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St. Asaph & District City Times



Issue No 25

December 2023

Photo by Steve Morris



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We're always looking out for letters, items, reports or features relating to St Asaph. Or that special photo! The absolute deadline for the February issue is Monday 15th January – but **please** submit well before to ensure publication as the paper fills quickly. Thank you.

We are also fully reliant on and very grateful for sponsorship and advertising—if you would like to sponsor or advertise, please contact via editorsact@gmail.com

Thank you Gwynt y Môr!

We are very grateful for funding support received from the Gwynt Y Môr Community Fund: www.cvsc.org.uk/en/funding/gwynt-y-mor-community-fund



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New Chair for Denbighshire CC

County Cllr Peter Scott (St Asaph West), well known to all of us in St Asaph, has been elected as the new chair of Denbighshire County Council. Peter has been standing in as Deputy Chair since the sudden death of Pete Prendergast, the previous chair of DCC, in September. We wish Peter all the very best as he takes up this demanding and important post.

Côr Bach Tremeirchion Bach Choir

Christmas Oratorio

J S Bach

Arweinydd
Conductor
Trystan Lewis

Organydd
Organist
Graham Eccles

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Tenor
Bass
Kathryn Nash
Rhodri Prys Jones
Jamie Woollard

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Storm Babet hits St Asaph

Storm Babet pummelled the country on October 20th, and the Vale of Clwyd had its fair share of the consequences with flooded and impassable roads, and fields turned to huge lakes. Sainsburys in Rhuddlan was flooded, and a threat to life for 350 sheep from the field opposite Rhuddlan Castle meant they had to be swiftly evacuated, herded over Rhuddlan bridge and up the street to higher ground, captured on video for Facebook.

In St Asaph, Llys y Felin once again bore the brunt of the torrential rain with ground floor flats being flooded and residents having to evacuate late that night to stay with families or in hotels. Some spent anxious hours in the leisure centre whilst the problem was at its worst.

The recurrent flooding there is a problem that needs to be sorted urgently; it is caused not by water coming over the top of the flood defence dyke, but by run-off water coming down from upper St Asaph. The blue flap valve discharging this into the river is designed so that it will not open when the river is high, and so the run-off water during heavy rain has nowhere to go. On occasions it is at such pressure that it lifts the heavy manhole cover and fountains out to form a lake which then floods Llys y Felin. This time the water around the nearest flat was at least 18 inches deep. The fire service sent two appliances and attempted to pump the water from the manhole straight into the river, but the volume of water was much too great.

Following the previous flooding at Llys Y Felin in 2020 (*Storm Cristoph*) Denbighshire County Council fitted flood resistant airbricks, non-return drain valves, and flood defence panels for doors and windows. They had also provided a store of sandbags, which had unfortunately rotted. Despite the valiant efforts of residents and local people who rushed to help by sweeping the water and by laying new sandbags, water rapidly entered the properties.



A few days after Storm Babet, a large tree stump was found wedged against the outflow flap valve, probably deposited there during the flood.



The field upstream from the New Inn

Aftermath of storm Babet. A strangely mesmerising record of the flooding. Drone footage by Steve Morris www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVwo5yUTeP8



The fountain at the manhole cover (top) and the lake forming at Llys y Felin

Councillor Martyn Hogg was there with many other volunteers trying to protect Llys Y Felin, and described the heroic efforts being made by all to manage the situation, including a crew from TG Williams who brought a pump and a truck load of sand for filling sandbags. “The community spirit was amazing, and the camaraderie was really heartening. It was such a shame that the lower flats were flooded again”

A senior Welsh Water official outlined the various challenges involved when torrential rain is combined with a full river such that the flap does not open. Welsh Water are only too aware of this problem, and in the run up to storms, check all such outlets to ensure they are clear before water levels rise.

The pipe and flap valve are a Welsh Water asset. The County Council have commissioned a locally based specialist firm to examine the problem, and will be holding a multi-agency meeting with Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales in coming weeks to decide on a way forward. They will examine all aspects of the problem, and the options available. In some ways a low bund round Llys y Felin and extending along to protect the slightly higher houses on Mill Street might be a reasonable solution, but expert advice would clearly be needed to assess this.



Some of the suggestions on social media:

- Introduce beavers upstream
- Dig a drainage tunnel through to the Clwyd
- Make multiple bends to the river upstream
- “Re-wet” bogs and moorland on the hills
- Build a bund round Llys y Felin.
- Check sandbag provision regularly.
- Put better seals on flood panels

A wild night out at the seaside....

Perhaps the most remarkable story of the Storm Babet flood belonged to the beautiful pheasant that lives on the St Asaph riverbank. The pheasant, carved by Mike Owens, is a memorial to much-loved local resident Alison Watkins, who died tragically early at the age of 51 in 2017, and had been funded by family and friends, and by the Conservative Club where she had been chairperson.

Beth Stavelly-Jones, Alison's daughter, went down to the riverside the morning after the flood and was devastated to see that he had been swept away with no trace, having withstood previous floods without problems.

The heartbroken family went on social media to ask people to look out for him. Would he have been destroyed by the raging torrent, or stranded high up a tree with other debris? Astonishingly it turned out that the adventurous pheasant had in fact gone for a night-time whitewater ride six miles downriver to the beach at Rhyl. The following morning, he was spotted by dog walkers Jo Horrocks and Andy Davies, perched upright on his log, not much the worse for wear, and with a slightly shame-faced look on his face!

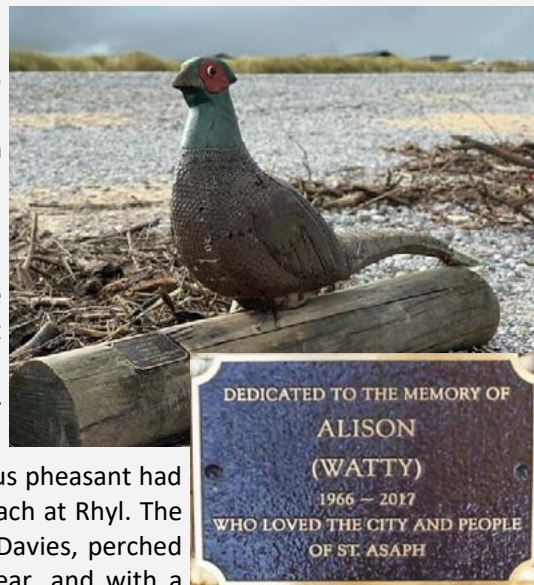


"Alison would have loved this story!"

The memorial plaque gave the clue as to his home, and after some social media searching, a message came through to the delighted family. Beth said "We were all so relieved when the memorial was found and my tears of sadness turned into tears of laughter as this is now a story we can add to my incredible mum's legacy. She would have loved it."

A team of five was dispatched to the beach to collect the errant bird and his perch, using a makeshift sling to lift the heavy bird into a trailer, and brought him safely back home. He is now undergoing health checks and recuperating in an undisclosed location. The council have kindly offered to help restore him to his riverside home, and plan to anchor him securely to prevent further escapades. Who knows where he might have set off to with the next high tide on the beach had he not been found?

Beth commented "We will feel great comfort seeing my mum's memorial back in his rightful place and I'd like to say a big thank you to all that reached out, sent us supportive messages and lovely stories of my mum and her memorial, and to those that are helping to return him to his home in St Asaph"



Some notes on the November City Council meeting

- **Library:** Council approved a letter written to DCC re their proposal to cut library hours by 50%, stating their opposition to this plan, and pointing out that the City Council pays £12,000 per year to support the library. If the closures go ahead, the City Council will withdraw this funding.

- **Deputy Mayoral duties:** Amongst other duties, Cllr Peter Scott had the honour and delicate challenge of judging pumpkin decorations at Ysgol Esgob Morgan.

- **Councillors report:** Amongst other duties, Cllr Hogg had attended a meeting organised by the National Grid outlining their plans for the Cefn sub-station, and had also inspected the impressive provision of bat and bird boxes at Maes Yr Haul.

- **Notice board:** Plans for a new stand alone Council notice board by the bus stop opposite the cenotaph were approved.

- **Waste costs:** Annual costs of waste management for the City Council amount to £11,000; this year the Council are trialling a trade waste service which will help with management of littering.

- **Bins:** During winter, bins by the river are removed to avoid their being washed away by floods. The Council deplored the habit of some dog-walkers who have been leaving bags of dog waste at the spot rather than taking them to another bin.

- **Planning:** Re. planning application 46/2022/0431 (erection of dwellings off Gemig Street), the Council fully supported building on this site, but felt that 9 dwellings would be over-development with problems for parking and traffic.

- **Flooding:** Council discussed the flooding from storm Babet and welcomed plans for a prompt meeting for residents, Welsh Water, Natural Resources Wales and DCC to outline further actions required to avoid repetition (page 3).

