

North Wales Life

Cheshire Life, Archant, The Whitehouse,
Greenalls Avenue, Warrington,
Cheshire, WA4 6HL. Tel 01925 438121

Editorial

EDITOR
Louise Allen-Taylor
louise.taylor@cheshirelife.co.uk
01925 438121

DEPUTY EDITOR
Paul Mackenzie
paul.mackenzie@archant.co.uk
07834 101712

DESIGNER
Sophie Maloney
sophie.maloney@archant.co.uk
01603 772754

STYLE EDITOR
Janet Reeder
janet.reeder@archant.co.uk

HOMES EDITOR
Kate Houghton

FEATURE WRITER
Emma Mayo

Rebekka O'Grady
01925 438021

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER
Kirsty Thompson

DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER
Vijay Arogyasami
vijay.arogyasami@archant.co.uk
01925 438121

DIGITAL EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Lucy Matthews
lucy.matthews@archant.co.uk
01925 438118

ARCHANT NORTH MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS MANAGER
Kate Wilson
kate.wilson@archant.co.uk
07725 828755

Advertising

SALES MANAGER
Jackie Allen
jackie.allen@cheshirelife.co.uk
07970 615409

SALES EXECUTIVES
Marie Humphreys
marie.humphreys@cheshirelife.co.uk
07970 611135

Angela Halligan
angela.halligan@cheshirelife.co.uk
07918 724161

Rachel Foster
rachel.foster@cheshirelife.co.uk
01925 430481

PROPERTY SALES EXECUTIVE
Lesley Turner
lesley.turner@cheshirelife.co.uk
07501 462833

CUSTOMER SERVICES MANAGER
Jane Ramsay
jane.ramsay@cheshirelife.co.uk
07973 714946

Circulation and Subscriptions

REGIONAL CIRCULATION MANAGER
Richard Shevlin
07970 047024

Subscription enquiries
0844 8484213

GROUP EDITOR
Roger Borrell

PUBLISHER
Rhianon Wragg

Cheshire Life is published by Archant Community Media Limited (company number 19300) and printed by William Gibbons. Archant Community Media Limited is a leading family-owned community media company based at Prospect House, Rouen Road Norwich NR1 1RE. The company is active in the fields of newspaper and magazine publishing, contracting printing, marketing, internet communications and television.

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Welcome

WE DO LOVE to be beside the seaside and in North Wales, thankfully, there is so much of it to choose from. In this issue of North Wales Life, we paddle in the waters of Llandudno (metaphorically speaking!) which is one of the most popular resorts in the region.

I also take the liberty of indulging myself and telling you about my favourite locations. However, I'm a frequent visitor to the area, so this is subject to change. Every time I visit North Wales, there seems to be something new and beautiful to explore and add to my list of favourites.

I hope you enjoy this issue and do look out for the next North Wales Life section in the July issue of Cheshire Life. Bore da. ♦



Louise Allen-Taylor
Editor, Cheshire Life



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Freephone: 0800 085 2338
Telephone: 01565 740579
Email: sales@holts-orangeries.com
Web: www.holts-orangeries.com

Looking back, moving forward

For many, Llandudno is destination of nostalgia. REBEKKA O'GRADY meets locals taking the seaside town forward for future generations to enjoy

THE Victorians and Edwardians loved Llandudno. They loved it so much they called it 'Queen of the Welsh resorts' – an epithet that is still very relevant today to the seaside town. Although many resorts have lost their charm and sparkle, the people of Llandudno are determined to keep their town the ideal of what makes a great British holiday.

The town, blessed with beautiful architecture, a lovely beach and a Victorian pier, was laid out in 1849 by the Mostyn family, who leased most of the plots for development and influenced the building design and uses of the land. Today, Mostyn Estates still manages and promotes the economic well-being of the town – but they aren't the only ones to do so.

Acclaimed seafood restaurant, Dylan's, will be opening their third venue in the former Washington Hotel site on the East Parade in May. Run by business partners David Evans and Robin Hodgson, who already have two successful restaurants in Menai Bridge and Criccieth, the duo wanted to transform the historic Grade II listed building into something the town could be proud of.

'There was extensive damage to the building from a previous, ruthless attempt at renovation. We want to restore it in an elegant way that is sympathetic to its original period,

so you get that real wow factor,' said David, who said the £1.5 million project will cost around £800,000 to refurbish. Through its vast history, the building has been a number of things from Gentleman's Club through to most recently, a nightclub named The Wash.

