in fact, but still making the most of the benefits of urban living.

But, there were also people accepting good offers for their homes who subsequently struggled to gather sufficient finance for their next step, as some of the houses in their sights were not at reasonable prices. In the current conditions, people certainly seem reluctant to trade up to homes over £400,000. In early November, of the eight homes in town over £400,000, only two had sold. This is the more difficult area of the market. Yet, even in this class, there is a cause for optimism for vendors. Coetmor, which reached the market in late September, had sold five weeks later, in spite of an asking price of £599,500. It last sold in 2014 for £455,000. Here, though, was a property of extreme rarity.

From mid-September, the general market subsequently slowed down, alongside



fears of the second wave of the virus, not to mention concerns over redundancies. But, even so, compared to previous years, there remained some optimism.

And, some of the houses that had proven

## Estate Agent Speak

You have to hand it to the Purple Bricks online estate agency for at least trying to use imagination. So, accompanying an ordinary house along Llanfair Road, we find, 'We love this deceptively spacious home which is ideal for growing families or those who like plenty of room to entertain'. The only downside is that the term 'deceptively spacious' is code for 'small for the asking price'.

There's evidence that Williams Estates is now moving away from the formulaic 'Williams Estates are pleased to offer to the Market... in the Historic Market Town of Ruthin' approach, in favour of something more jazzy. Williams usually capitalises For Sale, Market and Historic, words that they accord Importance.

Alongside the ordinary, we also like the way Purple Bricks tosses in 'a castle' into the amenities available in Ruthin, as if every town naturally has one: 'Ruthin town offers a variety of amenities to include quaint independent shops, supermarkets, traditional inns and restaurants, a church, a castle, GP, dentist, garage and schools.'

difficult to sell have shifted. Well over three quarters of houses for sale entered the market in 2020. Those doing so in February and March were effectively on hold till June, owing to lockdown. 10 and as little as six years ago, some houses were stuck for over a year, some well over that. Now, those added for sale in the summer and autumn have generally not hung around. Half of the houses marketed during the summer and the record number introduced over the autumn to the end of October had sold.

## Estate Agencies

In spite of the supercharged post-lockdown environment, the Ruthin branch of Beresford Adams closed in July. It did re-open after lockdown but it seems that the writing was on the wall. It was marketing

only about half a dozen homes in town, plus some others in local villages.

Its owners, Countrywide, were closing a number of branches across Britain. This included Beresford's Abergele office. In a



statement, Countrywide stated, 'Sadly, due to the impact of covid-19 and in particular the closure of the housing market during lockdown, we have had to make the difficult decision to close some branches'. Given that the housing market has seen a 50 per cent increase in sales (according to The Times), one wonders about the Countrywide's thought process.

Clough & Co finished in Ruthin in 2015. At that time, Williams Estates and Beresford Adams were virtually neck-and-neck. The shake-out which has now seen Beresford Adams disappear has not been filled by online agents. In fact, town centre-based agencies have proven to be remarkably resilient. As at the beginning of November, just five homes were on with agents operating solely online. By contrast, Cavendish Ikin had a commanding lead, with double the number of homes for sale when compared to Williams Estates.

### Villages

For those villages without the benefit of new builds, the number of houses on the market was unusually small, no doubt a further indicator of the way the market was working. Of the six homes for sale in Clocaenog, four had sold. Nearby Clawddnewydd, usually with its plentiful supply of reasonably-priced 1980s bungalows, had one such, hung over from October 2019. A second dwelling, a large house with converted outbuildings at £599,950, had sold within six weeks. Gellifor offered two dwellings only and Cyffylliog managed three, none of which were sold. 12 of the 15 properties in Rhewl were sold. One of only three on the market in Graigfechan had sold. Llanfair was distorted by the large number of new houses available, few of which appeared to have sold.

Llanbedr is perhaps the most sought after village locally, being east of Ruthin yet convenient for town and with its commanding views over the Vale. Castell Gyrn has an offer, not for the £3.9m original 2016 asking price but for £1.75m. Half of the 20 conventional homes were sold, including six of the 12 at, about or over £400,000 and in this bracket, Llanbedr was doing better than Ruthin. The average price of sold houses in Llanbedr was about 1.8 times that in Ruthin.