- **Cemetery space:** Cllr Roberts had attended a meeting called by the mayors of Rhuddlan, Rhyl and Prestatyn re provision of cemeteries. Rhuddlan and Rhyl have no more space, and it appears before long that their burials will have to take place in Prestatyn. There is however sufficient cemetery space in St Asaph for several years.

- **Mill Race Meadow:** Council arranged for a small working group to examine the various requirements for leasing part of Mill Race Meadow for a football pitch. The group will work with the Football Club to cover all aspects of the development.

Full minutes will be available online at www.stasaphcitycouncil.gov.uk once signed off at the next meeting.



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Letters

Sue Scott - Thanks

Peter Scott

Where to start? Sue Scott, wife, mum, Nan and Nannie to 10 Grandchildren.

I must start with thanks to all the people who helped during her recent illness. Pen y Bont Surgery, the nurses and doctors at Glan Clwyd Hospital and of course the nurses, sisters and all staff at St Kentigern Hospice who all helped to make her illness bearable.

Also thanks to the funeral arrangements made by RW Roberts and especially Deiniol, St Asaph Cathedral for the service taken by the Dean the Very Reverend Nigel Williams and of course the hundreds of people who came to pay their respects to Sue. I am extremely grateful for your kind words on the day. It would be remiss of me to not mention my son Gavin's extremely moving tribute to his mum. The collection at the Cathedral raised £1327.50p for the Hospice and the New Inn also raised £400 for the same cause. Thank you for your generosity.

Sue loved living and working in St Asaph with all her friends, she was proud to be part of the City Times team and gave all she could to the community. As Mayoress of St Asaph City and consort to myself as Chairman of Denbighshire County Council Sue always enjoyed all the Civic Services that she attended, getting dressed up to represent the City and Denbighshire. She always brought a beautiful smile to everything she did and will be sadly missed.

Can I thank you all for having Sue as part of St Asaph. I miss you, love!!! Your loving husband Peter."



Memorial to Aircraftman 1st Cl LW Jones in Mount Road Cemetery

Remembrance Sunday

Despite the bitterly cold wind and lashing rain, there was a big turnout for the annual Remembrance Service and parade. The event began with a moving service in the cathedral, at which colours were presented.

Mayor Colin Hardie, read from the book of Micah, "...they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid"

Bishop Gregory Cameron reflected on the poignancy of this text against the background of the current wars in Israel-Palestine and in the Ukraine, and exhorted us to remember those who gave their lives for us, and to seek peace.

The choir sang an anthem written by Pericles in 431BC: "So they gave their bodies to the commonwealth, and received praise that will never die, and a home in the minds of men. Their story lives on without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives. So they gave their bodies to the commonwealth, and received praise that will never die"

After the service, the procession down the High street to the Cenotaph was led by Major Brad Percival, followed by the Guides, Brownies, Rainbows, the choir, the City Council and representatives of the armed forces and emergency services. The Last Post was sounded, the two minutes silence was observed, and wreaths were laid at the memorial.



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Elwy Solar Farm

This was the 156 acre Solar Farm proposed for land behind the Talardy hotel around Gwernigron farm.

Dear City Times Our family own the site in question so I have a vested interest and am biased, but Denbighshire County Council did approve the scheme. It was referred to Cardiff as "a development of national significance" due to its size. During two days of hearings in front of an Independent Inspector appointed by Cardiff held 9 months after it had been referred, the Welsh Government's argument against the scheme was based on a 20 year old report on the effects of mineral extraction on agricultural land. This was obviously irrelevant to a solar panel scheme. An offer was made by the company proposing to build the solar farm that when it came to the removal of the panels the Government could impose an inspector to determine the timing and method of removal of the panels. The farmer also supported the scheme and would have been able to continue to have his sheep graze on the land. The independent Inspector approved the scheme. We are told that the real reason why it was rejected was because of Plaid Cymru opposition. At a time when The Labour party and Ed Milliband in particular are trumpeting their green credentials, the hypocrisy is plain to see. The application for a Judicial Review was rejected. Shame on the Welsh Government!

Peter Kaufmann



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Town Centre Property Improvement Scheme!

Grants of between £5k and £50k are now available as part of the Denbighshire Commercial Property Development grant to smarten up commercial properties in town and city centres. This can include shopfronts, display windows, external lighting, roofs and chimneys, rainwater goods, rendering, stone cleaning and repairs, and repointing. Structural work may be eligible if it is part of a comprehensive package of structural improvements.

Visit www.stasaphcitycouncil.gov.uk/news for full details



Gifts that spread even more joy

Ben Ross

If you haven't bagged all your Christmas shopping yet (no shame – there's still time), we'd love to inspire you to seek out gifts from Welsh makers and merchants. Whether you pop to the high street, or shop small online, you don't have to look far to find wonderful wares with a local flavour. Even just in the Vale of Clwyd you'll find potters, painters, growers, brewers, distillers and more... all working tirelessly to craft produce for your festive table, trimmings for the tree, and gifts for the family.

There are too many to mention by name (not to mention we'd be swayed by favouritism). All we'll say is, seek and you will find... right here in North Wales. There are also some upcoming festivals and markets you might like to visit, where many independent traders will be gathered for your convenience, with St Kentigern Hospice's Winter Fayre on Dec 9th (see page 18), and the Conwy Christmas Fair on December 10th.

Ways you can support your favourite local businesses:

- Engage with them on social media – follow, like and share to help them stay visible.
- Write a positive review or recommend them to friends and family.
- Prioritise a friendly independent, over faceless big business.
- Make a purchase, however small.

Let's keep small enterprises going, enjoy the delights of the season together, and look forwards to both a merry Christmas and prosperous new year.

Nadolig llawen a blwyddyn newydd dda!



SWAYNE JOHNSON Solicitors present: The Perils of 'DIY' Wills

"In this month's edition, I shall discuss some of the dangers of homemade wills and why it is so important to seek professional legal advice.

A quick internet search will show various companies that sell will writing templates from as little as £10 and I am often asked how reliable these are. Many see these as a quick, easy and cheap alternative to seeking advice and drafting from a legally trained Solicitor. However, the risks are often overlooked.

I have seen firsthand the problems that can be caused when such homemade wills come to light, after death, when it is time for the estate to be administered. Often, the templates have only been half completed with vital sections either missed entirely or incorrectly noted. This could unintentionally result in a partial intestacy which means that some or all of the monies comprising the estate do not pass to your intended beneficiaries at all. Further, wills must be signed in accordance with the strict formalities of section 9 of the Wills Act and any error may invalidate the will entirely.

I cannot stress enough the importance of seeking professional advice from a legally trained expert. Your family circumstances or assets may mean that you need advice about potential claims - for example, if a child is to be excluded, or you are going through a divorce, or a doctor's report if Testamentary Capacity is in question, or Inheritance Tax advice to name a few. This advice is simply not offered or provided by online companies selling templates, or drafting wills based on a questionnaire alone. You wouldn't gamble your life savings whilst you are alive - don't gamble them on death!

Making a will with Swayne Johnson Solicitors is easy, so why not call now to book in your face-to-face meeting. We will sit and discuss your circumstances and wishes, and I will advise on the best will for you. Prices start from £200.00 plus VAT and our fees are fixed, to include the entire process from the start to finish - a small price to pay for peace of mind for you, your family and beneficiaries.

If you have a question and think that I could help, or you would like to book an appointment, then please let me know by calling 01745 586830 or by emailing me: sarahp@swaynejohnson.com I will be addressing a different legal topic during each City Times issue."

Sarah Pierce, Associate Solicitor and Trust & Estate Practitioner (TEP)

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Paul Mealar—the new artistic director of the NWIMF

Duncan Cameron

Professor Paul Mealar has been announced as the next artistic director of the North Wales International Music Festival. He was kind enough to talk to City Times in a Zoom call.

Paul was born in St Asaph, and came from a musical family, with his father and his uncle (George Williams, former resident and mayor of St Asaph) both involved with local brass bands; his mother sang in local choirs. The family lived in Connah's Quay, and at the age of 9, Paul joined the St Asaph cathedral choir. He recalls the cathedral appearing massive and somewhat daunting to a new chorister, but it proved a hugely influential time for him. There would be 3 or 4 services sung each Sunday, as well as mid-week practices, and choristers rapidly learned to sight-read music almost without noticing. He describes his head as being "full of music" from childhood onwards. There was a great camaraderie amongst the young choristers, and good musical education.



