

Town & Around O Gwmpas y Dre

Autumn 2026



NEWS, COMMENT & FEATURES FROM THE RUTHIN & DISTRICT CIVIC ASSOCIATION SINCE 2003

End of Historic Era for Ruthin



The main part of Ruthin School dates from the 19th century but even the more modern extensions to the left are impressive

by Heather Williams

Founded in 1284 then re-established by Gabriel Goodman in 1574 and relocated to the Mold Road site in 1893, the announcement of the sudden closure of Ruthin School with it going into administration at the end of the summer school term was unexpected by many.

Only on June 27th the school was promoting on social media that the school had a small number of places still available in September for the sixth form and private tours could be booked.

In April 2023, the Daily Post reported that the school was seeking investors. At that time Nicholas Grenfell-Marten, the school's bursar, said if the sale was

possible they had been reassured that there would be 'no impact' on its operation. It was stated that the school's most recent published accounts from August 2020 and the auditor's report warned of a 'material uncertainty which may cast significant doubt over the going concern position of the school'. In addition, the end of charitable status for many independent schools and the removal of VAT and business tax exemptions could force up school fees, prompting an exodus of students from private education.

The negotiation for investors was successful and Ruthin School was acquired by a Chinese business woman, who led the takeover, forming a company Ruthin Educational Ltd (with Nicholas Grenfell-Marten acting as the company secretary). This was subsequently linked to Galaxy Global Education Ltd, which had other UK schools under its control which took over the school's operation.

The appointed administrators are Simon Farr and Philip Watkins of FRP Advisory Trading Ltd. Darren Miller AS has met with Simon Farr who gave his explanation of the reasons behind the closure of the school:

- Pupil recruitment had been challenging in recent years and numbers were forecast to fall sharply at the start of the academic year 2026/7.
- At this stage there is no indication of any asset stripping 'at this stage'

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Abbeyfield 2026: another era ends

A tale of nine lives by Abbeyfield resident Liz Williams

The role of the Civic Association is to champion the interests of all residents and preserve the spirit of our town. The potential loss of Abbeyfield is not just a housing issue. It's a civic issue. When we lose spaces that foster companionship and keep our older people rooted in their

own community, we lose a piece of the town's heart.

Abbeyfield is a scheme to bring lonely people together, in an ordinary house, in an ordinary street, getting support and creating an atmosphere of companionship from neighbours. It fosters staying in the community in later life, rather than moving away from it.

This in 1955 was the vision (today, you would say 'mission statement') of Richard Carr-Gomm when he left his post as army major and started the

Abbeyfield Society. This concept continues to be the foundation for all the work done to alleviate the problems of loneliness and isolation in Ruthin today. The able managers and staff here continue in this much valued tradition.

As a resident of Abbeyfield Ruthin, it is with a heavy heart I report the intended closure or sale of our home.

As Abbeyfield Ruthin is no longer

Continued on p3

From the Chair

I love Ruthin because it just feels like a place with a bit of soul to it.

There's something really nice about living in a town where the past is never far away. When you walk through Ruthin, you can really feel the history: the old buildings, the Castle, the winding streets, and all the character that's built up over generations. It's not trying to be something it's not. It's just proudly itself, and that's a big part of the charm.

But, for me, Ruthin isn't just about history. It's more about the feeling of the place.

It's how the town shifts with the seasons. Those crisp mornings when the hills feel closer, summer evenings when everything feels alive, autumn when the Vale turns all those colours, and winter days when everything goes quiet and almost timeless. Living here means having proper countryside right on your doorstep, but still having a real town at the centre of everyday life.

I love the views, too. Ruthin sits in such a beautiful part of North Wales, surrounded by hills, fields, and huge skies. You don't have to go far at all to

find a spot that makes you stop and take it in. It's easy to forget just how much space there is here until you've been away for a while.

But most of all, I love Ruthin because of the people.

A town is just bricks and roads and buildings without the people who bring it to life. Ruthin has that real community feel: familiar faces, local stories, independent shops, and people who genuinely care about where they live. You can walk through town and feel like you're somewhere that actually matters to people.

So when Ruthin School closed so suddenly, it didn't just feel like news. It felt like a crack in something familiar. A place that had held routines, friendships, history and above all futures, now gone in a moment. Just like Abbeyfield, in fact.

Even so, Ruthin has been through hard times before. The kind of hardship that leaves a mark but doesn't manage to break the place. It doesn't just endure. Ruthin adapts and then it grows into something new.

Ruthin isn't perfect, and I don't love it because it is. I love it because it's real.



It's got its quirks, its challenges, and its imperfections, just like anywhere else. But that's all part of what makes it home.

There are places that are more famous, more exciting, or more impressive. But home isn't really about that.

Sometimes home is just the place where you know the streets, recognise the views, remember the moments, and feel like you belong.

For me, that's Ruthin. And that's why I love it.

Ruthin School

from p1

including sales of land or buildings at the school by its owner. However the administrators will undertake further investigations in line with their legal duties. 'At this stage' hedges the issue.

■ The school has incurred losses between £2-£2½m p.a. in recent years

■ The owners have invested in excess of £6m to keep the school operating. This would tend to suggest that the owners' motives were not to strip assets.

■ A redundancy exercise was undertaken in an attempt to make the school financially viable.

■ The school was forecasting a loss of around £1.2m in the next financial year.

■ The impact of the introduction of VAT on fees, the loss of charitable status and increase in employer's national insurance was estimated to be £1m p.a. It supports a view that the school was already in a perilous position before the shock announcement. (N.B. in 2024/25 the school absorbed the 20 per cent VAT

rather than passing it on to parents).

Becky Gittins, the local MP has also been active and has also been meeting with the Administrators and an update in mid- to late-August was expected to give clarity to the situation for staff and others affected.

Its closure will affect employment of staff, local businesses/shops, school suppliers and hospitality providers, and also cause uncertainty as to the future of land and a significant number of buildings, some of which are listed.

At the present time some staff have been kept on to deal with administrative issues and the maintenance of the site. Denbigh's Myddelton College has appointed the former head, Frances King, and some staff members, and some pupils are transferring to the school in September.

Discussions are taking place with North East Wales Archives to ensure that valuable historic assets will be retained. More details about the history of the school can be found on the Old Ruthinian Association website under the History of Ruthin School section www.ruthinora.co.uk/history-ruthin-school.php

Some security measures are in place now to ensure that the main school building is maintained, as so-called 'urban explorers' soon took the opportunity to film inside of the property. It will be a challenging job given the size and mixture of property to make sure the buildings and the land do not deteriorate, and that a suitable use can be found for them sooner rather than later.