*Clwyd Bank: a piece of history, dating from the 16th century, with a rare Ruthin Borough Council plaque. At £355,000, it was on between June & sold September 2020*

# Cheer from the Courthouse

by Heather Williams

As members will recall, we held a RADCA Social/Quiz in the Old Courthouse about a year ago, following the renovation during late 2019. Ruthin Town Council meetings started to be held and it was anticipated that the building would be fully open to the public in Spring 2020.

Then, the coronavirus struck and the country went into full lockdown until July, bringing life to a juddering halt. We then endured measures in October, then a second lockdown.

During the whole of 2020, however, the Old Courthouse Working Group has been meeting regularly via Zoom (a video communication channel with which many of us have become familiar) to progress the use of the building. The Working Group consists of the Old Courthouse Manager, Kate Harcus, some Ruthin Town Councillors and other people who have expertise to assist in its development.

The manager and the town clerk are now able to use the space on the upper floor for work, although some working from home still continues. The Town Council has not held any meetings there since March, but these take place via Zoom and are streamed live.

Work has progressed on creating the heritage exhibition display stands, and the content is now being worked on, which will include information from the early inhabitants to the recent past.

The Old Courthouse Manager put together an application on behalf of Ruthin Town Council for a Heritage Fund grant to support small-scale projects which help to connect communities with the heritage of their local area. Ruthin Town Council has been successful in its application, so this project will be under way imminently.

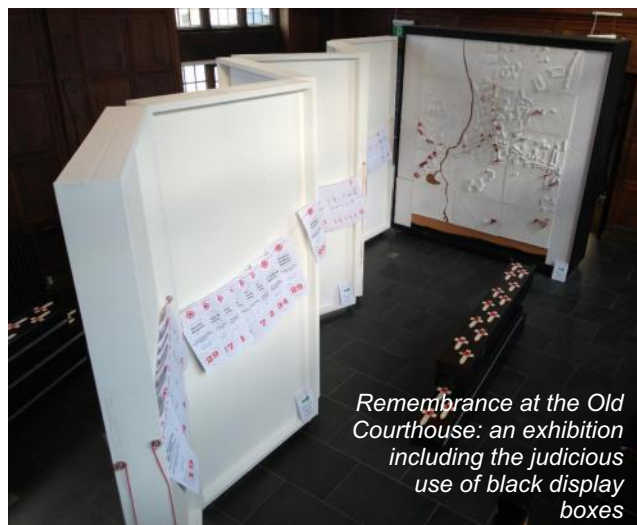
15 Munud Stori Rhuthun will explore four or five themes, which will bring to life the heritage of the town, through sharing and creating stories, pieces of art, videos and digital resources for learning. The project activities will be:

- Virtual 'Heritage Café' sessions, with guest speakers, exploring and discovering the themes chosen. Participants will find out more and or share their knowledge and experiences, which will instigate mini community projects about each theme, creating digital resources: short videos, multi-media art and written literature.
- Five supported walking reminiscence sessions, with small groups within 15 minutes' walk of the Old Courthouse, gathering memories, stories and local people's history on video, photos and

audio.

- Engagement with eight people from Ruthin living with dementia, individually or in small groups. Personal reminiscence sessions and their own stories will be recorded.
- Creative activities: writing, storytelling (in a stone circle or on walks around town) and applied art.
- Training for volunteers and participants in creating videos on smart devices. The Old Courthouse in the centre of the town would be the base for interactive sessions. This may be possible in early 2021, but regardless the space can be used for exhibitions, where the creative outputs will be available to view.

The building has been open to the public for certain events during the autumn, with



*Remembrance at the Old Courthouse: an exhibition including the judicious use of black display boxes*

Covid-19 precautions and social distancing measures adhered to. Most notably the Old Courthouse was the only building which could be visited for the Ruthin & District Open Doors Heritage event held September 26th. More recently, the building hosted a 'Cofio Remembrance' exhibition for several days from November 11th, which displayed the details of Ruthin soldiers who died in the Great Wars.

With Christmas just round the corner, ideas of brightening up residents' lives have been thought about. Ruthin Forward has organised a Santa's Grotto for families & children on a pre-booked basis on December 12th/13th at the Old Courthouse. Great demand for tickets has meant the group having additional dates during the following weekend.

The Old Courthouse/Ruthin Town Council will also be supporting Denbighshire County Council's initiative 'Light up Denbighshire', by lighting up the building in a dynamic way. The County Council is organising dynamic floodlighting of the eight towns/cities in the County. In Ruthin, the focus will be on St Peter's Square and St Peter's Church.

