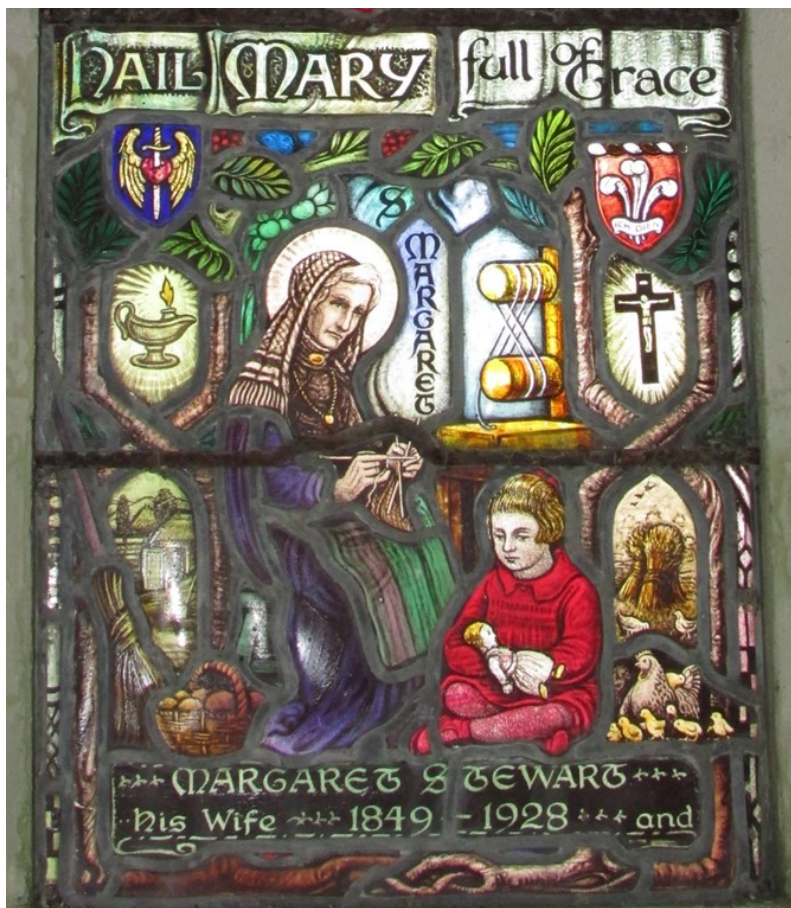


Council for British Archaeology

Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig

Wales/Cymru



Close-up of stained glass in east window of St Sulien's Church, Silian (P10). Each lancet represents a member of the Stewart family, each portrait thought to be the true likeness of that individual

Newsletter 63 Spring 2022

<http://www.councilforbritisharchaeologywales.wordpress.com/>



The Council for British Archaeology Festival of Archaeology takes place 16th to 31st July 2022 and incorporates hundreds of in-person and virtual events delivered by community groups, heritage organisations, universities, commercial units, and more in-person and online across the UK.

This year the theme is Journeys...

Getting from A to B, one step in front of the other, road to nowhere, life in the fast lane, life journeys, career paths, holidays and pilgrimages: our cultural language and heritage is littered with references to the journeys we make in our lifetimes.

From the processes we apply to archaeological finds to transform their meaning, to the evidence of former transport systems - the theme of Journeys resonates through archaeology. Journeys happen at every scale, through space, time and personal experience. Journeys include daily commutes, trade routes and migrations. Journeys cross land and sea or take place within yourself at a personal level.

Journeys - of and within people - traverse all genres and eras from prehistory to the modern day, a journey encompasses careers and volunteering (either from youth or a midlife change) to a journey of recovery and/or discovery.

We hope the theme of Journeys will help people discover the archaeology that is all around them. It will flow throughout the 2022 Festival in a myriad of ways from the obvious, such as pilgrimage, roads, canals and railways to the wider influence of folklore, customs, beliefs, traditions, knowledge and language.

In the past, groups and organisations in Wales have contributed greatly to the festival, with guided walks, museum exhibitions, digital talks and online resources. In the lead up to the festival, we will be releasing our resource area which has a wealth of guides, tools and tips for festival event organisers, as well as ways for individuals to get involved and take part throughout the event.

The 2021 festival guided walks took place in Anglesey and were a particular highlight. We hope that other Welsh guided walks can take place for 2022, and we are already in conversation with some organisations who are preparing for the festival. Event organisers can use our Organiser Materials which can be found on the new Festival of Archaeology website <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/festival.html>. These include 'Event Guides' to help you make you Festival event inclusive and welcoming for all, Guides for marketing and photography, health and safety, top tips for youth engagement and even evaluation tools.