Rear of Ruthin School

What might happen to the site?

It is right and proper that the initial reaction should be focus on the plight of employees and the impact on pupils, adds Peter Daniels.

But now that we are at least partly used to the change, what of the site and the buildings?

The core of the school is grade II-listed. Exactly one year ago, Town and Around published an article on the impact of the architect John Douglas, including the original 19th century school building. What will befall that building? Will it remain unused and deteriorating, just like some of our redundant primary schools?

Then there are other more bespoke buildings, such as a sports hall and a new restaurant. There are also dormitories on site. One is a much-altered Heulfre, not listed but nevertheless with some architectural and historic worth.

'Goodman', the former Anchor Inn in town, was effectively saved by the school in 2004. Its future at an important gateway location now seems uncertain.

There's plenty of land. There are said to be covenants on some of it to protect the land for educational purposes. We'd hazard a guess, though, that at least part of the site will terminate as housing.

As we say elsewhere regarding the Quayle award winner, you never know what could happen (see p12).

Cunning Development

The Civic Association welcomes the fencing now installed at the gap in the previously fallen wall belonging to the Ruthin Castle Hotel. Serendipitously, it allows a view of the Castle and walls.

That the County Council has swept its length and cleared growth is an encouraging sign. Will all this activity at last mark the reopening of Cunning Green footpath?

That depends on the state of the remainder of the wall. One thing's for certain: the County Council will not reopen the path till they are absolutely certain of the structural integrity of the rest of the wall.

The County Council is responsible for the path, not the structures that abut it.

These are in private hands, except for the Lord's Garden wall (which previously collapsed but was repaired as promptly as possible by the County Council).

The fact that the fencing is in place now really puts pressure on the County Council and we would again urge them to act swiftly. Too much time has already elapsed.

However, we should not be surprised if in the near future there is a further closure. The state of the remainder of the wall remains uncertain and with autumnal stormy weather there can be no certainty.



A cleared and swept path with new fencing on the Castle side

Abbeyfield

from p1

owned by the Abbeyfield Society, it as lost its charitable status. The present owner is Codi, identified as Compass Diversified Holdings, and it functions as a diversified holding company and middle-market consumer conglomerate. It's obvious that they have no interest in nine pensioners from Ruthin. Their plan when they purchased here was to pass it on quickly for profit.

The decision to close or sell has stunned all of us here, including the staff, who will be made redundant.

As Denbighshire County Council is a property-owning housing authority, the purchase of Abbeyfield by them or one of their extra-care partners would be the best possible rescue plan. They obviously saw the need for this kind of housing back in the 1980s, when permission to build Abbeyfield was granted (as they have in converting the adjacent Awelon into Llys Awelon, a similar extra-care facility).

Denbighshire's role, when residents are forced to move from supported housing, often requires a care needs assessment to determine eligibility for financial assistance or alternative placement. This makes my plea to Denbighshire particularly critical, as the council controls the funding and allocation of alternative social housing.

Back in the 1980s, Abbeyfield Ruthin was opened to great acclaim, by the Marchioness of Anglesey, on August 11th, 1983, and so it has served the local community for 43 years. Hundreds have lived here and local people have been employed here, too. It has given several generations of people hope for their future.

The youngest resident of Abbeyfield Ruthin is in the late 70s and the oldest is over 100!

Here is what current residents have to say about Abbeyfield:

'I've lived here for over 20 years and enjoyed all my time here. O dear. A time to move on. Difficult.'

June (aged 90) said, *'I expected to end my days here but feel like the grand*

plan for Abbeyfield is to close it down whatever. That is in spite of there always being a waiting list of people who want to live here. Nobody wants to leave here voluntarily. I have very poor eyesight and will have to find another Abbeyfield to go to, as the Abbeyfield system addresses my needs and helps me lead an independent life. I feel safe here.'

Civic Association member Karline (aged 87) said, *'I was offered a place in Abbeyfield as a 'forever home' and so I agreed to sell my house and move in. My mother lived here for many years and spent a happy, contented old age here. The closure of Abbeyfield is a shock to the system and a major problem for me'.*

As a Civic Association dedicated to the betterment of Ruthin, we believe that 'civic pride' is measured by how a community treats its most vulnerable. We call upon the County Council

Abbeyfield and Liz Williams



to act not as a distant authority, but as a steward of our community, ensuring that the vision of 'care in the community' remains a reality rather than a slogan. Come on Denbighshire: can you save nine lives?

Trefnant

W.I. — At the July meeting of Trefnant W.I., Mrs E. Pearson of Llandyrnog, the county treasurer, gave a demonstration of flower arranging on the theme "Summer Bounty". The competition, "an arrangement in a candlestick", was won by Mrs K. Smith, second was Mrs Alice Williams and third, Mrs J. Hughes. The flowers on the presidents table were provided and arranged by Mrs Myra Jones.

It had been intended to display Trefnant W.I.'s scrap book (made in 1965) at the Clwyd-Denbigh Federation's Jubilee at Howells School. The committee were distressed to find that it had gone astray. If anyone has any ideas as to where this jubilee scrap book could be, they are asked to contact the secretary, Mrs K. Lockley, 14 Clwydian Park Crescent, St Asaph.

HOME IS OPENED

The Marchioness of Anglesey opened Abbeyfield House, Ruthin, on Thursday and is pictured unveiling a commemorative plaque.

With her is Rev T. Noel Roberts, chairman of the Ruthin committee; Mr Gilbert H. Parry, architect and Mr Graham Anwyl, representing the construction company.

Ground Control

From pews to parking prevention

In the post-public realm new town centre, the Town Council has considered a new strategy regarding floral displays.

To date, the Town Council has provided and paid for hanging baskets. These were effective but in recent years have proven to be less durable and even during some years disappointing.

These high-maintenance lamppost hanging baskets will be a thing of the past. No longer will they require cherry pickers and frequent watering. Instead, the Town Council favours ground-based planters.

Not only would these be more sustainable, they would help discourage pavement parking.

One of the early downsides of the public realm works in Well Street and on the Square is the proliferation of pavement parking. Sometimes, motorists park entirely on the (now enlarged) footway, negating the improvement and

taking up space set aside for pedestrians.

Planters would in addition bring lasting seasonal colour to the town centre, assuming there is a suitable planting strategy.

The approach envisages bespoke feature planters for St Peter's Square, clad with the former church pews stored for the purpose. This follows the refurbishment of the church. The pew planters would sit alongside simpler off-the-peg planters for the surrounding streets.