These December activities will, hopefully, bring a bit of cheer to the residents in Ruthin and the surrounding areas.

# A Light in the Darkness

by Peter Daniels

As we approach the beetle black of midwinter, how many of us take for granted the comfort offered by our street lights. They help us to carry on our lives as safely and securely as possible. And, during daylight, have we ever looked up to notice the various street light designs still just about 'visible' around town. Now might be a good time to look. Denbighshire County Council is about to conclude its 10 year plan of replacing our street lights with new LED lanterns. Examples of older types are still evident. In Ruthin, LEDs emerged about eight years ago. The plan was to convert small pockets of each town at a time, rather than to complete one in one go. Denbighshire was off the blocks near the beginning of the LED lighting revolution, thanks to an 'invest to save' programme that allowed the LED energy saving to repay a loan used to purchase the hardware.

... and an LED goes on



early attempt at energy efficiency. They were 'whiter' than their counterparts elsewhere in town. They provided a reduction in wattage of about 60 per cent, to 36W each. The Council replaced these florescent tubes in October. The new LED heads bring the power rating to 9W and are the most efficient in Ruthin (previous LEDs for the same luminance run at 13W. In the last five years, LEDs, already efficient, have improved by 25 per cent). But the thing is that despite a four-fold reduction in energy, the luminosity is actually better. LED white light leaks less, is concentrated on the footway & carriageway and everything is more distinct under them.

That isn't always welcomed, though. The clarity under a 'whiter' light can make some people less comfortable when walking. And, LEDs tend not to wash into front doors in quite the way traditional lanterns used to—this may or may not be a blessing. But, the clarity improves and the carbon reduction is considerable.

It's still possible in Ruthin to experience the once familiar rheumy, grenadine glow of sodium-vapour lamps. Soon to be replaced, these orangey 60W lanterns continue to illuminate Ty'n y Parc, Porth y Dre, Bryn Coch, Bryn Glas, Y Menllis, Bryn Rhydd, Maes Cantaba, The Werns off Greenfield Road, and Castle Park.

Haulfryn is also unique. Over the previous 15 years or so, its roads are lit by ceramic metal halide lamps by Philips, somewhat akin in shape to a domestic bulb and previously offering an energy saving now

The new LEDs make it that little bit more uncomfortable for gulls to land—no bad thing



An old lantern comes off...



The programme started with our main roads, all of which are now converted to various styles of LED lighting. Main and distributor roads have a noticeably higher LED classification than housing estates. It was these residential areas that came next. All converted are Bro Deg, Erw Goch, Maes Hyfryd, Llawr y Dyffryn & Maes Hafod, Bryn Eryl, Glasdir, Y Parc, Cae Seren & Parc y Dre, Canol y Dre, Cae Castan and Parc Brynhyfryd.

Parc Brynhyfryd was previously unique in carrying Ruthin's only florescent tube lanterns, which were an emerging and

No prizes but can anyone spot where these lanterns are?



overtaken by LEDs.

Glasdir's heritage-style column heads now incorporate LEDs. When installed, they were of a high pressure sodium type. About a year ago, when the Council adopted the estate's roads, it included the pre-conversion to LEDs. But, the unadopted car parks remain lit by sodium lanterns and this is one area where you can easily spot the grades of illuminance between the two types.

And then there's the town centre. In the early 1990s, the town's lamp columns and heads became similar in design to the gas lamps of yore. Finding LEDs that will fit this design has been a challenge but it won't be long till all these are modernised (anticipated January or February 2021).

Currently, the sodium lanterns operate at 100-150W and up to 250W depending upon location and it is here were the scope for carbon reduction—and improvements in luminosity—is now the greatest.

While most are pleased with their new street lights, a few find them a hindrance. It's possible to place a 'shield' on an LED to concentrate their light downwards still further, as seen on this lantern on Denbigh Road



## Illuminating LEDs:

- The drivers within LED lanterns are actually able to reduce brightness by 30 per cent during less busy periods, between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. This saves further energy and CO<sub>2</sub>. It's unlikely that you will notice this reduction in light intensity.

- LEDs have an estimated 25 year life. As they get older, the LEDs can dim but the drivers within the lanterns can compensate for this by increasing the wattage slightly. This, of course, is accounted for within the energy saving and carbon reduction calculations.