Trombone and piano lessons accompanied his singing, and he began to write pieces of music – an *Ave Maria* for the choir, and a brass band march. His teachers at school, Rae Dickinson and Ken Sage, recognised his potential, and wrote to Professor William Mathias, newly retired from Bangor University, to ask if he would consider giving lessons in composition to Paul. William Mathias had of course set up the North Wales International Music festival in 1972. And so, in addition to his other musical commitments, Paul would be taken over to Menai Bridge for weekly lessons in composition. Paul remembers Mathias as being bursting with enthusiasm, always ready to laugh, and ready to guide Paul in the complex art of composition. Paul learned the crucial elements of harmony, and of counterpoint; why some pieces worked, and why others did not. And as well as being kind and endlessly entertaining, Mathias was a firm teacher, ready to draw attention to areas of Paul's compositions that did not work. He wouldn't give an answer but would encourage Paul to find his own way forward. Paul recalls going into the house for lessons just as Aled Jones (of 'Walking in the Air' from The Snowman fame) was leaving singing lessons with Yvonne Mathias.

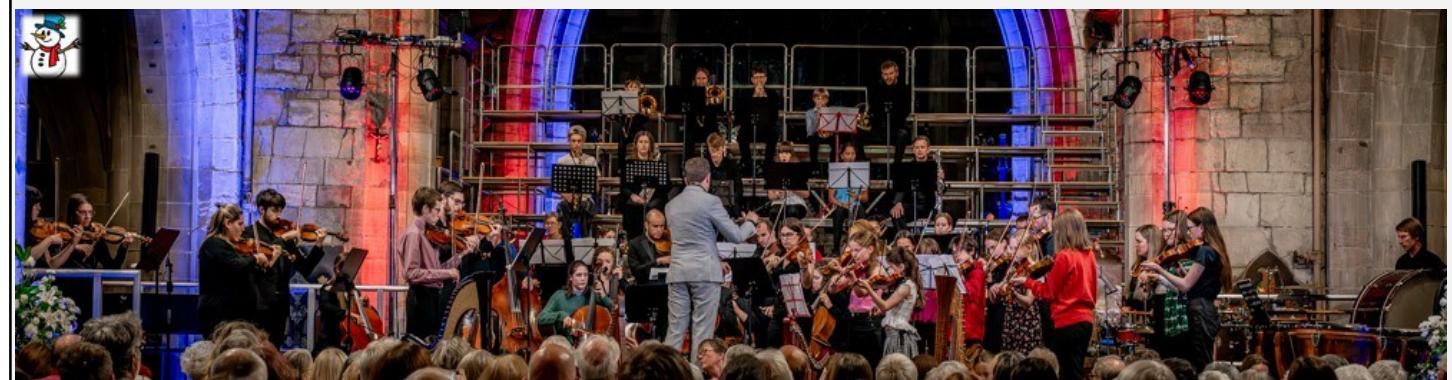
After leaving school, Paul studied music at the University of York, where he also undertook a PhD in 2002. He subsequently studied in Copenhagen. Since January 2003 he has taught in the Music Department at the University of Aberdeen, where he is now Professor of Composition. His music has been commissioned and performed at many festivals and by many orchestras and choruses, and has been broadcast worldwide. He was catapulted to international stardom in April 2011, when 2.5 billion people (the largest audience in broadcasting history) heard his motet, *Ubi caritas* performed by the choirs of Westminster Abbey at the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton. He subsequently had the honour of being the first composer to set the Welsh language at a coronation when his *Coronation Kyrie* was sung by Sir Bryn Terfel at the coronation of King Charles III.

He describes having tunes, songs and music playing in his mind constantly, even on waking at night. He begins writing first thing in the morning and carries on for four or sometimes five hours at a time, being totally immersed and caught up with his composition, such that he feels disorientated when he stops to take on more mundane duties. Sometimes he composes to accompany the words of a song or poem; at other times he has to provide the music for sequences of film, such as the BBC Wales' natural history series *The Wonders of the Celtic Deep*. His opera *Gelert*, with words written by Dr Grahame Davies in Welsh and English, was commissioned by NWIMF and premiered here in 2022.

Paul has been closely involved with NWIMF as Vice-President of the festival for many years and he is already brimming with ideas about next year's festival. One possibility might be to introduce a small scale fringe festival, with local musicians performing in pubs and other venues, with Welsh folk music, contemporary music and even comedy as part of the fringe. Next year's festival will also be recorded for Classic FM and BBC Radio 3.

Paul plans to move back to North Wales next year, and will be sure of a great St Asaph welcome at his homecoming!

Photograph www.stephencainphotography.co.uk



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The Curlew

Fiona Shand

What's the connection between St. Beuno and the curlew? As well as being World Curlew Day, April 21st is the feast day of St. Beuno (c. 550 – c.630), a 7th century Welsh abbot, who was an important figure in the history of the early Welsh Church, particularly in North Wales.



A charming story connects the saint and the bird. It is said that St Beuno was sailing off the coast of Wales when he accidentally dropped his prayer book into the water. A curlew flew overhead, retrieved it in its beak and took it to the shore to dry. St. Beuno was so grateful that he blessed the bird and to thank his feathered helper for his compassion, St. Beuno granted all curlews protection by making it difficult to find their nests, therefore enabling them to rear their chicks in safety.

The curlew is a large wading bird, not dissimilar to a female pheasant in appearance, apart from its long, downward curving bill for feeding on tidal mudflats and marshes. In the spring and summer, the curlew prefers rough pasture, moorland and wetlands. An average curlew weighs just under 1kg, having a wingspan of approximately 90cm. Its length is about 50 – 60cm and its average lifespan is 20 years or more.

It lays its eggs in a nest (known as a 'scrape') on the ground, making its chicks easy prey for predators such as foxes, despite St. Beuno's blessing!

Curlews in Wales were traditionally associated with impending doom. Hearing the cry of the curlew at night heralded a death in the family - a curlew calling over a fishing boat would forewarn of a storm at sea, and the fishermen would be wise to abandon their mission and head for home. The "cur - lee" call itself was often considered eerie. Mark Isherwood, MS for the North Wales region and curlew champion comments: "The curlew's distinct and ethereal song is a familiar sound that is deeply ingrained within our culture."

In some places the eventide cries of a flock of curlews were associated with the terrifying concept of the seven whistlers - a group of birds that flew through the skies, forecasting disaster. In Wales, the curlew's call is associated with Cŵn Annwn, mythical black dogs that carry the souls of the dead across the sky. The word 'curlew' is thought to have originated from the French 'corliu' meaning 'messenger'.

It is estimated that there are 58,500 breeding pairs of curlews in the UK, with numbers in Wales ranging from 400 to 1700 pairs. The South Clwyd mountains and Mynydd Hiraethog are home to some 80-85 pairs of curlews. However, national monitoring data show that the UK curlew population has been in long-term decline and has almost halved over the last 20 years. In Wales many colonies are on the verge of local extinction, with curlew numbers down by more than 90% in the last 20 years. Curlews have been on the UK red list since 2015, meaning that urgent action is needed to prevent extinction. It is now illegal to shoot this wonderful bird.

Curlew Wales (Gylfinir Cymru) www.curlewwales.org set out the Wales Action Plan for the Recovery of Curlew over 10 year period from 2021-2031. It offers support to farmers and land managers, enabling them to create the sort of landscapes in which curlews can thrive. Volunteers with 'Cri'r Gylfinir' (the curlew's cry) have been busy during the 2023 nesting season. When they discover a nest, they work quickly to put an electric fence around it, therefore preventing predators from destroying the eggs. Four weeks later, small electrical tags are attached to the newly hatched chicks to keep a track of their whereabouts by aerial radios. The volunteers are reluctant to interfere in any way with the birds, but the information gleaned has proved invaluable when making decisions on how best to help the curlew population.

Denbighshire County Council stated recently: 'Vital work is now underway to help protect Denbighshire's curlew population. We will have a dedicated curlew officer to work with farmers, landowners and the wider community, raising awareness of the plight of the curlew as well as implementing targeted measures to improve chick survival rates.'

Nearer to home, you will often hear the hauntingly beautiful cry of this remarkable bird on the river path between Rhuddlan and Rhyl. Hopefully, with our help and protection, we can enjoy their presence for many years to come.



Sources: BTO, DCC, Gladstone's Library, The Guardian, RSPB. Siân Shakespear RSPB Cymru



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PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR VOLUNTEERS

Beverly Webber

The St Asaph Cathedral Heritage Garden at the west end of the Cathedral has been in the making for two and a half years. Our group of seven volunteers usually meets on a Wednesday morning to develop and maintain the Medieval Physic and Paradise gardens along with the Victorian Potager. We also have free craft events for youngsters at different times of the year which are advertised on Facebook. These have proved to be very popular for children and adults alike with varied activities, sometimes reflecting elements of the Garden.

Unbeknown to our group, Lorna Kernahan (of Keystone Heritage), who had initially had the vision for the project, entered us for the "Marsh Award for Volunteers in Museum Learning".

We were surprised and delighted to learn that we had been chosen to be **joint winners for all Wales**. An invitation was offered for us to attend a ceremony at the British Museum in London on 2nd October. Certificates and a prize of £250 were to be presented. However, train strikes made that difficult, though some of us were able to watch it via Zoom. The award was also featured on BBC and ITV Wales news. Needless to say, we are thrilled, and are busy thinking of inspiring ideas for using the prize money.