'The building is a mismatch of Edwardian and Victorian décor. We are restoring the terrazzo floor, stripping the oak panels back to the original wood and remaking a kilometre of cornicing so that as soon as you come through those revolving doors, you get a real feel of what it would have been like in 1925.'

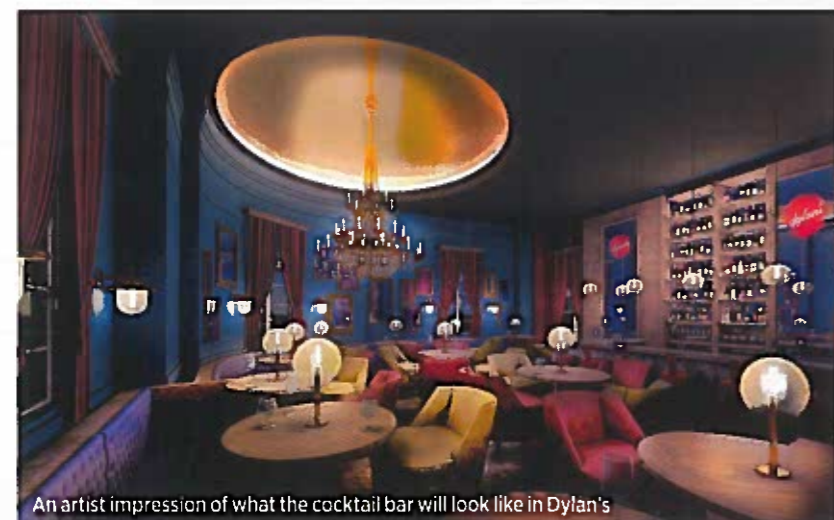
The ambitious project will bring two floors of stylish dining, a sumptuous stand-alone cocktail bar and an outdoor terrace. As with their other sites, the menu here will showcase the best in seasonal and local produce from the great larder of North Wales, and of course, spectacular seafood.

'As specialists in seafood, to have a waterside location is important to us. Llandudno was an ideal choice for the next site as it's a beautiful town that is really on the up,' said Robin. The duo both commented on how recently there seems to be a different sort of visitor and offerings in Llandudno, changing its reputation of an older town to something appealing to a new generation.



Above: An impression of one of Dylan's restaurant areas in the renovated Washington Hotel

Below: Tony Burns, Director at St George's Hotel in front of the mood board for the development of the Rooftop



An artist impression of what the cocktail bar will look like in Dylan's



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRSTY THOMPSON

'It's bubbling. We like to be ahead of the curve, so we want to be a part of this change, helping to enrich visitor experience and boost the local economy. The Washington Hotel is an iconic building that has lots of memories for many people. We want it brought back to its former glory, so that it's not an eyesore and new memories can be made. Now as custodians of the building, it's important that it can stand for another 100 years so that future generations continue to enjoy it.'

Walk along the promenade, past the ice-cream shade buildings and you'll reach the St George's Hotel. Here they are also looking at the future, and for the first time in the building's history they are creating a completely new space with five new luxury rooftop bedrooms.

'The old roof needed repairing, so before doing that we considered if there was an opportunity for the hotel to go up a storey,' explained director, Tony Burns. 'We are literally raising the roof! At first, we were hesitant with how we would be supported by the town and Mostyn Estates, as the hotel is Grade II listed. But it's all been really positive as they can see with the project we are trying to add something, an asset, to not just the hotel, but the town.'

The five exclusive bedrooms, which start at £260 on a bed and breakfast basis, will no doubt bring a new level of tourist to

"The menu at Dylan's will showcase the best in seasonal and local produce from the great larder of North Wales, and of course, spectacular seafood"



Robin Hodgson and David Evans outside Dylan's

Llandudno. Each of the 'Deluxe Sea-View' rooms will have a balcony offering panoramic views of the Llandudno seascape, under floor heating, luxury bathrooms with his and her sinks and even a telescope. They will be decorated in a New England style, with bleached grey wood, and blue and green tones. It's still coastal but with a luxury edge.