- Denbighshire changes 1,500 lanterns to LEDs per annum. They started at 18-22W each and are now 9-13W each, such is the improvement in design even over a five year period.

- Denbighshire's street lighting engineers are a multi-award-winning team, having won UK performance standards almost every year for a dozen years.



# Of Red Squirrels and Windfarms

## Chair of Natural Resources Wales and RADCA member Sir David Henshaw tells us what's been going on in and around Ruthin

When I took on the Chair of Natural Resources Wales (NRW) about two years or so ago, one of the immediate priorities for me was to see an organisation that built stronger relationships with the communities we serve all over Wales and with our many stakeholders. Partnership work is crucial—it is only by working together that we can achieve our ambitions for Wales—for its environment, for its communities and for its economy.

And so, in this article, I'd like to take the opportunity to discuss some of the key partnership work that's been going on in and around Ruthin, an area that I've called home for the past twelve years.

I have to start with the agricultural community. Farmers play a critical role in protecting our countryside and we are working with farming groups to help develop a sustainable agricultural industry that will support the wider environment. Agricultural pollution remains amongst the top of our list of concerns. We are working in partnership with local farmers along the River Clwyd to help improve the water quality of the river. Together with the farmers, NRW has fenced off around 650 yards of the main River Clwyd and installed troughs as an alternative drinking water point for the animals. By restricting access to cattle, we can protect the river, improve the water

quality and river life here on the Clwyd as well as nearby streams, rivers and coastal waters for years to come.

And as an aside, and on a personal note, the River Clwyd has also been the focus of a couple of litter picking ventures (along with regular litter picking locally) that my wife has organised with the help of Keep Wales Tidy and our neighbours. The damage to wildlife of litter generally is immense. We all appreciate the voluntary effort that goes into collecting litter in the Ruthin area and more generally across Wales.



Last year, we saw the completion of the Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm which is owned by RWE, but built on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate that is managed by NRW. The project successfully installed 27 turbines within the working forest and is now capable of producing enough renewable energy for the equivalent domestic needs of up to 63,800 average UK households per annum.

As part of this scheme, NRW has also purchased 40 hectares of farmland on the edge of the forest. This is part of our woodland creation programme and we'll be planting a mixture of broadleaf and conifer species over the winter months



that will offer opportunities for people, businesses and biodiversity, as well as make a positive difference to our lives and to those of future generations.

And, as RADCA members will know, the forest is also home to a small but very important population of red squirrels, and since 2018 the Clocaenog Red Squirrel Trust (CRST) has worked with us to help protect one of the UK's rarest mammals.

Like us all, the coronavirus pandemic has forced me to reflect on the Wales we want to see as we emerge from one of the most challenging time of our lives. I was very pleased to be asked by the Welsh Government Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AS, to chair a task force that puts green policies at the heart of how we recover from the pandemic. We asked organisations and individuals across the country to propose projects and schemes that contributed to taking on the challenges presented by the pandemic to the environment and climate.

We've received a huge number of suggestions. The task force is about to publish its report and hopes to move into a delivery role in the coming months making sure these projects happen. I hope to be able to talk in more detail soon.

There is a lot more we can all do, and I look forward to continuing working with NRW colleagues and our partners to achieve our goals of facing the climate and nature emergencies, and seeing the benefits that environmental projects can give to communities throughout Wales. I'd like to encourage RADCA members to keep in touch with NRW via its website <https://naturalresources.wales> where you'll see information ranging from flood warnings to details of our various projects. Any feedback or questions, please get in touch.



# A Trickle for a Treat

**Two days before hallowe'en and there was no razzmatazz at the 8 a.m. opening of Aldi's new Ruthin store, reports Peter Daniels**

October 29th and if anyone was expecting to arrive at 7.55 a.m. and be the very first customer within our new Aldi store, they'd be disappointed. And no marching bands, no balloon arch, no local junior football team, no DJ compere, no minor celeb. Especially no held-back queue or communal new year's eve-style countdown.

Contrast this with November 2017's Aldi fanfare in Denbigh and you realise that Management decided the wisest course was to do things quietly. Opening in the teeth of a fire break lockdown would have its challenges. Queues of expectant and hungry shoppers were probably unwise. So, instead, as early as 7.30 a.m. we witnessed a trickle for a treat rather than a tumult for a taste—and all with the fever of losing supporters at the end of a cup final.