Not many citizens of St Asaph and the wider community seem to know about our Heritage Garden. Anyone is welcome to come and look, and a bi-lingual guide of the plants and their uses is available. Certain plants grown by the volunteers can usually be found nearby, where they can be taken for a small donation.

And if you would like to join us on a Wednesday morning, you would be most welcome. Be reassured that we don't usually dress in medieval garb whilst we garden!

Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Team

Duncan Cameron

Clive Hughes of Rhuddlan gave a compelling and detailed account of mountain rescue in a presentation at the October meeting of the Kentigern Guild in St Asaph parish church.

Clive was an operational member of the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue team for an extraordinary 37 years, and built up a huge bank of knowledge and experience over that time. He took the audience through the principles of mountain rescue, outlining the requirements to become a member (rigorous), the training required, the equipment used and the technology available to deal with different situations.

He explained the stages of a call out, how the team would deploy, the use of tracking dogs, and liaison when necessary with the helicopter search and rescue teams. Perhaps the most gripping part of the talk was his descriptions of different incidents with which he had been involved, accompanied by photos of the team in action. Some of these involved working in darkness or extremely adverse weather, or sometimes both; many involved extricating injured people in dangerous locations.

The advent of mobile phones and GPR has had a huge impact on the nature of the work; mostly positive, but also negative when walkers rely on them too much for navigation (until the battery fails) or use them to readily to call for help. The massive increase in numbers taking to the mountains after the pandemic posed special challenges for the local teams.



The talk made us all re-assess what is required for a foray into the mountains. It's worth looking at the website of the **British Mountaineering Club** www.thebmc.co.uk for essential advice for hill-walking and mountaineering. And if you want to see why, view the **NWMRA website** (<https://www.nwmra.org/>), which lists all the Mountain Rescue teams that cover North Wales and where the details of each team's incidents are recorded!

The Kentigern Guild meets monthly in the parish church. On December 6th, Elin Roberts of Llysfas College will be talking about the work of the college, and on January 3rd, Chris Evans and James Elson will be giving a presentation about Llannerch bridge. More details from the secretary of the Kentigern Guild Dr Rosemary Solbe on 01745 583313

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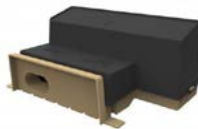
Run-off solutions and new homes in new houses

No, it's not opencast mining in St Asaph. The large open pit at the edge of the new Maes Yr Haul estate has been the source of some confusion as to its purpose. It is in fact an **attenuation basin** specially designed to cope with run-off rainwater.

In line with current Welsh regulations, there is a requirement to make provision for rain water run-off from new estates during adverse weather - water that would previously have soaked into a field. The rainwater passes down the road drains and thence into the channel seen in the attached picture, and the barriers of loose stones within wire cages (gabions) slow the progress of water to the outflow culvert. During times of very heavy rain, the water level may swiftly overtop the first barrier before moving on to the next and then the culvert, which drains the surface water under the Upper Denbigh Road and down the slope to be released into the river. The basin has been planted with grass and wildflowers and will be looked after by a landscape management company to be another green space on the estate. It is not in any way related to the tendency for flooding of the Upper Denbigh road just before the Oriel House.



One of St Asaph's most active green warriors was delighted to see the provision of bat and bird boxes on the Maes yr Haul estate. She recalls the great numbers of swifts, house martins and swallows that used to whirl around the former hospital during the summer months, and was concerned that new homes for them should be built in to the new houses as required by the regulations. The boxes do not allow access into the cavity wall, but will be comfortable homes for swifts and bats. In addition, bird boxes have been placed in the magnificent and ancient oak trees on the estate, so thank you to Castle Green for



their environmental commitment!

Vision Support Bus in Tweedmill car park on Wednesday the 6th December and Wednesday the 3rd of January 10am-3pm

Whether you are vision impaired or know somebody who may be having problems with their sight, please pay us a visit and pick up information or ask us questions.



Photo: Alan Duke

Santa gets ready for Christmas!

Alan Duke

Santa has made an unexpected visit to the Rotary Club of Rhyl to make sure that his Christmas float is in tip-top condition for the festive season. He even lent a hand to his small army of Rotarian elves to make sure that the float is gleaming and 'ready to go' for its popular appearance in and around the areas of Rhyl, Rhuddlan and St Asaph. Santa is looking forward to meeting all families, especially the children, at many of the local supermarkets between the 2nd and 20th December and is hoping also to tour some of the local districts during this period.

President-elect Rotarian John Dicks from St Asaph commented: **"It has been a pleasure to help Santa give the float a wash and brush-up; we cannot wait to accompany him on his rounds in December"**.

Current President Tony Thomas added: **"This is one of the most popular activities of our Rotary Club year for adults and children alike. The club raised thousands of pounds last year and helped many deserving causes both here and abroad. Our Christmas collection is a vital part of that effort"**.

For further information about Rhyl Rotary Club contact Pete McKenzie on 0777 555 3688 or e-mail: pete_mckenzie@sky.com



You can meet Santa and his Rotarian helpers on the following December dates:

Sat 2nd	Sainsburys Rhyl (10am - 5pm)
Sun 3rd	Sainsburys Rhyl (10am - 4pm)
Sat 9th	Morrisons Rhyl (10am - 5pm)
Sun 10th	Morrisons Rhyl (10am - 4pm)
Wed 13th	Co-op St Asaph (4-7pm)
Sat 16th	Asda Rhyl (10am—5pm)
Sun 17th	Asda Rhyl (10am—4pm)
Wed 20th	Co-op St Asaph (4 - 7pm)

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If you are experiencing hearing problems, Micro Suction may be the answer.

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Please make an appointment through BDM Podiatry, Abergele on **01745 826633** to arrange a consultation. Home visits can also be arranged. I look forward to being of service to you.

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Christmas at the Parish Church

Sat. 9th December 10am: Christmas Coffee Morning
Sun. 17th December 9.30am All-Age/Family Worship
Christmas Eve 4pm Christingle & Crib Service
Christmas Day 9.30am Christmas Celebration for all the family.

Christmas at the Cathedral

Fri. 15th December: 7pm Carols by 1000 Candles - a Concert by St Asaph Cathedral Choir
Christmas Eve 7pm Nine Lessons and Carols
 11.30pm Midnight Mass
Christmas Day 11am The Cathedral Christmas Eucharist

St Mary's Church Cefn

Sun. 17th December, 6.00 pm Carols by Candlelight

Christingle making!

There will be a Christingle making event on Saturday December 23rd in the parish church, from 10am to midday. This popular tradition uses the Christingle candle to illustrate the light of Christ coming into the world at Christmas. The Christingles can be brought to the crib service on Christmas Eve. Come along and enjoy the fun! All items provided.



DIARY OF EVENTS Activities listed are correct at time of going to press. For listing in the Diary of Events in the February issue, please submit items to editorsact@gmail.com before the deadline shown on page 2. If you don't send it in, we can't put it in the diary...!



Regular weekly events

Day	Time	Details
Monday	6-8pm 7.30-9.30	Open Access Youth Club run by Denbighshire County Council at the St Asaph Community Church, High Street. (term-time only) St Asaph Choral Society in the Parish Church. New members welcome. For further information please contact choralsocietystasaph@gmail.com
Tuesday	9.30-11.30 2-3pm 3-4pm	Aros a Chwarae. Free toddler group for preschool children and their parents/carers. Meet at Llanelwy Community Church, High Street. See www.facebook.com/stayandplayllanelwy/ Tai Chi at the Parish Church. Contact Ann Sim on 07852 321502 Qigong at the Parish Church. Contact Ann Sim on 07852 321502
Wednesday	9.30-5pm 6pm 6-7pm	Warm Space welcome in the Library: WiFi, free internet access, papers, refreshments Informal running group; meet at the Cathedral car park. 5k run, wear high viz gear. Contact Ian Jones on 07775 684171 or Julie Roberts on 07900 188222 Exercise with Liz in Parish Church. Facebook: Rhuddlan Clubbercise and Fitness with Liz
Thursday	1.30pm	Cash bingo at Llys y Felin
Friday	9.30-5pm 2.30pm	Social Mornings in the Library: WiFi, free internet access, papers, refreshments Cash Bingo at The Old Palace.
Sunday	9.30 11.00 4.30-6pm	Eucharist in the Parish Church. All welcome Choral Eucharist in the cathedral Community Fridge in the Parish Church. All welcome. Stay after for coffee and a chat.