The pew-design is envisioned to wrap around a standard, self-watering planter rather than requiring a bespoke watering system of

its own, said to be simpler, longer-lasting, and quicker to source. They would be painted in a heritage colour.

On planting, it is reported that advice would be sought from a landscape architect and the County Council's tree officer, with an ornamental evergreen tree proposed for the feature planters, underplanted with native, pollinator-friendly perennials and spring



bulbs.

For the surrounding streets leading to the Square, the Town Council proposes reusing the existing stored semi-circular hanging baskets as self-watering inserts within new pots inspired by the shape of the town's new church bells.

Tests of one of these proposed pots (above) having been moved from location to location have been successful.

Ongoing maintenance would rely on a mix of contractor support and community involvement. Early and encouraging conversations had taken place with a local expert about establishing a community group to help sustain the scheme.



Obstructing empty car, also with Open door ...

A 21st Century Phenomenon



Tucked away Maes Ffynnon off Mwrog Street may not be a heritage location (other than the site of a former mineral water works, of course). But does the small housing estate justify an intrusive bank of postal lockers? They appeared in the last week of July.

The really scary thing here is that if Maes Ffynnon can suddenly see such infrastructure, presumably so could any housing estate. Not just that, they could potentially begin to threaten heritage locations. Imagine one to the front or side of the post office on St Peter's Square, for example.

The site in Maes Ffynnon is clearly inappropriate and ill-judged. There are better locations with lockers. And, five

minutes walk away at Bridge Services, you can deposit and collect parcels between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. over the counter.

As the residents of Maes Ffynnon brace themselves for additional traffic noise and nuisance at all hours, at almost exactly the same time there appeared lockers to the rear of County Hall. That seems a more sensible location. No neighbours, shielded from the town's heritage street-scene, and a large car park. Those at County Hall had planning permission. Not so at Maes Ffynnon.

We struggle to understand why Maes Ffynnon might be singled out in the eyes of the locker operator. Could it be an

unusually high theft rate in the general area, perhaps?

Meanwhile, as people wonder why the range of shops in the town centre is diminishing, here's the answer. There are now seven locker sites in Ruthin from which to choose, plus

three shops taking in and giving out parcels. All to cater for ever-growing internet shopping demand.

■ The UK parcel locker market transformed from a niche offering with fewer than 2,000 locations in 2015 to mainstream infrastructure (10,000+ locations by 2025). Plus 6,000 in store collection points. Growth has been non-linear and accelerating, with the sharpest expansion occurring in 2022–2025, driven by e-commerce saturation, parcel theft, and consumer demand for flexible delivery. InPost has emerged as the dominant operator, though competition from other carriers including at Maes Ffynnon continues to intensify.

Short Stays. Big Gains

It's a struggle to get local people into town during the public realm work on the Square and Well Street but the hour's free parking initiative has nevertheless proved successful.

It also indicates that footfall isn't quite as dire as it seems.

It was 12 months ago that the Town Council introduced free parking in partnership with car park operator Denbighshire County Council.

An hour's free parking is available at Crispin Yard, Park Road and Dog Lane car parks. Those taking advantage must still obtain a ticket. Staying more than an hour means you have a longer-period ticket with the free hour automatically added.

The most recent comparisons show the scheme has been popular.

Taking summer figures from May to July 2026 inclusive, during the Well Street street works and the start of those on the Square, overall parking was up by about 35 per cent compared to the

previous three months of 2025. Crispin Yard was the busiest car park by far and grew fastest in absolute terms. Dog Lane demand grew well and is now often full. Park Road declined slightly but, then again, half of it was unavailable owing to the public realm contractor's compound. People may have just avoided it.

In terms of stay duration, the one hour ticket share jumped considerably year on year. In fact, it more than doubled. Understandably, long stays fell (by a third) but the percentage increase in one hour parking more than compensated for a decline in longer stays. This analysis suggests that the huge increase in shorter parking isn't just the same motorists switching to shorter stays but also a genuine increase of additional short term parking.

There being limited parking currently on the Square may account for some of this increase but, conversely, it seems



Full up: previously a rare site at Crispin Yard

that during the May to July 2026 period there were anecdotally many more prepared to risk parking on Market Street's double yellow lines (who presumably used to prefer the Square). And, we do not know the potential changes in other car parks where free parking does not apply.

Levelling Update

St Peter's Square



The Square taking shape

Work on the Square not due till July 2026 was brought forward. As such, the Square is progressing well. By the time you read this, the work to set off The Old Courthouse will be complete. The large reservoir space in front does justice to the this important building.

Contractors will clear out by November 20th, 2026 for the Christmas period. It is anticipated, at the time of writing, that they will need at least January and some of February to complete the entire scheme. This, then, leaves spring and summer 2027 open to celebrate the newness of town.

Now that the Square is already looking better, there has been a marked upturn in positivity. The Festival's Top Dre reported no problem with the new arrangement and it even resulted in repositioning one stage to the greater benefit of all. There is space on the Square designated for a Christmas tree but not a flagpole.

In August, however, attitudes to the Square and in particular Well Street hardened again. This was largely the result of concerns that larger vehicles might be unable to access the street and the turns onto the Square. However, vehicles will be able to do so, when finished.

There remained a majority in favour but not necessarily on social media.

Old Gaol

Work is complete on site but neither the fit-out nor the letting of the café is finished. Frustratingly, there has been little progress over the summer at 46 Clwyd Street, with a launch now expected for the 2027 season.

Levelling Up works at Nantclwyd y Dre are in a similar position.

Cae Ddôl

Work on the 1,600 feet of active travel route linking the the tennis centre at Lôn Fawr to Crispin Yard began over the summer. The appointed contractor is also working in town. It includes a boardwalk at the fringes of the Cae Ddôl lake. The County Council in addition will replace the central bridge over the Clwyd. Importantly, the popular and new pump track for bicycles and skates is currently under construction. The track will have an uneven terrain with ramps, banked curves, turns and mounds.

Meanwhile, the Town Council has refurbished and returned the much-valued rocking horse as a static item at the entrance to Crispin Yard. Work will shortly begin to refurbish the Crispin Yard lavatories. This is expected to include a seasonal café with decking, to serve parents and children



Construction of the board walk by the summer-depleted lake at Cae Ddôl

attending what will be the much-improved Cae Ddôl park.

The Town Council is expected to take over the running of the lavatories at least for a fixed period (see opposite).

Work is anticipated to be completed by next spring, with the active travel route opening earlier.

Flush with Ambition

In response to Denbighshire County Council's closure of the public lavatory on Market Street, Ruthin Town Council has agreed to adopt the lavatory at Crispin Yard. This is on condition that Levelling Up funding is used to upgrade the block, to include a new automated access & payment system. The project should be completed by next summer.