Mind you, by mid-morning, the car park was much livelier, with a fuller car park but still about 70 per cent of the total cars parked at the same time at Tesco. Things will shake out in time. A fortnight later and cars at Aldi had reduced.



The journey to October 29th began in May 2019 with a consultation at Llanfwrog Community Centre. There, we wondered why Aldi would ever want to build Ruthin's third supermarket in a town of barely 6,000 (remember the days when we had a solitary Kwik Save?).

It turns out that Aldi expected Ruthin's store to do better than Denbigh's, in spite of a larger population eight miles farther north. Something to do with the socio-economics of Ruthin, they said. Aldi had moved into the middle ground, they said.

As if to emphasise this point, 8 a.m. saw a local 11-month-old Porsche Macan SUV turn up in the car park while its owner went to shop. Such cars retail for a minimum of £47,000. Truly a sign of Aldi's middle class appeal perhaps, chasing the beer battered fish, the Parma ham, the fresh pesto, the coconut oil, the gingerbread mulled wine, the houmous, the alcohol-infused mince pies and the damson plum & pink gin pudding.

Work on site commenced immediately before the March 2020 lockdown and it



The 7.55 a.m. trickle on October 29th. By mid-morning, the car park was much fuller

continued throughout. There was some minor criticism in March that Aldi had not halted (but construction was exempt). Of those who expressed an opinion either way, most were keen to see Aldi completed. Aldi themselves pointed out that they would be providing an essential service (but so was the Co-op & Tesco). Seven months later, we see that realised.

There were concerns, too, that the site was too far from town but few seemed bothered that it was on green fields. The site was in the LDP, after all. Contrast this with Clwyd Alyn's development to the side of Glasdir, where some locals considered building on the greensward anathema.

If there were no held-back queues athirst for their first Aldi fix, there to witness the event were Aldi's managers. I spotted six black company Audi A4 cars. Four wore 67-plates; one was an 18-plate; and another sported a 19-plate. A sprinkling of black Audis was also present during the

lead up to the day, with managers no doubt fussing and bustling over last minute details. Today's clutch of inky flivvers weren't the usual shiny examples you tend to see, thanks to the rain that tarnishes black cars quickly. Aldi managers must spend much of their time cleaning and waxing their carriages. Black is such an unforgiving colour.

Meanwhile, in a renewed push for your loyalty, Tesco continues to promote Clubcard prices that can see as much as a third off. They've made cosmetic improvements especially to the car park. Within, Tesco is also promising to match Aldi's prices.

The two supermarkets are certainly very different and no one can claim that Aldi can substitute entirely for Tesco but it will make a dent. When the novelty of a brand new Aldi wears off, when Aldi becomes second nature, when the activity subsides and when the black Audis have forsaken Ruthin for the next store launch, there's no doubt for the first time Tesco will still have a run for its money.





# £1,500 for a Private Room at Ruthin Hospital

## Documents given to the safe custody of the Civic Association open a lens on the period between 1923 and 1963 when Ruthin Castle was a hospital

A 36-page 9" x 6" brochure dated September 1950 promotes the hospital and the virtues of Ruthin itself which in the 'Eden of Wales' enjoys a 'mild and equable but not relaxing climate'. From 24 guineas a week for a bedroom and up to 40 guineas a week for one with what today are called en-suite facilities, plus 30 guineas for preliminary lab or X-ray investigations, patrons had access to first class medical staff and full board. It was certainly not for the indigent. 40 guineas equates to about £1,500 per week today.

general demand for doctors and patients that similar work should be done in a place more easily reached from larger centres'. Ruthin was the place deemed to be 'more easily reached' hence the purchase of Ruthin Castle & grounds.

As if to emphasise Ruthin's accessibility, the brochure includes maps showing Ruthin as the focus of the road and rail networks of the time. This, of course, was 12 years before the closure of the LMS passenger line through Ruthin. There were indicative rail times from London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow and, unsurprisingly, Aberdeen. As for travel by car, 'Ruthin is easily reached by motor from the midlands and northern regions of England and from north and south Wales'.

In a town known for the purity of its water, the brochure boasts 'A pure and private water supply flows from a spring and reservoir on the property'. To guard against drought, the Castle 'has been connected with the Birkenhead Water Supply and this can be drawn on at any moment'.