Regular monthly events

1st Sunday	11am	Messy Church in the Parish Church. All ages welcome, lunch provided.
1 st Monday	12-3pm	PROBUS club in the Oriel Hotel. Contact Gareth at julmwilliams1974@gmail.com
1st Tuesday	10am	Litter pick: Start at Council Meeting Rooms. Afon Elwy Environmental Group
1st Tuesday	7pm	WI meet at St Asaph Parish Church, info at stasaphwi@gmail.com
4th Saturday	10am	Litter pick: Start at Council Meeting Rooms. Afon Elwy Environmental Group
3 rd Sunday	3-5pm	T Club at the Parish Church. Details on church website. Contact Marion on 01745 590960
		Merched y Wawr

One-off events

December		
Friday 8th	6pm	St Kentigern Hospice Light up a Life service in St Asaph Cathedral
Saturday 9th	10-3	St Kentigern Family Fair and Fun Day at the hospice (see opposite)
Saturday 9th	7.30	St Asaph Choral Society concert in the cathedral: Christmas Oratorio (Saint-Saens). See page 2
Sunday 10th	3.30	St Kentigern Hospice Light up a Life service in Waen chapel, Waen, St Asaph LL17 0YD (Gwasanaeth Cymraeg)
Sunday 17th	6pm	Carols by Candlelight, 9 Lessons & carols at St. Mary's church, Cefn.
January		
Monday 8th	12-3	Probus Club in the Oriel Hotel. Talk "Canadians in Kinmel Camp" by Celia Drew. Contact Gareth at julmwilliams1974@gmail.com
Wed 17th	7pm	Llangwyfan and Llandyrnog Local History Society in Llandyrnog Village Hall. Talk on the Vale of Clwyd Railway by Fiona Gale. Contact llangwyfanhistory@hotmail.com

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VINTAGE TRACTOR PLOUGHING MATCH

Hefin Jones



Tractors on the headlands at Bryn Carrog, Rhuddlan

In October Cymdeithas Hen Dractorau Dyffryn Clwyd (CHDDC) held their 36th annual vintage ploughing match at Bryn Carrog Farm, Rhuddlan by kind permission of Mr Ivor Beech. Tractors and ploughs dated from 1939 to 1976. There were 46 competitors, some CHDDC members and others travelling from North Wales, North West England and Shropshire.

The weather was excellent, though it had been wet and stormy the week before; the field condition was very good, allowing the competitors to show their skills at their best.

To enable a variety of abilities and types and age of equipment there were eight classes. Some ploughs are directly mounted to the tractor and others are simply attached like a trailer and drawn. Classes were from an open "professional" to novice and beginners,

with a special class for ages 13-25 to encourage young competitors. There were also classes for tractors and ploughs identical to the way they left the factory up to 75 years ago. There were six judges working in pairs. Ploughing competitors each had an equal size plot of 75 by 12 yards. Ploughing starts at a given time and each competitor has to make an opening in their plot which is judged. Once judged the ploughing continues by closing the opening and making a further 11 or 12 furrows within their plot. Judging is carried out during the whole process until the work is complete.

Ploughing is judged on 8 criteria, each marked out of 20:

Opening – Well cut, uniform and straight

Start – 11 or 12 furrows – Uniform, level and straight

Seed bed – Weed control and soil made available

Firmness – Firm well packed furrows, no holes

Uniformity – Clearly defined uniform furrow, straightness & pairing

Finish – Uniform shallow and straightness

Ins and outs – Neat, accurate and regular

General appearance – workmanship and general appearance



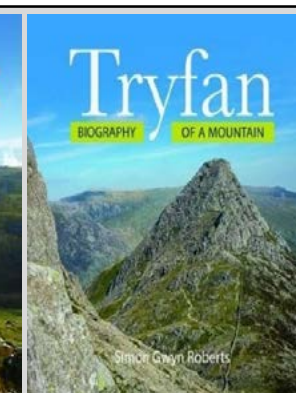
International Harvesters and ploughs in factory condition
Hefin Lloyd Jones, Llanelwy, Jason Lindsey, Whitchurch, Ken Lloyd, Tushingham and Mike Speed Nantwich.

The Society would like to thank the sponsors and advertisers for their support and to all who helped to ensure the day was a success. The catering for the competitors and the public was prepared by members of Merched y Wawr, Llanelwy.

Ploughing matches in this area will re-start in the Spring as the land is generally too wet from the end of October to March. CHDDC will be holding their next match on the first Saturday in October 2024, venue yet to be decided but it will be local.



CHDDC held their annual Vintage Tractor Road Run in June and collected £1500 which was given to the Cancer Unit at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd. This makes a total of £14,500 given to the unit over the past 7 years from the Vintage Tractor Road Runs



Hiraeth dwys am y mynyddoedd...

Simon Gwyn Roberts, who was brought up in St Asaph, is the Deputy Head of Media and Senior Lecturer at the University of Chester, and son of D.I. Roberts. Previously Simon worked as a financial and business journalist, editing several London-based publications, before re-entering academia in 2003 to launch the Journalism programme at the University of Chester.

From the title of his most recently published books in the Compact Cymru series (opposite) one might be forgiven for thinking that it was not just the prospect of a post in the University of Chester that drew him back to this area, but the lure of the mountains. In November he represented Wales in the V50 category GB & Ireland cross country event held near Glasgow, and was well placed in a strong field. Both books available in good bookshops and online; a great Christmas gift for those who love the mountains.



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Llanelwy WI

Denise D'Albertson

At our October meeting we were taken back to 1915 when the land for Kinmel Park Camp was requisitioned by the Army. It was the largest camp in Wales to train troops, and later it was used to house Canadian troops at the end of WWI.

Our speakers, Lorraine Lister and Julie Slater were in period costume, and informed us that there were 20 sub-camps with accommodation, mess halls, stores, post office and a cinema. There was even a railway that connected Kinmel Camp to Rhyl.

In March 1919 the delays and poor camp conditions resulted in the infamous Canadian Riots which led to the deaths of 3 rioters and 2 guards. There are over 100 military graves in St Margaret's Churchyard in Bodelwyddan and many of the soldiers died from the Spanish flu.

We were shown a selection of photos, clay pipes, tooth brushes, combs, cutlery and other artifacts that were found at the camp. It was a very interesting presentation on our local history expertly brought to life!

If you would like to come along to one of our meetings please email stasaphwi@gmail.com for further information.





Denbigh and District Probus Club

Julia Williams

At our October meeting we welcomed Gwenno Jones, Designated Landscapes Dark Skies Officer. She works on a Wales-wide project aiming to help communities and businesses improve their lighting in order to reduce light pollution to benefit biodiversity and human health.

Gwenno explained how light pollution has increased by 400% in the last 25 years and is still increasing by about 10% every year. This has a huge impact on biodiversity as more than 60% of our biodiversity relies on dark skies and also a billion pounds a year is wasted in energy costs because of misdirected lights, upward spill of lights and inappropriate lighting.

Artificial lights confuse animals and insects. For example, there is an impact on the life cycle of moths and because of this, there has been a massive decline in the moth population. Light pollution disrupts 65% of our night time pollinators. Bees are meant to sleep at night to recover, but lighting disturbance means they do not rest as much and thus produce much less honey. Apparently 150 insects per night are killed by a single street light. Many migrating birds coming in are re-directed by lights and fly into buildings and an untimely death.

Only 2% of the UK population experiences truly dark skies and can see more than 12 stars in the sky. Light can interfere with our melatonin levels and too much light before bedtime and during sleep time can cause migraines and interfere with sleep patterns. Blue light from screens and other devices can also disrupt our sleep patterns. Many areas including much of Denbighshire have dispensed with orange neon streetlights and are moving to softer and more economical LED street lighting. An all-Wales Dark Skies week is run annually in February half term with multiple interactive events and activities for schools and other groups.

Denbigh and District Probus Club welcomes new members to join their group for monthly meetings held at the Oriel Hotel, St Asaph where they enjoy lunch, friendship, and a talk from a guest speaker. For further information have a look at the club web site denbighprobus.com or contact Gareth Williams at julmwilliams1974@gmail.com 07881 783735

#HikesWithTheHospice in 2024

Walk through the seasons with St Kentigern Hospice, an inspiring calendar which each month boasts a hand-picked walk around the North Wales Coast and guides you through the wildlife you could see along the way. From kingfishers to orchids, the calendar is a celebration of nature from the local area and an enchant to get you outside - follow the nature trails for yourself to see an array of amazing flora and fauna. Designed and produced by North Wales born artist and author Sally Mills, it is a must for any nature lover or for those who simply want to enjoy an adventure into the slightly wilder side of life.

Share your pictures with the Hospice to show them what you find, and use the hashtag #HikesWithTheHospice for a chance to win each month. The perfect Christmas present or the perfect treat for yourself, calendars can be purchased from all St Kentigern shops, the hospice & their online outlets - either via Vinted or [eBay](https://www.ebay.co.uk) at a bargain of £9.99!!