The agreement will also allow the Town Council to provide an income-generating community asset (a seasonal café kiosk plus ancillary space). This would be partly funded by some £90,000 released from the Sports Wales Pump Track grant. This remains subject to planning permission and external grants to fit out the community space.

The original lavatory block was completed in 1988 and rather than the initial separate sides for women's and men's lavatories has subsequently seen the introduction of lavatory 'pods'.

Changes will include an additional customer lavatory and and more windows.

The café will be a kiosk-type arrangement, maximising outdoor seasonal seating.

Stepping into History...

... in one of our shops, with Heather Williams

I wonder if you have ever stepped into the Children's Society charity shop at the top of Clwyd Street. If so, have you noticed the mosaic tiles in the recessed entrance lobby to the shop door? If you pause and take a closer look you can see holes where the former name of the shop is spelt out—'Hepworth's'—a shop which some readers who have lived in Ruthin for many years may remember.

For about a century until 1985, Hepworth's was a thriving national chain of men's clothing shops, with a good choice of ready-made and made-to-measure suits. Hepworth's was founded by Joseph Hepworth (1834-1911) from Huddersfield who followed in his father's footsteps and became a woollen cloth dresser (cutting the cloth) at a local mill. In 1864, Joseph set up a business as a 'Juvenile Clothing Manufacturer', with his son Norris joining him in 1878 in the business which was located in Leeds. It then became known as J. Hepworth & Son and, instead of supplying the trade, Hepworth's began to sell direct to customers in Britain and abroad.

The decision was taken to open shops in all important towns as rapidly as possible. Among the first shops which opened in 1884 were those in Birmingham and Derby. In 1891, they had 81 shops and by 1914 Joseph Hepworth & Son was probably the largest clothing manufacturer in the country. Hepworth's changed its image in 1961 when it began opening shops named 'The Hardy Amies Tailoring Shop' within several Debenham's department stores.

Hepworth's changed its direction again in the 1980s, when the company bought the women's wear chain Kendall & Sons, which was then used to launch a new chain of shops called Next. It proved so successful that Hepworth's name disappeared from the high street by the end of 1985, absorbed by the new brand.

However, some fragments of



Hepworth's have survived, such as Hepworth's Arcade in Hull and entrance lobbies which remain a feature of traditional historic shop fronts in Penrith and Blandford Forum.

In the mid-20th century, Hepworth's shops were characterised by deep entrance lobbies which maximised the window display area, just as we have here in Ruthin. The beautiful hard-wearing tiles are typical of the intricate black and white checker-board or mosaic patterns which were popular in the late 19th and early/mid part of the 20th century.

While not perfect, they are still in pretty good condition and have survived countless people stepping on them. Low stall risers were installed, which means the clothing was brought to the same level as 'window shoppers' and deep fascia boards for the signboards with large lettering advertising the name of the shop were simplified to read 'Hepworth's'.

The tiled entrance lobby survived the significant renovation of the shop in 2009 and previous renovations.

This is one of the small local architectural shop front features which need to be retained to help the town retain its character.

■ These days, it is almost inconceivable that a town centre the size of Ruthin should feature a nationally known retailer. Hepworth's was not the only national chain or brand. The fact that they have all but disappeared from town centres of our size indicates the monumental change we have seen in retail, travel, home deliveries and towns.

■ There is a picture of Ruthin's Hepworth's at francisfrith.com. Search within for 'Clwyd Street 1939'.

Double Delight



September 2025 and January 2026 brought improvements to the Rhyl to Wrexham via Denbigh & Ruthin bus service, now Traws Cymru® T51. May 2026 progressively marked the arrival of brand new double decker buses.

The new vehicles represent a total investment of around £2½m, underlining a major commitment to improving capacity and passenger comfort on the route.

Why double deckers? It's a fair question, especially as buses pass through Ruthin, where passenger numbers are often at their lowest.

But the answer is simple: several T51 journeys regularly carry more passengers than a single decker can comfortably accommodate. Demand is strongest on journeys to Denbigh, to Wrexham and one to Ruthin, while some peak services in and out of Rhyl also require additional capacity.

T8 Improvements

There's more good news on services between Corwen and Chester via Ruthin, Mold and Broughton Retail Park. This became Traws Cymru® T8 in 2022.

From this September, passengers will benefit from a new Sunday service and larger single deck buses.

The extra capacity will help meet growing demand, with standing passengers currently seen on some journeys, including, at times, those travelling all the way from outside Mold to Broughton.

The new buses will be no more than three years old and will replace the existing midi-buses, offering a noticeably improved passenger experience.

The return of Sunday buses is particularly welcome. The Ruthin to Mold corridor has not seen a Sunday service for around 50 years.

Bryn Eryl's Plot Twist

You'd be forgiven for missing the saga of the planning application for a proposed bungalow on a plot at Bryn Eryl, off Mold Road.

Building a bungalow on vacant land on a modern housing estate seemed straightforward. The problem was that residents had documentary evidence that the proposal was on amenity land designated as community space, and have used the area to hold events over the years.

It appears that subsequently

Denbighshire County Council sold the plot. No one locally was aware of this. Public opinion was very much against the development.

The original application was pulled before determination. A second went in but was refused in August.

The reasons for refusal did not cite a lack of amenity space directly. The decision was on the basis that the bungalow would appear cramped and visually incongruous, failing to respect the established character and pattern of

development in the area. Additionally, the development would eliminate informal open space that currently contributes positively to the housing estate's sense of openness.

This is good news for those who value community open spaces as part of our suburban housing.

It's round 1 to the local residents and those who value community open spaces. But there's an appeal lodged. Watch this (amenity) space, as the (building) plot thickens...

Caring for St Meugan's Church

by Heather Williams

As many readers will know, in the small hamlet of Llanrhydd about a mile from the town centre of St Peter's church is St Meugan's. This was the original mother-church of the Welsh settlement which subsequently became Ruthin. The church is dedicated to St Meugan, a monk in the golden age of Welsh Saints in the 6th and 7th century.

The present limestone and sandstone building with a Welsh slate roof dates from the 15th century. Inside, one of the key features is the beautifully carved wooden oak rood screen (between the nave and the chancel), which dates back to the late 15th century and is one of the best in the Vale of Clwyd. Other notable features are the stone memorials of the Thelwall family, dating back to the 16th and 17th century, who lived at nearby Bathafarn.

Outside is the shaft of a stone preaching cross which dates back to the 1670s. There are also many interesting grave stones. One is at the east end of the church and marks the death of John Jones who was a Ruthin draper who was killed by a fall from a gig in 1835.

