

Ships, Shells and Shops

Rhuddlan was fortunate to have many tradesmen and businesses and Bennett's Trade Directory of 1913 lists:

Mr J Barlow, Bootmaker in High Street
Messrs Barnett, Grocers and Fruiterers, Victoria Buildings, Rhyl Road
Mr H Barnett, Builder
Mr J Blinston, Meat Purveyor, High Street
Mr F Cookson, Rhuddlan Cycle Works, High Street
Corbett, Williams and Sons, Agricultural Engineers, Station Road
M J Davies, Grocer, Tower House, Castle Street
Thomas Davies, Boot and Shoe Dealer, Maker and Repairer, High Street
W Davies, Butcher, High Street (slaughter house to the rear)
W H Davies, Grocer and Draper
Edwards Brothers, Builders
W Edwards, Purveyor of Meats
T Ellis, Saddler, Parliament Street
Mrs Evans, Post Office
R A Griffiths, Grocer and Provision Dealer, Old Post Office Stores, High Street
T C Howatson, Veterinary Surgeon
E Humphreys, Smith
John Johnson, Horse Slaughterers, whose licence was temporarily suspended in 1913 because of failure to make improvement ordered at a prior inspection.
W Jones, Fruiterer, High Street
Jones & Downes, Smiths
Jones & Roberts, Provision Merchants, Parliament Street
D A Kelly, Stationer and Tobacconist, High Street
Morgan's Baker & Confectioner, High Street
E Morris, Confectioner, High Street
National and Provincial Bank, High Street
J Roberts, Family Grocer, High Street
J Roberts, Contractor
W Roberts, Coal Merchant
Miss Williams, Newsagent and small lending library, High Street
Richard Williams, Wheelwright, Election Row (Prince's Road)

Of particular interest is the family grocery business J Roberts and Sons of Central Stores, High Street, founded by John and Ellen Roberts in 1887, which served the residents well through family descendants until finally closing in 1981. Ellen ran the grocery and fruit shop while husband John worked as a slater and plasterer whose work included slating the "marble" church in Bodelwyddan. After the war their sons Ernest and Edgar ran the shop and their sister Evelyn established a haberdashery and millinery business next door.



Left: Baker's engine, manufactured at Rhuddlan Foundry

Right: Davies butcher's delivery bicycle

In September 1914, Mr W J Roberts, coal merchant, Church Street. was presented with an illuminated diploma by the RSPCA for the great care and kindness shown to his pony "Tommy" during the 22yrs it had worked for him. A replacement pony was gifted by Mrs Aitken of Bodelwyddan Castle.

A little known but long-standing trade of Rhuddlan was ship-building with fairly large vessels such as sloops and schooners launched from the slipway, the remains of which are still present below St Mary's Church. However, silting of the river and construction of the Foryd Bridge at Rhyl in the 1880s prevented passage of these large vessels down to the estuary and production ceased. One Rhuddlan ship, the *William George* (151 tons) originally built in 1876 as a three-masted schooner, came to a dramatic end in WW1. While transporting a cargo of coal from Swansea to St Valery-en-Caux she was stopped and sunk by U-boat UC26 on September 30th 1916, 10 miles NNE of Cap la Hague, fortunately with no casualties. The U-boat in turn was sunk in May 1917 with loss of her captain who had been responsible for sinking 75 other allied vessels.

Rhuddlan foundry, or more correctly Corbett Williams and Sons, Agricultural Engineers, located on a large site adjacent to the west bank of the river was a major employer in the town. It played a particularly significant role in the war effort as it turned to shell case production and is described in a separate section in this book.

There is no doubt that the war affected businesses, with some declining as male workers enlisted but others prospering because of increased demand and the spending power of troops based at nearby Kinmel Camp. Because alcohol consumption reduced productivity in the massive war effort that was becoming necessary, breweries and public houses suffered as beer was watered down, pub opening hours were restricted and it became forbidden to buy alcohol on behalf of anyone else. Even the King signed a pledge not to indulge in alcohol until the war was over. As fuel availability became restricted, some business reduced their opening hours and the decision to close the Post Office on Thursdays for reasons of light and fuel economy was taken in 1916, but while some trades failed others came along with the changing times and Bennett's 1922 Trade Directory reveals new names and activity:

Miss Britland, Confectioner
S E Gregory, Mineral Water Manufacturers
R Hughes, Chemist, Castle Street
W Jolley, Grocer, Castle Street
Mrs Jones, Confectionery and Tea Rooms, High Street
London, City and Midland Bank
Rhuddlan Motor Company
Mrs Roberts, Grocer, Castle Street
T H Roberts, Grocer, High Street
Miss E A Williams, Oxford Refreshment Rooms, High Street
T Williams, Dairyman, Milk House Farm



Sidney E Gregory's mineral water bottle