Llandyrnog and Llangwyfan Local History Society

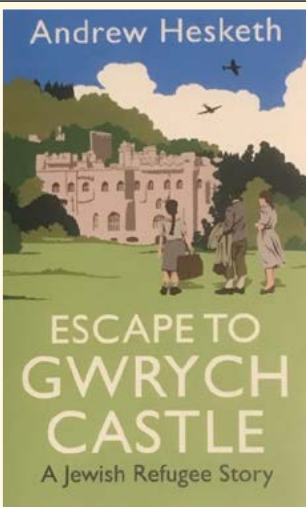
At their recent meeting, members of the LI & LI LHS welcomed local history teacher Andrew Hesketh who spoke about his recently published book telling the little-known story of the arrival at Gwrych Castle in Abergele of around 200 children rescued from Europe on the *Kindertransport*.

Following the terrifying events of *Kristallnacht* in November 1938 when Nazi paramilitary groups attacked Jewish shops, businesses and synagogues throughout Germany, the British Government agreed to take in unaccompanied Jewish children in the *Kindertransport* programme. Just under 10,000 children were brought to Britain in the months before the start of WW2 and around 200 children came to Gwrych castle. It was in a dilapidated state, but local residents, businesses and church groups helped make it more habitable.

It was a fascinating evening to hear about life in Gwrych for the children, and to hear about what became of them subsequently. Andrew's book is available at local bookshops and online.

The LI & LI LHS meet 4 times a year in Llandyrnog village hall. New members are always welcome—please contact via email at llangwyfanhistory@hotmail.com

**** Next meeting: Jan 17th Vale of Clwyd railways Fiona Gale**



St Asaph Library

In these tough times our local library in St Asaph has developed as a hub for us all to use in many ways in addition to the traditional book lending service. Facilities and amenities at our library include all those listed in the box opposite:

So it has been very sad to hear that DCC are seriously considering a significant reduction in library hours across the county to assist with the budget shortfall that they face. The public consultation took place during October and we await the DCC decision. The proposal suggests local people go to other towns to use their libraries on the days their own library is shut, putting the expense and inconvenience back on to residents - ignoring the community cohesion a local library gives to town residents, the cost and the carbon footprint implications. Our local library report that there was

a lot of interest in the consultation and residents were keen to make their views known. Dr. James Davies MP has also written to the County Council offering support for the Library Service as a valuable local resource for residents of Denbighshire.



This will make it very difficult for library staff to offer all the services that are there now and for libraries to be a relaxed and welcoming venue when there are such time pressures due to much reduced hours.

As part of our enquiries, the City Times has been made aware that our local St Asaph City Council have been contributing **£12,000** per year to DCC to support the running of the library in recognition of the benefit the resource is to our local community. The City Council have met recently to discuss the library service and the outcome is a letter to Denbighshire County Council stating that the support funding will cease if the County Council reduce the current library service. There is only one other town council in the County that has supported their library like our City Council has and yet St Asaph appears to be being penalised in the same way as all the other towns in the county. We will keep our readers up to date with future developments.



The library in St Asaph is currently open for five days a week, including Saturdays so local children can visit at the weekend and be encouraged to develop a lifelong interest in reading. The proposed hours are as follows:

Monday 10 am - 1 pm
Tuesday 2 pm - 5 pm
Thursday 10 am- 1 pm
Friday 2 pm - 5 pm

What our library provides:

- Books, audiobooks, DVDs and CDs
- Free public internet access, photocopying
- Printing and scanning and cloud printing
- Meeting rooms for hire, Community kitchen
- Solo digital space, Tourist information point
- Warm space in the winter months
- Help and information about council services
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Jo Cotton

Late Update: the decision whether or not to go ahead with this proposal will be taken on Dec 19th. (a good day to bury bad news? Ed.)

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Murder in the cathedral!

Hot on the heels of the Abba tribute band and the silent disco, the latest unusual event in the cathedral was the Murder Mystery evening in October. There was a massive run on tickets, with a capacity crowd of 160 being treated to a sumptuous meal in beautifully decorated surroundings. Right from the start, guests were immersed in the murder mystery, with actors telling the story and potential suspects all around; tables had to work out the most likely murderer using logic, gut feeling and careful analysis of the evidence. The evening rounded off with dancing and was judged to be a huge success by all.



D&D Occasions North Wales (on Facebook) were the venue dressers

Work on the organ

During a recent storm, high winds loosened a slate on the cathedral roof, which fell and sliced a hole in one of the lead gullies, allowing water to seep into the tower. Apparently the trombone key on the keyboard was making unusual sounds which transpired to be due to water damage; other pipes were also damaged. Nicholson & Co., Pipe Organ Builders from Malvern, were called in to repair the damaged pipes and to generally overhaul the organ, which had been rebuilt in the 1990s.

Peter and Phil from Nicholson gave City Times some details. There are 3316 pipes in the cathedral organ with 58 notes on each of the 4 keyboards, and 60 draw stops. Pipes are either metal or wood, each with its own pitch and timbre. The highest note is inaudible to many in their senior years, coming into the dog whistle territory, whilst the lowest notes are perceived not so much a sound as a low rumbling sensation. Deep in the innards of the organ, the accumulation of dust was impressive. Around a third of the pipes were removed, cleaned, rubbed with linseed oil and replaced. The wind chest and its multiple valves were reconnected and tested. Fine tuning and “voicing” of the organ is then



Kyle puts the last pipe in the Great Principal



Phil, Peter, Kelvin and George: Nicholson's experts

required. Organ repair and maintenance is clearly a very complex affair, requiring specialist knowledge, a keen musical ear, and a good understanding of physics.

Nicholson & Co. is one of the UK's leading pipe organ specialists, and look after around 1000 organs in the UK, and many overseas also. One of their future projects is to build and install a new organ at Christchurch cathedral in New Zealand, which is being rebuilt following the devastating earthquake of 2011.

You can hear the organ at cathedral services or at recitals — see www.stasaphcathedral.wales



Elizabeth Williams Charities—applications invited

The trustees of Elizabeth Williams Charities welcome applications from people who are experiencing difficult circumstances. This may be because of low income, poor health, hardship or distress caused by a change in circumstances. It is a local charity dating back to 1791 at the time of the Alms Houses. To be able to apply for a grant you must live within St. Asaph, Bodelwyddan, Cefn Meriadog or Waen.



Requests for an application form can be sent to the clerk of the charity via e-mail to: alison.alexander@btinternet.com or by post to 19 Roe Parc, St. Asaph, Denbighshire. LL17 0LD.



Mrs Barbara Rust was presented with a substantial garden token from the City Council by Mayor Colin Hardie in recognition of her long years of service to the City Council and the community. She plans to create a rose garden.

A Christmas Garden Miscellany (and a garden thug...!)

Chris Jones

Holly is a key plant decoration at Christmas and an afternoon gathering foliage, berries, sprigs of ivy, cones and even colourful stems can all be put to good use to create wonderful plastic free festive decorations to brighten the home. You can even add dried orange slices or cinnamon sticks to give that wonderful scent of Christmas.

Mistletoe's fresh green leaves and white berries have a tradition that harks back to Greek and Roman times mainly because it appears to magically stay bright and fresh when the trees on which it grew (mainly apple, hawthorns or poplar trees) seemed to lose their leaves and die back in winter. It was used as a charm for young women to find husbands. The seeds are spread by birds. You can sometimes see birds eating the berries but rubbing off the sticky seeds on to the bark of the tree with their beaks, which is how they then germinate.



Conifers — it is impossible to imagine a winter garden without a conifer tree. During the spring and summer they fade into the background amidst the summer flowering shrubs and plants. But winter and frost comes and magically gives them centre stage and strong outlines and shades of green and blue. There is no need to have bare soil in winter either. The areas covered in the summer months by colourful annuals can be replaced by dainty leaves of plants like hardy cyclamens or heathers or bulbs such as snowdrops or aconites. *Bergenias* (elephant ear plants) will develop deep red tints to their leaves in the winter.

Bare trees with interesting bark are also a bonus as are colourful foliage shrubs with berries which the birds will love. Two of my favourite trees are *Prunus Serrula* which has a shining nut brown polished bark and *Betula Jacquemontii* which in contrast has a bright white bark. Both will be even more stunning if you wipe clean the bark with warm water.

They also have the benefit of a shallow root run which makes it easier to under plant with bulbs and shady perennials.

Golden leaved or variegated evergreen trees and shrubs also come into their own and brighten the winter garden. *Taxus Baccata Fastigiata Aurea* (Irish Yew) is a slim golden pillar which makes a good focal point. *Pittosporum Tenuifolium* is a very attractive evergreen shrub with dainty variegated leaves with dark stems and is a useful foliage plant in Christmas decorations along with *Ilex Argentea Marginata* (so called hedgehog holly because of its leaf form), but sadly this one lacks berries. Another popular shrub is *Hebe Frozen Flame* which has variegated pink edges to its grey-green leaves. This variation intensifies as the weather gets colder. It also has lovely blue flowers throughout the summer.