Another interesting gravestone in the north east corner of the churchyard is one recording the death of Alfred Corbett, a tramp, who came to the end of his road in 1947. Finally, Stanley Weyman, a popular author in the late 19th/early 20th who lived at Plas Llanrhydd was buried here in 1928.

Like many rural churches, the worshippers have declined over recent years. Before the pandemic only occasional services were held. Now, the

services held are pre-planned ones, such as christenings, weddings and funerals.

A couple of meetings were recently organised to discuss the future of the church. It is clear that it requires some practical help to care for the church to keep the church open for future generations. It was decided to encourage volunteers to come along on a Saturday morning once a month from 10a.m. to 12.00 noon. The first session was held on July 25th, with the following sessions on August 29th and September 26th.

I attended the first session, when the local mission area lead Revd Diana Greenfield explained the situation to at least a dozen or so volunteers, whose age ranged from young to old. People introduced themselves and had different reasons for coming along: quite a few had family connections, but others were interested in caring for the heritage. Some helped to clean the inside of the church, much needed with spiders and other insects having decided to take up residence. There are also bats there, but none were seen in the daylight. Others set to work outside with secateurs trying to tame some of the vegetation, such as the ivy and various bushes. At the end of the session you could see that even an hour or two of volunteer time did make a difference so let's hope the enthusiasm continues.

■ For more information on the three graves mentioned here, search findagrave.com by using the deceased person's name.

Hidden History at The Hide

A brand new licensed restaurant has just opened near The Square, writes Liz Williams. All fresh, locally-sourced food will be simply cooked and presented at The Hide.



The Hide, at No. 1 Prior Street, which is literally hidden away from view on Prior Street, was previously The Smithy, where horses were shod and all kinds of foundry work was undertaken. A huge cast iron round-barrel boiler was found on site when clearing it. It is possible that hops and barley for beer making from local pubs would have been prepared here. Together with the intriguing three-storey 1A immediately above it, the building is grade II listed. Cadw states this is because of the tall and narrow no. 1A and the retained form of no. 1, The Smithy.

Two brothers of the Williams family lived here for many years and ran the Smithy and there's evidence of a busy foundry there, until the 1960s.

In 1984, local businessman Peter Jones took over the property and had a workshop there as a base for his successful building and repair business. Jones, now semi-retired, has long had an interest in the food trade and now looks forward to a new challenge of running The Hide with Head Chef Matt, who used to chef at the Rug Estate, barman Stewart, and four extra staff to look after you.

All patisserie and ice cream will be made on site and a huge range of Welsh speciality beers and Wrexham lager are offered. With growing facilities on site, most vegetables will be truly local.

There will be specials on the menu and two and three course meal offers. Birthday, anniversary and wedding celebrations will be catered for and The Hide will be open Friday and Saturday 12 noon to 4 pm then 5 pm to last orders at 9 pm. Sundays will see mainly traditional roasts (12 noon till last orders at 7 pm).

The restaurant seats 34 and in addition there are outdoor tables with stunning views across the Vale. Planning permission for the change of use to a restaurant covered the building itself and it's likely that permissions for the use of the outdoor space will need catch up.

This nevertheless is precisely what Ruthin needs: a good quality offer to diversify its hospitality base.

Remembering David Castledine

As a long-standing member of the Civic Association, the late David Castledine is remembered for both his knowledge of Ruthin and the surrounding area, and for his quiet, steady contributions to local life. He died peacefully in Ashbourne, aged 76.

Those who knew him spoke of his amazing knowledge and memory of the local area. He had worked in the Clwyd Record Office and then on the same site in Ruthin at the Denbighshire Record Office, staying there from the 1970s until his retirement.

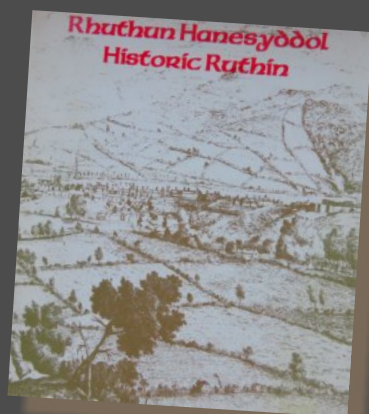
David was also described as an author with a deep connection with local history. He compiled 'Historic Ruthin' while assistant archivist, published by the Clwyd Record Office in 1979. It still remains a go-to source of information. He went on to produce numerous articles, often for the Denbighshire Historical Society, including one on the origins of that society itself.

In addition to his writing, he contributed to research for articles covering a significant number of subjects. He also helped others learn

by teaching at evening classes, and he served as a town guide, bringing local stories to life for visitors and residents alike.

David Castledine was a member of Ruthin's English Presbyterian Church, and he remained active while in Ruthin in a range of interests beyond history and research, including Scottish dancing and chess. He had learnt Welsh to a good standard.

Latterly while in Ruthin, he had been a resident of Abbeyfield.



Civic Association Annual Report 2025/26

The Civic Association year 2025/26 has proven to be less active than in previous years. There has also been some considerable introspection as to the future of the organisation.

Nevertheless, membership of the Civic Association remains stable and, again, we have maintained a healthy financial position, with balances of about £7,000, similar to 2024/25.

During the year, the Committee has given much thought to the Civic Association's future. We feel that much now depends on new ideas and 'new blood'. The current Committee has been in post in some cases for almost as long as the Civic Association itself. Not only is this unhealthy, in time it can stifle creativity. A number are looking to step down but, understandably and gratefully, are loathe to do so without replacements.

These days, volunteers are certainly difficult to come by, no matter the organisation. Our appeal in June's Town & Around brought forward a couple of people who may be interested and who may be able to help. A subsequent summer drive using wider means (social media) has to date garnered no realistic responses.

This is a topic we shall need to address fully at the October AGM following the September close of the Civic Association's year. There are no immediate plans to do something precipitate.

On more routine matters, the Civic Association considered a number of planning applications, including at Pool Park, Rhos Street School, Myddelton Arms and Llys Famau. During a well attended evening in December, those behind the Peers Memorial received the annual Quayle Award. There followed a quiz by Ian Lewney. Two months before, Fiona Gale had addressed the Civic Association AGM. 20 people attended a

thoroughly interesting talk by Brian Hubble on the geology of Ruthin's buildings and the links between our streetscape and local stone. This was highly relevant, given that link was now well and truly broken in Ruthin, with the use of granite kerbs for Levelling Up works from India and York stone from China.

