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Guildhall building is steeped in history

CARMARTHEN'S Guildhall is one of those iconic buildings that instantly identify a town or a location.

With thousands of tourists visiting the town each day the abiding memory that many of them will have of Carmarthen will be of this majestic building overlooking the sloping square.

Various commentators have described the building as being a work of national rather than local significance. My colleague on the council, Alun Lenny has even gone as far as to say that it is the "jewel in the crown" of Carmarthen.

The building is steeped in history.

Two of the ringleaders of the Rebecca Riots, David Davies and John Jones, were tried and sentenced to transportation there, along with a number of their contemporaries.

In more recent times, one of the last men to be hanged in Wales, Ronnie Harries, was tried and sentenced there for the brutal murder of his aunt and uncle. In the late seventies, the court was closed to the general public during

Council leader
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the trial of two men who were charged with conspiracy to damage a TV mast during the campaign for a Welsh language television station and how ironic it is that we should now be welcoming SAC's new headquarters to the town.

It could also be claimed that the Guildhall played its part in starting the nationalist parties in both Wales and Scotland.

The votes in the 1966 by-election were counted there, and when Gwynfor Evans was announced as the first Plaid Gymru MP, he greeted the crowd of people gathered in the square from the Guildhall's balcony.

The building's future looked uncertain after its closure in May, but after last week's decision by Carmarthenshire Council's Executive Board to buy the building, we can now move forward with plans for its development under public ownership.

There is huge potential for the building with the possibility of creating a visitor and educational centre to 'tell the story of Carmarthen'.

There will be challenges, of course, but working with partners such as the town council, I am excited by the possibilities for this grand old building.