These evergreen shrubs brighten the duller of winter days and when selecting these plants, consider choosing those bearing berries which will also benefit wildlife with both shelter and food. Don't forget that shrubs can be bought as bare root plants and planted anytime as long as the ground is not frozen or waterlogged. Roses are often bought as bare root plants.



When we think of rose hips, we often think of *Rosa Rugosa* which is as tough as old boots and forms a dense hedge very rapidly — but it can be a thug and, as such, it must be restricted to the garden and not allowed to escape i.e. not to allow the rose hips to freely develop. Although I try and deadhead repeat-flowering roses in the summer to maximise blooms, I stop doing so by September to allow rosehips to develop for attractive foliage and to provide support for wildlife in the garden. One of the most striking rosehips is that of *Rosa Geranium*.

Shorter days can also suit the garden that contains the Spruce tree, with its spiky silver-blue needles which seem to intensify in colour. For softer needles the Noble Fir has a striking upward reaching needles and cones and a wonderful scent. *Pinus Mugo* is a lovely green in the summer but then changes to yellow as the weather becomes colder

and makes a striking feature of the winter garden with attractive cones. Flowering heathers (*Erica* types) will tolerate lime, their bright pink, purple and white lowers and bright foliage are superb in the winter pots and well drained spots in the garden. Don't confuse them with summer-flowering varieties which do not tolerate lime and must be planted in ericaceous compost or acid soil.

All of the above can grow in your garden providing a wealth of foliage, berries, scents and textures to decorate the house as well as the garden at Christmas.

If you are able, why not pay a visit to Bodnant Garden and see their Winter Garden which is a real treat and a source of inspiration.



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Ysgol Esgob Morgan

Jodie Martin

Sharing the good news - We are proud to announce that Ysgol Esgob Morgan has succeeded in receiving the Silver Award Cymraeg Campus. Our learners and colleagues have worked hard in order to reach high standards in the Welsh language across the school. The accreditation means that our learners have positive experiences that promote Welsh culture and heritage. Congratulations to everyone involved! On to the Gold Award!



Sports success! Well done to our girls football and mixed rugby team who have represented us this term competing in Denbighshire North primary TAG festival and Vale of Clwyd tournaments. A special mention to Isla year 5 who scored 11 goals during the football tournament. Both teams showed fantastic team work - "Together We Aim High!"

Monsters ball Our newly formed PTA ran their first event of the academic calendar, during October, with a sell out 'Monsters Ball'. Pupils took part in a fashion parade showing off their costumes and the deputy mayor attended to judge the entries in the pumpkin carving competition. They raised an amazing £350! Thank you to everyone who helped at the event and we now look forward to our very popular hot pot and quiz night.

We Will Remember Them Thank you to our head boy and girl Caitlin and Charlie for laying the wreath on behalf of Ysgol Esgob Morgan during the remembrance day parade. It was great to see so many Esgob Morgan pupils representing various clubs and paying their respects.

CogURDD This term we held the first round of the URDD cooking competition and this year pupils from year 4,5 and 6 were asked to create a salad. The pupils were very creative with their presentation skills and some even made their own dressings! Thank you to our chair of governors Sally Godden, who had the difficult task of judging the competition. *Pob Lwc* Caitlin in the next round!



A year of the amazing Community Fridge!



St Asaph Brownies and Rainbows carry their standard at the Harvest service in the Parish Church, and also help out at the Royal British Legion stall in Aldi.



The Community Fridge has been one of the great success stories of the year for St Asaph. Once a week, volunteer drivers collect food from local supermarkets (thanks Aldi, Sainsburys and the Co-op) that would otherwise have gone to landfill; the food is stored in the Parish Church and then made available to anyone who wants it, without charge, on Sundays between 5 and 7pm. The organisation Fairshare also brings around 70kg of similar food each week. In addition to cutting down on waste, it has become quite the social event with tea and coffee served while you wait! So far, almost 10 tons of food - bread, vegetables, fruit, meat, biscuits, pasta, sauces, cereals etc have been distributed in 2023.

If you haven't been yet, it's worth a visit. And volunteers (pick-up drivers or distributors) are always welcome. Community Fridge is a nationwide and very successful initiative.



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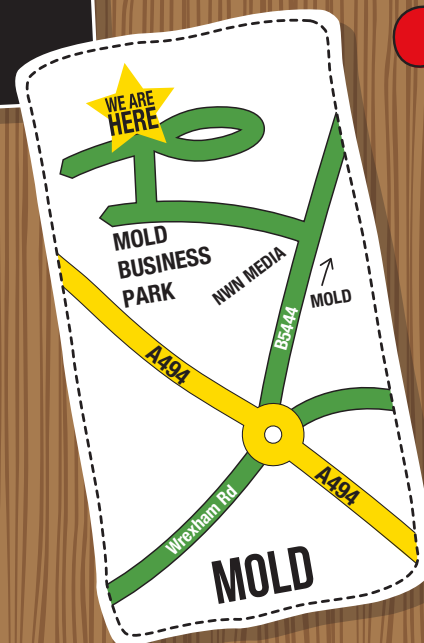
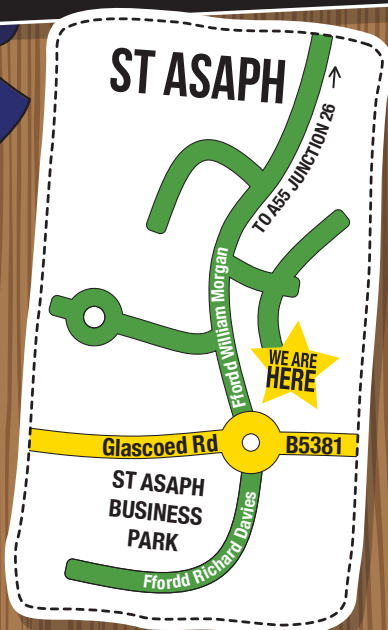
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TEST YOUR FESTIVE KNOWLEDGE



1. Santa's sleigh is pulled by 9 reindeer, named Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Blitzen, Rudolph and... can you name the final reindeer?

2. What's the name of the mountain that the Grinch lives on – Mount Crumpit, Mount Muffin, or Mount Marshmallow?



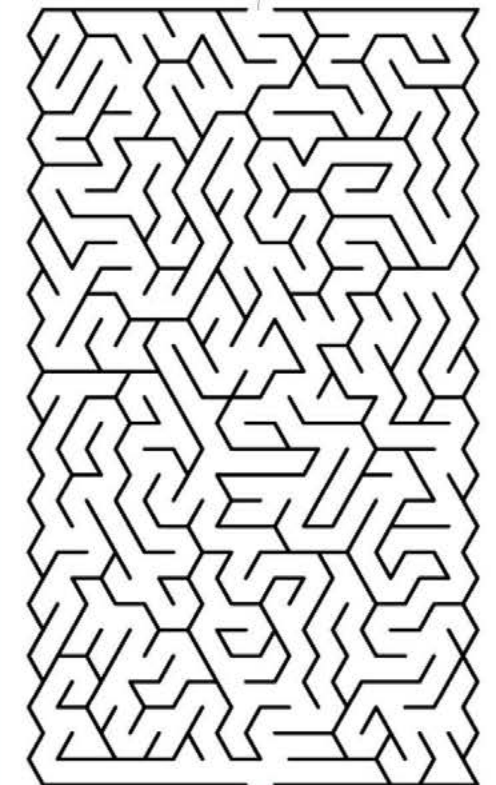
3. In the song, the 12 days of Christmas, what gift was given on the seventh day?

4. In Charles Dickens' novel, A Christmas Carol, what was the first name of the miserly character, Scrooge?



5. What are you supposed to do if you find yourself under the mistletoe with someone special?

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Ysgol Glan Clwyd

Meryl Pierce

Sioe Gerdd "Yn y Dechreuad"

Llongyfarchwn ein holl ddisgyblion oedd yn rhan o'r sioe *Yn y Dechreuad* a berfformiwyd yn y Theatr ganol Tachwedd. Roedd hi'n sioe â sglein arni, a phob dim am y cynhyrchiad yn gwbl gloddiw; cadarnhawyd hynny gan ymateb y gynulleidfa oedd ar eu traed ddiwedd y perfformiad!

Sioe ydy hi sy'n adrodd hanes sefydlu Ysgol Glan Clwyd yn Y Rhyl yn ôl ym 1956, a'r holl ddrama oedd yn rhan o'r brwydro cychwynnol hwnnw dros addysg Gymraeg. Gwelwyd ynddi y dadlau ymysg teuluoedd, herio'r awdurdodau, ynghyd â ffrindiau'n cael eu gwahanu i ysgolion gwahanol oherwydd dewis rhieni o iaith addysg uwchradd i'w plant. Da hefyd oedd gweld yr hiwmor yn cael ei ychwanegu wrth gyfeirio at y dewis enwog o frown fel y wisg ysgol wreiddiol!