With the help of Friends of the Earth, the Civic Association organised a hustings ahead of the May 2026 Senedd elections.

Uncertainties surrounding the Square Levelling Up project at the time of planning Open Doors resulted in uncertainty for the 2025 event. This was a particular shame because, as we approached the autumn, it was clear that there were significant delays in the start of the levelling up works.

I should therefore like to thank Heather Williams for her hastily-arranged 'Mini Open Doors' in September, and the volunteers who helped staff The Old Courthouse. The Old Courthouse was available for a weekend, with an exhibition of some of the Town Council artefacts (paintings, silverware, mace, robe, etc., with suitable information) and also information about the Peers Memorial clock tower (with guided tours). Refurbished Plas Coch and some other properties were open. Given the notice, numbers were encouraging.

These Public realm works continue and regrettably have blighted Open Doors 2026, too.

The Town and Around journal continued to be the most tangible part of the Civic Association's work, with its usual diverse mix of interesting & relevant articles and news items. This is now generally accepted by those who read it as an important part of the local community, with much praise from members and non-members alike. Yet,

the editor can only produce what he has to hand. It is a great credit to him that the four editions were so full. Even so, that for March 2026 was eight rather than the usual 12 pages. We cannot print what we do not have: again, I urge members and readers to consider how they might contribute in the future. They can offer the occasional full article, suggestions, or a list of bullet points that the editor can use to craft a piece. Without these, Town and Around cannot fulfil its expectations. May I warmly thank the contributors and in particular editor Peter Daniels who has the task of stitching together the articles and photos. In 2025/26, we published 30,226 words. Although this is down when compared to 2025/26, Town and Around remains a credible source of news.

Overall, this year saw the Civic Association consolidate its finances and membership while remaining active in safeguarding as best it can Ruthin's built heritage, contributing to major development discussions, and providing cultural and historical resources for the community.

I thank the 2024/25 Committee for their help, support and contributions during the year. At the close of the Civic Association year, they were Anne Roberts (Chair), Heather Williams (Vice-chair), Robert Williams (Hon. Treasurer), Peter Daniels (Secretary), Steve Beach, Kay Culhane, Kathy Daniels, Menna Jones and Liz Williams. I should also like to mention with thanks that during the year the office holders of the Vice-chair and Secretary switched, to allow Peter to undertake his 2025/26 mayoral role.

Last but certainly not least, may I thank our membership for their continued and valued support.

Anne Roberts MBE
Chair of the Civic Association 2025/26

RADCA Subscription Unchanged for 13th Consecutive Year

Annual subscriptions for the year September 2026 to August 2027 fall due on September 1st, and remain the same for the thirteenth year, namely £10 for individuals and £15 for joint/family membership.

We know from feedback that over the years the work and activities of the Civic Association have been greatly appreciated including the annual Open Doors events and our quarterly newsletter, Town & Around. However, as stated in our previous edition, our existing committee members have all been in post for a considerable time and there is a need for new people to fill posts on the committee to enable the Civic Association to continue its primary role in securing the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in Ruthin and the surrounding area. Unless we are able to do this there is a real danger

that the Civic Association will be wound up.

If therefore you are reading Town & Around and are not yet a member please consider joining the Civic Association to support its activities.

The membership form for both prospective new members and also existing members who do not yet pay by standing order is opposite. When completed, this should be returned to the Honorary Treasurer, RADCA, Lenton House, Mold Road, Ruthin LL15 1SL. (Scanned copies can be sent via email to ruthincivic@btinternet.com and subscriptions paid by bank transfer to the account shown).

Please note that no action is required for members already paying by standing order.

For any queries please email the Treasurer at: ruthincivic@btinternet.com or telephone 704998.

Notice of AGM 2026

The Civic Association 2026 Annual General Meeting will be held on October 15th at 7.00 p.m. at The Old Courthouse, Ruthin. We shall send the minutes of the 2025 AGM as usual by email.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held October 15th, 2025
3. Matters Arising
4. Chair's Annual Report (above)
5. Treasurer's Report & Accounts
6. Future of the Civic Association
7. Election of Officers & Committee 2026/27
8. Any Other Business
9. Guest Speaker on the regeneration project at 46 Clwyd Street (Old Gaol)

Cymdeithas Ddinesig Rhuthun a'r Cylch (CDdRhAC)

Tanysgrifiad Aelodaeth Blynnyddol (1af Medi i 31ain Awst) - Unigolyn: £10 Dau/Teulu: £15

(1) Teitl:..... Enw.....Cyfenw:.....

(2) Tieitl:.....EnwCyfenw:.....

Cyfeiriad:..... Cód Post:.....

Ffôn:.....Ebost:.....

Rwyf/Rydym yn dymuno ymuno â CDRAC – Ticiwch/dileu’r canlynol yn ôl yr angen:

Rwyf/Rydym wedi gwneud trosglwyddiad banc o £10/£15 ar gyfer y flwyddyn bresennol.....

Rwyf/Rydym wedi sefydlu archeb sefydlog flynyddol o £10/£15 ar gyfer y blynnyddoedd i ddod yn ddaladwy ar Medi 1af bob blwyddyn.....

I: Ruthin & District Civic Association – A/c HSBC, Rhuthun

Cód Didoli: 40-39-16 A/c: 81137514 – Defnyddiwch eich cód post fel cyfeirnod.

NEU: Rwyf/Rydym yn amgau siec (neu arian parod) am £10/£15 yn daladwy I Cymdeithas Ddinesig Rhuthun

A’r Cylch – anfoner i:

R H Williams, Trysorydd, CDRAC, Lenton House, Mold Road, Rhuthun LL15 1SL

Cymorth Rhodd/Giftaid eich taliad (dewisol)

Rwyf/Rydym yn talu treth y DU ac yn dymuno i’r taliad ac unrhyw daliad a wneir yn y blyn ddoedd I ddod neu a wnaed yn y 4 blynedd diwethaf fod yn Gymorth Rhodd. Rwyf/Rydym yn deall os byddaf/byddwn yn talu llai o Dreth Incwm a/neu Dreth Enillion Cyfalaf na swm y Cymorth Rhodd a hawliwyd yn y flwyddyn honno, mai fy nghyfrifoldeb I/ni yw talu unrhyw wahaniaeth.

Elusen Gofrestredig 702203

Ruthin & District Civic Association (RADCA)

Annual Membership Subscription (1st September to 31st August) – Individual: £10 Joint/Family: £15

(1) Title:..... Name:.....Surname:.....

(2) Title:..... Name:.....Surname:.....

Address:.....Post Code:.....

Telephone:.....Email:.....