For its time, the facilities at the hospital were impressive. Then again, you wouldn't spent £1,500 a week for a back street clinic. The moat and south wings were newly constructed for the clinic, as were the specially built kitchens.

The hospital boasted two 'new and enlarged' main laboratories with eight accessory rooms, accessible by crossing the bridge over the middle moat.

These were fitted with 'modern appliances for chemical, bacteriological and pathological work'. There were separate 'laboratories of radiology' at the junction of the moat and south wings.

There was a fixed and a portable electrocardiograph. There was also a 'properly lighted and fitted operating room' with sterilising room adjoining. Those patients who were likely to be X-rayed were asked to bring pyjamas or nightdresses not made of silk.



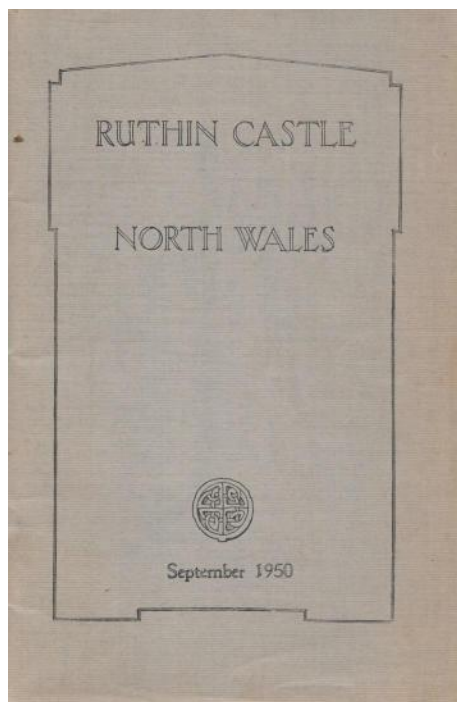
There was a slightly perverse-sounding 'douche-massage bath' and this was seemingly a rather primitive piece of equipment designed for some unspecified 'abnormal complaints'. There was an electric light bath for obesity and for kidney disorders, and an intestinal douche for bowel disorders. The rather mediæval-sounding 'Faradism, galvanism, diathermy, the short wave and similar methods' were provided 'and the Bergonié chair', which appears to be a non-lethal electric model.

'Sufferers from every form of internal disease are receiving diagnosis and treatment at Ruthin Castle'. Among the long list of suggested maladies were high tension, rest after

overwork, habitual constipation, emaciation and 'the Anæmias'.

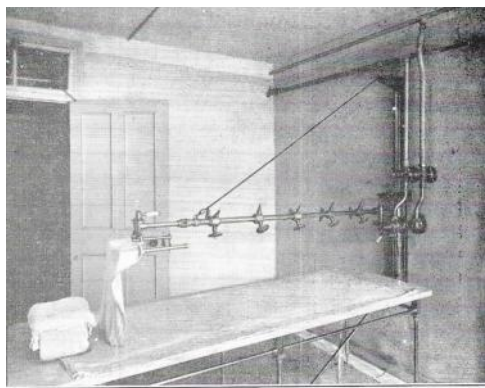
There were also exclusions, in bold type, including those with 'infectious diseases, including active pulmonary tuberculosis; inebrity, severe neurosis, hypochondriasis; epilepsy in any form or mental affections'.

Unstable, drunken, afflicted sufferers of covid-19, real or imagined, need not therefore apply. P.D.



Sounding like something out of Richard Gordon's fictional St Swithin's, the brochure acknowledges one Sir Edmund Ivens Spriggs as co-founder and senior physician. Upon Spriggs's retirement, his replacement, Sydney Wentworth Patterson, was credited formerly as consulting physician to no other than king Edward VII. Edward, of course, was Bertie, a frequent visitor to Ruthin Castle when titled prince of Wales, visiting the then home of the Cornwallis Wests.

In 1913, Duff House in Banff, Aberdeenshire, was the first private hospital of its kind to open. Success there resulted 10 years later in 'a



DOUCHE MASSAGE BATH.



# Seen in Passing...

Overnight on November 5th, some wag appended two quite well made signs to the new bollards on Market Street. One, seen here, reads 'RTC Expressway'. We're not sure whether the initials 'RTC' stood for Ruthin Town Council or road traffic collision. Either way, the signs disappeared early on November 6th.