Heb os, mae hi'n stori bwerus, ac yn stori y dathlwn ddewrder a chadernid arweinwyr y cyfnod am arwain y frwydr dros addysg Gymraeg. Cafwyd perfformiad caboledig ac emosiynol ar adegau, a sawl un yn y gynulleidfa yn eu dagrau ar ddiwedd y sioe; roedd hi'n sicr yn faint bod yno. Diolch i staff yr adran Gerdd a Drama am eu gwaith caled, ac i nifer o staff eraill fu'n brysur yn cynorthwyo i sicrhau llwyddiant y sioe.

Diolchgarwch

Cafwyd gwasanaeth o ddiolchgarwch bendithiol yn yr Eglwys Gadeiriol ar fore hydrefol braf pryd y cafodd pob disgybl gyfle i gerdded i'r Gadeirlan a chael bod yn rhan o'r cyfarfod diolch blynyddol. Rhannwyd neges amserol iawn am ryfel gan y pennaeth, Mrs Sian Alwen, a chael blas ar eitemau arbennig gan ein disgyblion. Ymfalchiwn yn y berthynas agos rhyngom fel ysgol â'r Eglwys Gadeiriol wrth allu parhau i gynnal y traddodiad pwysig sydd wedi bodoli ers i'r ysgol gael ei sefydlu yn Llanelwy.



Cast: Yn y Dechreuad



St Asaph VP School

Kate Langford

Remembrance day We are so proud of the Caterpillar and Butterfly pupils (Year 1 and 2) who took part in the St Asaph Remembrance Day Parade. The children attended the parade and laid a remembrance wreath on behalf of the school with Miss Langford (Headteacher) and Mrs Blears (Year 1 & 2 teacher). The children made us so proud and we would like to thank their family members who also gave up their time on a Sunday to attend the event – diolch.

The magic of Christmas The children have been working extremely hard on their Christmas concert performances. The Ladybird, Caterpillar and Butterfly classes are all performing traditional Nativity concerts – we would like to thank the Cathedral for hosting our concerts again this year. Bumblebee children will perform Christmas songs in school and have a Christmas craft morning with their families. Our Grasshopper children will have a very active festive morning with a Christmas sensory circuits session. We are all looking forward to sharing the magic of Christmas together as a school family.

Anti-bullying week, road safety week and Children in Need

The children took part in **Anti-bullying week** by wearing odd socks to school. We spoke about the importance of kindness and being a kind friend. The children learned about speaking out against bullying and how to keep safe.

We also enjoyed a visit from **Sustrans** who helped delivery Road Safety sessions to our pupils.

Children in Need is a well-loved event at the VP and we would like to thank our families for their generosity. We dressed up in our favourite fancy dress costumes or something spotty to raise money for children less fortunate than ourselves.

Nursery applications for September 2024 A polite reminder to any families with children born between 1st September 2020 and 31st August 2021. Your child is eligible to attend Nursery class from September 2024; apply for a place at our Nursery using the Denbighshire website. The closing date for Nursery applications is 16th February 2024.



Ysgol Cefn Meriadog

Laura Martin

This term has been incredibly busy with us welcoming lots of different visitors to further enhance the teaching and learning across the school in many of the different Areas of Learning. Visits and visitors have included a trip to Liverpool World Museum, a trip to Conwy Castle, Maisie the Therapy dog visiting, Cricket sessions from Cricket Wales, a morning with an author, talks from the RNLI and Fire Service and so much more. Thank you to

all of our guests!

Two of our pupils represented the school beautifully at the Remembrance Sunday Service and both laid a wreath on behalf of our whole school community. We have also supported



Children in Need, the Food Bank and St Kentigern hospice this term and recognised Anti-Bullying Week and Road Safety Week with activities taking place in all classes.

We are now in full preparation mode for Christmas at Ysgol Cefn Meriadog with lots of exciting activities and events planned throughout the month of December. Wishing all of our families and the community a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year!



Photo: Aaron Lennox

Blaze at the Bowling Club

The spectator stand at St Asaph bowling club was destroyed in an arson attack in broad daylight on Saturday 4th November. Two youths seen on CCTV were later arrested and charged with arson. Volunteers have already come forward to help rebuild it.

Back in November 2017, the clubhouse itself was burned to the ground in an arson attack; the culprits were never found. In previous years, the tennis clubhouse, the football clubhouse and the former community centre were all subject to separate arson attacks.

St Asaph Bowling Club

Nick Thomson



The club had a very successful season and the bowling green has been in superb condition thanks to our main greenkeeper Emlyn Pierce, with many bowlers saying it is the best green in North Wales. Sadly Emlyn is retiring this year after many years service to the club.

The club put on two top competitions with local businesses sponsoring the prize money. First was the doubles comp. sponsored by T.G. Williams and the second was a singles sponsored by Spring Garden caravan park. These were well attended by players and spectators from all over North Wales and across the border.

In the vets league (over 60s) the club came a very respectable 4th in a very strong A division with local player Phil Nash top in the averages. In the Colwyn Bay league (Wednesday evening) the team gained promotion to the A division at the end of last season and managed to finish mid table, with local St. Asaph resident Stan Schofield top of the averages. In the Clwyd league (Thursday) the A team finished top of the A division with Steve Dace top of the averages. In the B team we had some new members join the club who hadn't bowled before but really enjoyed the season and the team are still in the B division. In the coast league (Saturday) we are in the A division and finished mid table in a very strong division.

The season starts again next April so if anyone would like to come along and take up bowls with a very friendly club which does not cost much to join then please get in touch with me next February/March. The details are on the notice board outside the club next to the gate.



A challenge for 2024.....Couch to 5k!

The St Asaph City Striders running group are pleased to announce that at 6pm on Tuesday 2nd January 2024, at St Asaph Cathedral car-park, they will be launching their **"Stride to Five (5k)"** running plan for **absolute** beginners!

The aim is to get you gently started with running, with an ultimate aim of completing a 5k run sometime in 2024. You will be guided by specially trained C25K mentors. And it's all free.

Please contact Ian Jones on 07775 684171 or Julie Roberts on 07900 188222 for further information.

High flying Saints!

John Roberts

At the time of writing the Saints are in third place in the Ardal North West League with a game in hand over the two teams above them. This is a remarkable achievement following our promotion to the third tier of football in Wales at the end of last season. They have won all their league games since the end of September and have also progressed to the third round of the FAW Amateur Trophy. An already strong squad has been further strengthened with the return of Jake Walker to his home town club from Denbigh Town FC, who has scored four goals in his first three matches.

The success of the club goes beyond the first team. The Reserves are in third place in their league— just one point behind the top two teams. Our newly established Under 19s team, which is comprised mainly of 16 year olds in their first season of senior football, have progressed to the second round of their League Cup and are mid table in their league.



Looking to the longer term future of the club our junior section continues to grow and flourish. Our Under 14s have made the step up to 11v11 on a full size pitch with full size goals. Following a summer of change with some players leaving the club and others joining the team has settled well. Following a number of close results they won their first three points of the season in their most recent match. We're optimistic for continued improvement as the season progresses.

Our Under 11s continue to be formidable opponents for any team in their age group and have been fortunate to play every weekend despite the unpredictable weather. With a healthy number in the squad we've had the opportunity to experiment in both 7v7 and 9v9 formats.

Dreigiau Under 10s have had a very positive start to the season. Highlights to date include a 3-3 draw against Rhyl Hearts, 11-3 win against Denbigh and most recently a 7-1 win against Abergele. Our Under 10s Llewod have also got off to an great start to the season with many excellent wins in the Rhyl & District Junior League. The Under 8s Saints have started the season strongly. Their commitment and hard work in training and games has resulted in an impressive start to the season. St Asaph U8s Flames have also had an excellent start to the season and would like to thank **British Gas** for funding new home and away kits, tracksuit tops, training wear and winter wear. The Under 7s have had a promising start to their second season with the club. They have recorded some good wins and one of their strengths is that they have a never give attitude and always enjoy their football.

Our newest and youngest team have begun their football journey, with weekly training and recently matches against Denbigh, Hearts, NFA, Pentre and Prestatyn. The Under 6s have focused on improving their skills with plenty of time with the ball and are making great progress.

The Club would like to thank the **customers of St Asaph Co-op** for choosing us as one their causes to support during the past year and in raising £1492 towards buying new playing and training equipment for our junior teams. We would also like to thank the **Bod Erw, Claire Michelle, Neil Shaw, The Talardy, City Glam, Ruby Tuesday's, May Quay** and everyone who has donated to the Christmas Hamper towards our Christmas Raffle, which also has £100 as one of the prizes. The next event on the juniors' calendar is their Christmas Party at Spring Gardens on December 10th.

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