Please contact our Festival Coordinator Debbie Frearson festival@archaeologyuk.org if you have any questions. We look forward to your involvement either as an organiser or a participant in this year's Festival.



AN UNDERGROUND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE LLANYMYNECH OGOF COPPER MINE (POWYS)

Simon Timberlake, Phil Andrews, John Pickin, Anthony Gilmour & Brenda Craddock

A small team from the Early Mines Research Group undertook some preliminary work at the Llanymynech Ogof in September 2021 following receipt of SMC from Cadw, and after a year's delay due to Covid measures.

The Ogof is the best known of a series of shallow, early mineworkings for copper and lead located within the interior of the large hillfort on Llanymynech Hill, the western edge of which is followed by Offa's Dyke. The mine was last investigated by prospecting miners in 1823, but since the end of the 18th century these labyrinthine and still open passages had attracted the attention of antiquarians such as Thomas Pennant and William Davies (1796) following the discovery of Roman coins, skeletal remains and mining tools, and more recently through explorations undertaken by cavers. An archaeological evaluation of the 19th century mined Shaft Chamber was carried out in 2016 following the discovery of human skeletal remains and evidence of damage to this monument (CPAT Report no.1407), but to date no serious attempt has been made to try and date the workings, or for that matter to interpret the existing cave surveys in an archaeologically meaningful way. A hammerstone, possibly a mining tool, was found inside the mine close to the entrance in 1996 (AW36,69), whilst there is a record of two antler picks (since lost) found by cavers in the 1990s (Adams & Pearce 1992) within a working located close to the exterior entrance of the mine. Because of this interest, and the continuing threat to the monument from un-licensed digging, it was proposed to re-survey the main easily-accessible portion of the workings and to section some of the calcreted (flowstone-cemented) underground mining spoil to recover samples for dating, either by C14 or by another archaeometric technique.

Small slot-like sections were chisel-cut at three different locations within the main Entrance Passage, and one within the earlier (now-blocked) lower entrance north of the Mandible Chamber. All of these excavations returned small amounts of charcoal that were found enclosed within the calcite or limestone breccia, although in the case of the latter this came from clay extracted from a mine spoil-filled trench located within the floor of the low-roofed blocked entrance passage. Within this entrance series at least two to three different phases of pre-gunpowder pick and wedge-cut working were identified; all of these 'cave-like' in appearance on account of the ubiquitous covering of the part-mined / part-natural limestone walls with variable amounts of speleothem.

No artefacts were uncovered during this investigation, although occasional traces of burning were noted upon the rock, though it was not possible to say whether

these had anything to do with firesetting. Much more likely, given the very small quantity of charcoal recovered, this came from the use of torches as a source of underground lighting.

In advance of the results of wood species analysis and radiocarbon (therefore a likely indication of the earliest period(s) of mining activity) the most interesting discovery of this investigation was the realization that we were probably looking at a part-mined natural cave system. The lower passage it seemed began as an artificially widened solution feature, and the means by which the earliest miners gained

access to and worked the small but variable amounts of oxidized copper ores (copper and zinc carbonates) present.

Given the discovery of Iron Age copper smelting furnaces at Llanymynech and nearby Domgay Lane, Four Crosses (T.Young), Early-Middle Iron Age mining would seem to be more likely than Roman mining, with which the Ogof is usually linked. This possibility seems to be borne out by the current fieldwork evidence, yet the truth of the matter may be more complex than this, with earlier and later dates reflecting a much wider range of activity. This will only be fully resolved once whole full system has been properly investigated and phased.



Speleothem-covered mine passage at the lower sampling site: underground within the Ogof



**Fframwaith Ymchwil ar gyfer Archaeoleg Cymru
Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales**

**Cynhadledd ar Thema
Oes yr Efydd Hwyr ac Oes yr Haearn
Late Bronze Age & Iron Age Theme Conference**



**Adolygiad o'r fframwaith ddrafft
Yn cyflwyno enghreifftiau yn seiliedig ar waith diweddar**

**Review of draft framework
Presentation of case studies of recent work**

**Dydd Mercher / Wednesday
Ebrill 27ain / 27th April
17.00 : 19:00 ar/on Zoom**

The second mini conference for the current Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales, current rewrite. Tickets are by donation.