I/We wish to join RADCA - Please tick/delete the following as appropriate:

I/We have made a bank transfer of £10/£15 for the present year.....

I/We have set up an annual standing order of £10/£15 for future years payable on 1st September each year.....

To: Ruthin & District Civic Association – A/c HSBC, Ruthin

Sort Code: 40-39-16 A/c: 81137514 – Please use your postcode as reference.

OR: I/We enclose cheque (or cash) for £10/£15 payable to Ruthin & District Civic Association - send to:

R H Williams, Treasurer RADCA, Lenton House, Mold Road, Ruthin LL15 1SL

Giftaid your payment (optional)

I/We pay UK tax and wish payment and any payment made in future years or which have been made in the past 4 years to be Giftaided. I/we understand that if I/we pay less Income and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Giftaid claimed in that year it is my/our responsibility to pay any difference.

Registered Charity No. 702203

Seen in Passing...

Those working in the public space on Well Street and on the Square during the summer have had to ensure searing temperatures while clad in the plastic of the obligatory high-visibility jackets and hard hats. They worked especially hard to ensure the Square could be handed over to for the Festival's Top Dre in early July. Little wonder, then, that we found a nicely upholstered stool and a fold-away camping chair to offer workers some comfort, even though both were unlikely to meet modern health & safety regulations.



There were some hairy moments when the contractors were working on the footway beneath one of our most important heritage buildings, Siop Nain, Well Street. A chunk of plaster fell off and there was concern that the vibrations associated with drilling might cause further problems. In the event, the contractors left part of the concrete footway around the support in place.



Siop Nain, meanwhile, took advantage of the road closure to install scaffolding to give the building a paint-up. It is unusual indeed to see drainage work on a housing development site before the demolition of buildings thereon. But this was exactly what happened over the summer, as work started on the former Rhos Street School site. The imperative was to complete works fronting Rhos Street by the end of August, before the start of the new academic term, to ensure that the otherwise ensuing traffic chaos would be kept to a minimum. It necessitated the demolition of the boundary wall and its reconstruction (but not to its original height). In addition were kerb lines and footway works, including the introduction of a dropped



kerb. Now complete, we can anticipate a full demolition of the buildings that sit so comfortably within their immediate area.



Has the summer exhibition at the Craft Centre reached new heights in terms of the asking price for the art on sale? Some of the Halima Cassell gallery 1 items were selling at £30,000 and more.

Another summer and another patch of unproductive, weed-strewn ground as you approach the Co-op car park. Similarly, in the Craft Centre car park. They do not offer a particularly good welcome to locals or visitors. Once, those in the Craft Centre were bursting with wild flower colour. Could these barren patches of land be put to better use? Could they help contribute to biodiversity and support pollinators?

And talking of pollinators, this summer's buddleia to the rear of the former Rhos Street School has proven to be an exceptional. The fauna this year were outstanding and not a wildflower meadow too nearby. Pity that these will go with the buildings.



2026 has been a 'good' year for our gulls. Unlike last year, gulls have multiplied. The August 12th eclipse was disappointingly partly obscured in Ruthin by cloud. But it did give us some respite from the continual squawking, as even the gulls packed up for 10 minutes at the eclipse's height. Never fear, they were back out again soon afterwards...

20 Years Ago

Our Tesco store opened 20 years ago... just at the conclusion of Tesco's pile 'em high sell 'em cheap era.

Comparing Tesco when it opened on the last day of July 2006 to today and there are some interesting changes.

By way of a birthday treat, in July Tesco installed yet further CCTV, this time at a number of self service checkouts. They join the 37 already in store (and eight outside). Bro Rhuthun, the Rhuthun/Ruthin Blog called this the most spied-upon space in town. Needless to say, there were none 20 years ago.

In 2006, Tesco sold some domestic appliances. These includes toasters, hair driers, microwaves, kettles and vacuum cleaners. Most of these remain, though the range has shrunk, and there are no kettles at £5 as before. Hoovers and microwaves have gone.

Also in 2006, Tesco sold laptops, but no more. There is nevertheless now a range of (fairly basic) smartphones on offer. Smartphones were almost unheard of in 2006. Tesco now has a large number of leads, phone covers and similar.



The Tesco of 2006 sold a small range of clothing: underwear, socks, tights, t-shirts, etc. That's also gone by the wayside, though over the summer there appeared a single rail of eclectic clearance clothes immediately to the left of the entrance.

Space devoted to wines and beers has increased. Food fashions have changed but the food offer is broadly the same as it was at the start. There's now a section for those with certain intolerances. There's noticeably fewer organic food products, though. Tesco refers less to local produce ('local' in 2006 meant Wales, rather than Denbighshire).

Perhaps the biggest change is this: Tesco in 2006 seemed more distinctive and ambitious in some ways, even significant, whereas today it feels more like just a part of the mainstream retail mix—still an important presence in Ruthin, and still among the town's largest employers, with around 150 staff.

National Emergency Briefing

Last November, a National Emergency Briefing was held which brought together leading UK experts in climate science, food security, health, economics, national security and nature.

It presents a clear, measured overview of how the climate and nature crisis is affecting everyday life in Britain... and what the evidence says about risks and responses.

The initiative is explicitly non-partisan and has support from a wide range of organisations including National Trust, Church of England, Exeter University, the Royal Meteorological Society, WWF, National Education Union, and many more. Its purpose is to support informed democratic discussion and ensure that the UK parliament (and potentially the Senedd) and the public share a common understanding of the scale and urgency of the challenge.

The issues and various solutions were suggested by speakers who gave presentations on the topics below:

- Weather Extremes: Professor Hayley Fowler

- Climate: Professor Kevin Anderson
- Tipping Points: Professor Tim Lenton OBE
- Nature: Professor Nathalie Seddon
- Food Security: Professor Paul Behrens
- Health: Professor Hugh Montgomery OBE
- National Security: Lt General Richard Nugee, CBE
- Economics: Angela Francis
- Energy Transition: Tessa Khan

A summary of these were edited into a 50-minute film which is being screened as the People's Emergency Briefing across the UK. This has been shown at two venues in Ruthin, at the Naylor Leyland Centre in June and the Assembly Rooms in July. A further showing could be at the Old Courthouse in the autumn.

So that the public is informed, prepared and projected, the National Emergency Briefing now wants the following actions to be taken:

- More people to watch the film by attending one of the community

screenings of the film and also having a prime-time, multi-channel televised national emergency briefing to the nation.

- The UK Government to launch a science-led national response to climate and nature breakdown, to include emergency legislation to drive down reduction in emissions and to also invest to adapt to a more dangerous climate.