A sign of the times? This 'road works ahead' sign features an obviously ill and hopefully self-isolating roadman seemingly grappling with unfurling an umbrella.



No sooner had we commented on the skip parked for some weeks on Well Street than it went away. Another came, though, on November 20th. We trust that it will not outstay its welcome.



Aldi introduced a rather strange way of managing its traffic at the vehicular entrance to its new Ruthin store. Not only did they mark 'give way' on exit, there was one on the entry, too. This gave pedestrians priority while crossing the road but it seemed counter-intuitive. Meanwhile, pedestrians who wish to use Aldi have to walk all the way to the road entrance. It would've been so much better had there been a pedestrian path cut nearer to the Mart.



On a theme, Tesco car park changes sparked some sour remarks but the majority found favour. It's still tight but now easier to navigate. In spite of signage, some still ignore the 'no left turn' instruction... including some Tesco staff departing when the store is closed.

The Free Press website announced Denbighshire's free parking after 3 p.m. initiative, with an accompanying picture of a full car park... in Mold.



Tŷ Celf, Well Street, advertises a pet painting service. Has someone told the RSPCA that golden retrievers might come out blue or that the family pet white rabbit may turn green?



Given the public health emergency, it seems such a long time ago that in March 2020 at v.gd/radca we featured an interview with the then manager at The Castle Hotel. She was looking to launch informal, mid-range dining, but the situation put paid to anything in that direction. Last month, the Castle Hotel did inaugurate its new dining area, Tafarn y Ddraig, which adds variety and is also planned to be open during the early part of the week, when others tend to close. Then, along came news of an enforced closure after 6 p.m...

A year earlier, March 2019 at v.gd/radca, we wrote about the state of the fingerpost roadsign at Galltegfa. This November, it was refurbished and, although not yet complete, is now a real

## 15 Years Ago

We may have a third supermarket upon the arrival of Aldi but 15 years ago things were about to change elsewhere in grocery retail.

It emerged that the new supermarket on the former rough car park at Lôn Parcwr would be Tesco. There started a war of words in town about the merits or otherwise of such a supermarket. The arguments about Aldi were very much more one-sided, in favour.



Meanwhile, Kwik Save closed 15 years ago, immediately after Christmas 2005 and, on January 25th 2005, reopened as Somerfield. Somerfield closed during February 2008, leaving us again with two supermarkets... till now.



sight. Can we have the same treatment for that at Lôn Fawr, please?

Just as the painstaking restoration of Wynnstay House drew to a close, the other half of the former Wynnstay Arms required urgent roof repairs.

The people of Llanbedr created over 400 'poppies' out of old plastic bottles. These were on display at St Peter's churchyard.





## A colorized photograph of a large, two-story building, identified as the New Post Office in Ruthin. The building features a light-colored facade with dark window frames and a central entrance. Several people are standing in front of the building, and the text "NEW POST OFFICE RUTHIN" is visible at the bottom of the image.



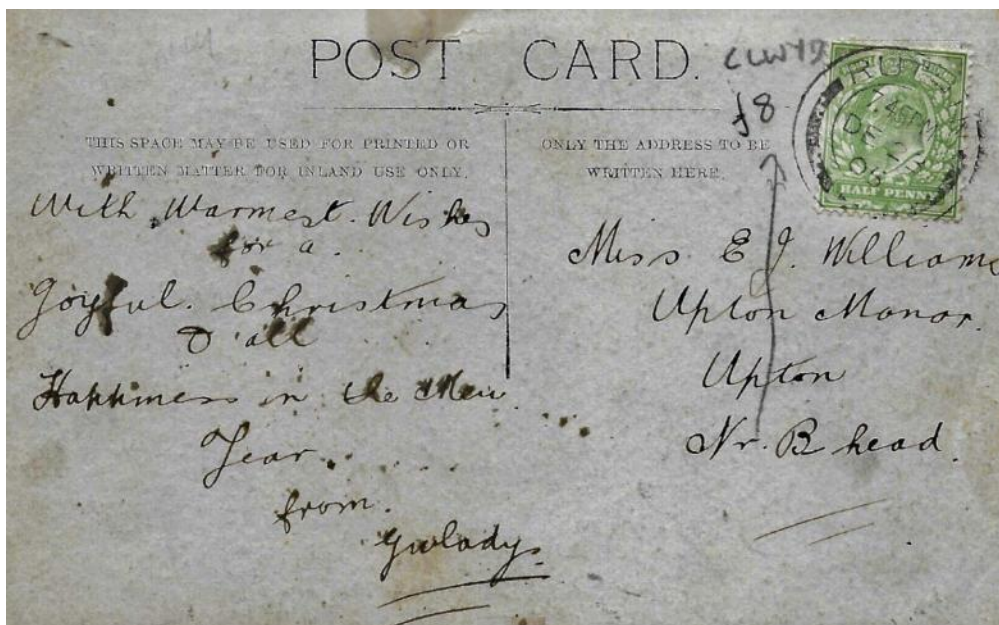
Since 1993, the Ruthin Post Office has been in private hands.