'It's all top of the range – there will be nothing else like it in the town. Lately for the town and area there's been a real lift, and I am glad that we are a part of that.'

www.dylansrestaurant.co.uk
www.stgeorgeswales.co.uk



Changing perceptions

Behind an impressive Edwardian terracotta façade is the foremost contemporary art gallery in North Wales. Mostyn is space packed full of award-winning pieces from around the world, it's certainly a fantastic gallery but not something many people would automatically come to expect to be in Llandudno. For audience relations manager, Lin Cummins, this is a perception the gallery is always challenging.

'Many local people don't think it's for them, that they wouldn't like "modern art". It's surprising really how many times you hear

that, but then they come here and spend time enjoying the exhibitions.'

The gallery's History Series has really helped in bridging the gap that some people see in understanding contemporary art and exhibitions. Since starting in 2013, the series has examined the heritage of Mostyn's building, the town of Llandudno and links further afield, but within a contemporary format.

The most recent is Wagstaff's (running until June 25), an exhibition about how the building was a piano and musical instrument dealership

of the same name from the early 1940s, before being reinstated as an art gallery in the 1970s.

'It's rumoured that Lemmy from the rock band, Motorhead, bought his first guitar from here,' said Lin. The exhibition considers the long-standing connection between music and art, and records an interpretation from today's perspective. It interweaves the local history of the building into various art pieces. 'You get a real crossover of audiences and visitors, and that's great in order to preserve Llandudno as a destination and make new memories.'

www.mostyn.org

Above: Alfredo Cramerotti (Director), Karolina Bayley Hughes (Engagement Team Member) and Lin Cummins (Audience Relations Manager) within the Wagstaff's exhibition at Mostyn

Right: Jon Hughes in Providero Tea and Coffee House

FROM VAN TO LLAN

What started as a humble Citroen van has resulted in two popular coffee shops. It hasn't been all that easy to get to that point though, as Jon Hughes tells me amid the crowd of ladies that lunch, students and families at Providero on Mostyn Street. The site, which only opened in late January, is the second venture that he and his wife, Ellie, have successfully launched via crowd-funding.

'The van was certainly different. We spent three years trading along the Welsh coast, with Ellie baking cakes and serving great coffee. It built a good local following, but we struggled to make ends meet and in the winter it was long days spent trading in the cold.'

In 2014, the couple thought about opening a shop in North Wales, a place they had found most of their success. One of their regular customers had mentioned there was a vacant space in Llandudno Junction, but at this stage they didn't have enough money to fund the next step of the business.

'A friend suggested that we did a Kickstarter campaign to raise the £12,000 that we needed. I was terrified to put the idea out there, but we did it and just hit the launch button.'

The way crowd-funding works is that the campaign has up to 30 days to raise their targeted amount. If they don't hit it within that time frame, they don't get any of the money. However, Jon and Ellie didn't have to worry about that as they had achieved their target by day 14, generating £15,000 by day 30.

'With a private donation we had ended up with £19,000. We really didn't expect it and were so humbled and overwhelmed by it all. The café we built ourselves, from reclaimed

flooring for the counter and church pew tables. People seemed to love it and they certainly appreciated that they could find us easier than they could in the van!'

Within 18 months, Providero customers were asking Jon and Ellie when they were going to open a larger place. The Llandudno Junction site was only small, and there were often queues at the door. 'It was frustrating not being able to serve everyone,' said Jon, who in spring 2016 saw a site for sale in Llandudno town centre. 'A lot of renovation was needed. This was when someone again suggested we launch a Kickstarter campaign.'

With an investor agreeing to come onboard if they could raise £30,000 on the campaign, the couple launched the bid. 'It felt like such a huge ask, and we didn't think it would happen, but it did.'

The success of the business has been huge, with a simple food menu, great coffee and over 30 loose leaf teas proving to be a hit. The Mostyn site has even been included in the Northern Independent Coffee Guide – thanks to their Sanremo Opera coffee machine. One of only 250 in the world, the handmade machine from Italy is the first one in Wales.

'My great-grandfather was a tea and coffee wholesaler, so I guess it's in my blood! We're not just another café in Llandudno, we're creating a specialist coffee scene in Wales. There's quite a collaborative network of independent businesses here now looking to take Llandudno forward. It's a beautiful place and it's great to be a part of making it memorable for a new generation.'

www.facebook.com/providero

"My great grandfather was a tea and coffee wholesaler, so I guess it's in my blood!"