- Help lead a stronger global action by taking the above steps.

You can see a trailer of the PEB film at nebriefing.org/the-film

For more information about the National Emergency Briefing (and the film, referred to as 'People's Emergency Briefing') see www.nebriefing.org.

- If you are interested in the original talks, delivered in London last November, you can watch them at nebriefing.org/expert-briefings or read the one-page summaries of each talk at: drive.google.com/file/d/1P9uT3P_EPZ5JP3xk5YuK_OYjGOGGT0ES/view

A Boulder with a Backstory: local colour or misplaced history?

by Peter Daniels



Maen Huail in St Peter's Square, Ruthin, sits in full view of passers-by and, for some, comes with a clear Arthurian story: a tradition that King Arthur beheaded Huail, said to have been Gildas's brother. A nearby plaque repeats that tradition, and it's easy to see how such a tale gains traction in an area some argue is known for its Arthurian legends.

But not everyone is convinced. Some people would rather the plaques linked to the story were removed, arguing that Maen Huail is nothing more than a geological 'erratic', a wayward stone deposited by natural forces. Others, however, have a different instinct: they would keep it where it is, because the legend adds local colour, and myths like these help give places their character.

Who actually knows whether the plaque's claim is 'right'? The truth is that even the origin of the tradition is uncertain, and the story may owe more to oral telling than to any firm record.

What can be said with more confidence is that the stone itself has often been treated as a public feature. It has been described as a craggy, heavily weathered limestone boulder, and it has been suggested that it may have served practical civic purposes, such as a market or meeting stone, or even as a preaching stone, rather than a stage for King Arthur's dramatic moment.

The point is, where would Beddgelert be without its famous myth? Should Ruthin have its own, too? And we need all the visitors we can get.

Passers by who visit often stop and ponder the plaques and the boulder. We don't suppose that there are many visitors who come purely for Arthurian links, yet those who do clearly want the story as much as the stone. This summer, a group of 10 Norwegians, informed sources report, each lined up to kiss it, an affectionate reminder that legends, however contested, still draw people in.

If nothing else, Maen Huail shows how Wales can be: infused with historic echoes, comfortable with uncertainty, and unashamed to let a little story live alongside the rock.

- Should the myth go with the removal of the plaques? What do readers think? Please write to us (p12)

Where Books Are the Opening Chapter

Ruthin Lending Library isn't just a library, it's a vibrant community hub, *writes Bobby Feeley*. I recently discovered why during a visit alongside Denbighshire Chief Executive Helen White, Head of Service Heidi McDougal, and Library Manager Vanessa Hill (pictured).

Walking through the doors, the energy is unmistakable. Yes, there are books, shelves of them, but that's only the beginning. Free technology support, job clubs, storytelling sessions for toddlers (Book Start and Rhyme Time), craft circles, reading groups, and face-to-face advice for social care needs all thrive under one roof. It's a masterclass in what a modern library should be.

The gem I didn't expect? Tucked upstairs is a Citizens' Advice Denbighshire office, a quiet corner staffed by knowledgeable advisors ready to tackle everything from minor queries to major life problems. And then there's the basement: a hidden archive of Ruthin's history, waiting to tell its stories to anyone curious enough to venture down.

The full circle moment came when I realized I'd stood in this very building decades earlier, back in 1986, when it served as the Council Chamber. Watching it transformed into the thriving library feels like witnessing a community investment that's truly paid off.



Lavinia Stamps her Mark

The 2025 Quayle Award winner is Lavina Stamps' conversion of Plas Coch, Well Street. This is what they've achieved, explains Kath Daniels

Plas Coch has undergone a transformation that, at first, many people thought would never happen. After it had previously operated as a social club and then closed, the predictions had been grim: the place would simply rot.

Instead, Lavinia Stamps set out to strip everything back and rebuild it properly. The brief was to ensure the building's character survived but with the structure and layout reworked for its next purpose. Paint was removed from the wooden fabric of the property using water pressure rather than sandblasting, a choice that was said to help protect what was worth keeping.

The ground floor was remodelled in a way that included moving the lavatories. In one place, a small section of wattle and daub is now visible, and even that is presented behind a special covering, keeping it protected while still allowing visitors to see a trace of what the building once was.

Those close to the work had described the builders as remarkably sympathetic. They worked alongside the County Council's Chris Evans and the project also incorporated part of the exterior into the interior, creating a sense that the building's past had not been erased, but rather re-framed.

A new ground floor kitchen has been created to support workshops and the growing number of attendees. It was reported that the expectation is no longer 'just coffee and cake'. There is a hope, in time, to expand the food offer further. From the first floor kitchen, access leads out to a balcony where the team intends to grow vegetables, linking refreshments directly to the life of the site.

The first floor has been set aside as office space. The former boardroom has been by two offices and a corridor leading to lavatories. One room has been dedicated to video filming, reflecting the way the workshops are developing beyond purely in-person activity. Meanwhile, the fully equipped flat in the attic can be used by those attending workshops, with the income from that facility said to help defray the obvious running costs of the building. Alongside the sleeping area are two sofa-beds.

The attic work also required the removal of older stub partitions. During that process, there had been concerns about the potential presence of asbestos. The contractor made a hole in

the ceiling, stuck his head through, and exclaimed, 'Wow!' Throughout, the builders carried out the changes carefully

Elsewhere, the flat was reportedly stripped back to the beams, letting the structure define the space. The outer staircase, meanwhile, was designed by Lavinia Stamps themselves.

Many locals may remember the area where you could once play pool. That space has now been repurposed as the main workshop area. There is also a large storage area on the ground floor, giving the operation the room it needs to run smoothly.

Looking ahead, the plan over the next twelve months is to expand food production on site. People involved in the project believe it could eventually become another café in town, though the emphasis, for now, remains on building gradually and making the business work as a workshop venue first.

Overall, it has been described as a remarkable business transformation: from Lavinia's own garage into the thriving new life of Plas Coch.

Meanwhile the workshops are said to be going well. Visitors, are coming from all over the world. The company tries to keep as much rooted in Ruthin as possible, providing customers with details of local facilities, hospitality, and accommodation.

At Plas Coch, the result has not been a quiet decline after closure, but a deliberate reinvention, one that, according to those involved, lets the building's story carry on, even as its future takes shape.



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

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Editor, Layout & Design: Peter Daniels

Secretary: Peter Daniels
cymru@clwyd.org

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

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

The deadline for the next edition is November 15th, 2025

Thanks are due to this quarter's contributors: Kath Daniels, Peter Daniels, Bobby Feeley, Anne Roberts, Heather Williams and Liz Williams

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

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