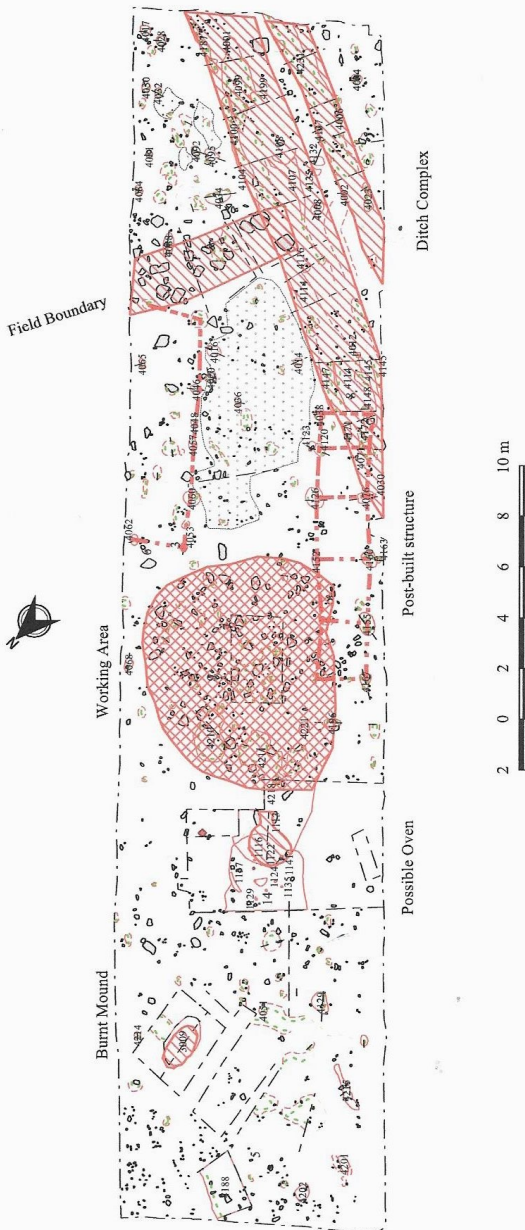
For tickets go to

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/research-framework-later-bronze-age-and-iron-age-conference-tickets-289475608337?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

Clwydian Range Archaeology Group : Moel Arthur Excavation 2021

(Nannerch SJ 145 664)

P. Culver (on behalf of CRAG)



After a year with no excavation because of the Covid 19 pandemic, CRAG volunteers, under the direction of Dr Ian Brooks, returned in July 2021 to the site on the Northern flank of Moel Arthur in the Clwydian hills for a month long excavation. The aim was to link the past five years of excavations with a 10m x 47m trench running adjacent to, and to the NE of the previous trenches. This trench also incorporated the 2013 (Burnt mound) trench and the 2015 (Beehive hearth) trench. (See reports on the Clwydian Range Archaeology Group website).

The Features Exposed (Fig.1).

A series of straight, deliberately cut channels, probably to drain the slope higher up, crossed the trench diagonally, linking to those excavated in 2017 & 2018. To the NE of this channel the 2013 and 2015 trenches were re-excavated exposing the trough of the burnt mound, with its filling of heated stones, and also aspects of the beehive oven/hearth discovered in 2015. To the SE of these there was an area of inter-connecting hollows containing scatters of stones, some of which appeared to be worked. A portable axe polishing stone (a 'Polissoir') was found in this area (Fig.2).

Fig. 1. Plan of Trench 21 with the main features



Fig.2. *Polishing Stone ('Polissoir') in situ.*

This section of the trench was provisionally interpreted as a working area where people had sat (several large flat stones could have been used benches) occupied in activities which are at present unclear. Further to the East, a double line of large boulders running at right angles to the line of ditches appeared to act as some kind of boundary. Between the working area and the ditches, and on a different alignment, ran a double line of six stake holes suggesting a post-built structure, possibly a raised walkway over the boggy ground. The exact nature of the activity being carried out here remains a mystery.

The Conditions.

As in previous years, the weather conditions varied from Mediterranean heat to cold and wet. On occasion the site was abandoned to standing water. Twenty-nine volunteers worked on the site over the period of the month, including six students from various archaeological institutions. Our volunteers remained cheerful in spite of the often extreme conditions and CRAG is grateful to them, and to Ian Brooks, for all their help.

Visitors and Open Day.

Sadly the Open Day on Saturday August 7th was a complete washout, with torrential rain all day. On most other days (at least when the sun was shining) many casual visitors stopped by for a chat as they passed on the Offa's Dyke path nearby and we met a few organized groups from local historical societies. It was noticeable this year that there were far fewer visitors from abroad.

The Finds.

Finds this year included the hammer stones and flint and chert flakes that we have come to expect on this site. Apart from the uncommon 'Polissoir', already mentioned, we found a roughly formed, and partly polished, stone adze (a stone which may have come from Mynydd Rhiw on the Llyn Peninsula) (**Fig.3**), and several stone

pecking tools similar to those deposited in the stream bed in 2017. A small quantity of charcoal was collected and it is hoped to send this for C14 dating.



Fig.3. Roughly polished stone 'adze'.

CBA Wales: New Committee Members Sought!

After two years without a formal AGM there will need to be a general regularisation of the membership of the committee as a number of honorary officers and committee members are now beyond their official three-year term of office.