Christmas cards were first introduced in 1843 when the tradition of sending Christmas letters to relatives and friends proved to be too much for a Henry Cole then a young civil servant and who later became the first director of the V & A. When they first went on sale they were not an immediate success, as they were hand-coloured and cost a shilling, a fortune in those days. Only the rich could afford then and this was still true in the early years of the last century.

This year, another intriguing postcard showing the 'New Post Office Ruthin' has come to light. The message on the reverse reads as follows. "With Warmest Wishes for a Joyful Christmas and all Happiness in the New Year from Gwladys". The postmark shows that it was sent on December 23rd, 1905 to a Miss E. J. Williams of Upton Manor, Upton, near Birkenhead. It was still cheaper and easier to use than the traditional Christmas letters to relatives and friends.

The post office had moved from No. 2

A copy of the Denbighshire Free Press of the time stated, "We understand that the contract for the building of the New Post Office has been let to Messrs Robert Evans & Sons of Old Colwyn". They had also just built the new post office at Denbigh. The architect was Mr James Hughes, who was also from Denbigh.





# Chronicles

Continued from page 1

sale of non-essential goods but, strangely, B & M does not. There ensues a destructive debate about what is and is not essential in supermarkets.

Unlike in March, fewer businesses put up posters but, like March, the town and car parks are (mostly) deserted. The most intriguing posters are at Corbett's, which declares the closure is because of (English) tier three guidelines and The Children's Society, which is operating to English lockdown dates.

The lending library poster reassuringly advises us, 'Please don't worry about fines'.

## October 31st

Lockdown prevents hallowe'en high jinks this year in a very subdued affair.

## November 7th

Bus service X1 Ruthin to Chester terminates at Broughton Retail Park for the duration of the English lockdown.

## November 8th

The public is asked to keep away from the town's remembrance day service. Only specific invitees are allowed. A maximum of 123 people view online.

## November 9th

Nation exits from lockdown 2. Shop doors open and windows again blossom. The Lord's Garden opens free of charge on Mondays. The following day, for one day only, a number of town centre shops offer 10 per cent off.

## November 14th

First Saturday after lockdown sees alcohol-related disturbances in the town centre after the 10 p.m. closing time and police introduce a dispersal order.

## November 17th

A walk-in covid-19 testing station appears for one day in Crispin Yard before 'outrage' sees it move for three weeks to County Hall. Available daily.

## November 25th

Government announces Christmas arrangements. Two days later, it warns of likely hospitality restrictions to come.

## November 26th

Ysgol Brynhyfryd shuts for two days because of a symptomatic cleaner. The school reopens on November 30th following a negative result.

At the same time, some year groups at Rhos Street begin self-isolation and the Royal Mail delivery office suffers disruption to mail distribution, owing to a positive

case.

## November 27th

Council tweaks the Market Street active travel scheme.



Town & Around is published quarterly by the Ruthin & District Civic Association. It is available from Ruthin Library and on [townandaround.org.uk](http://townandaround.org.uk). It is delivered free to Association members

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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](mailto:cymru@clwyd.org) or Coedlan, 25 Stryd y Brython, Ruthin, LL15 1JA

The deadline for the next edition is February 19th, 2021

Thanks are due to this quarter's contributors:

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

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Ruthin & District Civic Association

## December 4th

Pubs & restaurants are not permitted to admit patrons after 6 p.m. and cannot sell alcohol at all indoors. Those with an off licence may sell alcohol up to 10 p.m. for consumption off the premises. *P.D.*



## 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](mailto:ruthincivic@btinternet.com))