Most of the honorary officers are eligible for re-election for a second three-year term. The Treasurer, however, has reached the end of his second three-year term, and so by the constitution is not eligible to stand again at this year's AGM.

The committee as a whole is down to about half its strength in ordinary committee members. After the 2019 AGM there were already three unfilled places and two years without an AGM has seen three committee members reach the end of their term of office. A further member of the committee will reach the end of his second three-year term at this year's AGM

Anyone interested in joining the committee or willing to take on the role of Treasurer, please get in touch: with either the Chairman, Mike Greene (greenefate@hotmail.co.uk) or Secretary, Evan Chapman (evan.chapman@museumwales.ac.uk)

New lease of life for former parish church?

N. Vousden, Menter Silian

Redundant parish churches are becoming common across rural Wales, as congregations decline and the Church in Wales moves towards a more central delivery model. You may remember the discovery, in 2013, of a 9th- to 10th-century cross-carved stone (Silian 3) in a stream outside St Sulien's Church ([NPRN 402554](#)) near Lampeter. Perhaps you visited the church during EMWARG's fieldtrip the following year. It stands within a curvilinear churchyard, itself mirrored by a concentric field boundary representing a possible outer enclosure. A second piece of 9th- to 10th-century stone sculpture (Silian 2) lies loose within the church and a 5th- to 6th-

century inscribed stone (Silian 1) in the south wall commemorates *Silbandus*, probably the individual from which church and settlement derive their names. A Romanesque font bowl, with four projecting carved heads, is part of a regional group of stylistically similar fonts in the Teifi Valley. The evidence suggests a site of significance and patronage into the medieval period.

The current building (unlisted) is a simple, Victorian, rural church, constructed on earlier foundations in 1872–3. Designed by R.J. Withers, its unusual, geometrical bellcote showcases his later, more adventurous work. The interior has its original fittings, including alter, pine pews and choir stalls. The east window is unique as the only known example in Wales of the work of A.E. Lemmon, Arts and Crafts artisan and prominent member of the Bromsgrove Guild. Three lancets depict the Divine Teacher, the Annunciation and Dewi Sant, commemorating the life of John

Stewart (first headmaster of Silian National School), his wife and son. The portraits in each bottom panel are thought to be a true likeness of the three (see front cover).



Today, Silian is typical of small rural communities in West Wales, with no amenities and in one of Wales' most deprived areas in terms of access to services. The church, a focal point at the village centre, lies redundant. As such, the building is at risk and its contents could be removed, which would sever their direct relationship with the site. This would result in the break-up of the collection of carved stones (Silian 1 being incorporated into the building fabric) and the window would be unlikely to remain in Britain due to a lack of repositories for redundant stained glass.

The former church is central to community identity and its sense of place within the wider locality. It also offers the only potential for an indoor community space. To this end, villagers formed a Community Benefit Society (CBS) and the Church in Wales has agreed to a long-term lease. The CBS (Menter Silian) will seek project funding to transform the building into a multi-purpose community hub. A feasibility study found the project viable and a 5-year business plan has just been completed. A key challenge is the adaption of a historic building for modern-day use, retaining its character while providing a comfortable, multi-functional space. It must also be financially sustainable and will offer small-scale tourist accommodation as a means of income.



The interior fixtures and fittings, many donated by local families, are an integral part of parish history and (together with the architecture and archaeology) they tell the story of Silian and its people. The aim is therefore to retain or reuse wherever possible. Although the only scheduled artefact is currently Silian 2, the regional sites and monuments inspector has now recommended the other stones and medieval font for scheduling. The community will continue liaising with

Cadw to ensure they are protected during capital works and that their appropriate display and interpretation is incorporated into the final building design.

Success depends on a range of factors, including mutually productive relationships with key organisations such as the Church in Wales, heritage bodies and the local authority. Strong community support will remain critical, as will the dedication and long-term commitment of Menter Silian (whose volunteer directors must maintain and develop expertise in numerous different areas). The amount of capital investment needed is significant. Moving forward the project will be largely dependent on the availability of appropriate grant funding. If successful, however, it is hoped that the model may be suitable for other communities facing similar challenges.

To follow the project, see our Facebook page, [Hen Eglwys Silian Old Church](#).

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CBA Wales Autumn AGM:

Save the date!

CBA Wales is planning to hold its Autumn AGM on Saturday October 1st in Welshpool. Details to follow nearer the time.

Honorary Auditor required!

Honorary Auditor required to review CBA Wales/Cymru accounts. This is a voluntary position and requires knowledge of annual balance sheets and accounts. All enquires to Dr Gary Robinson g.robinson@bangor.ac.uk

If you are receiving this newsletter by post, you either do not have or have not given us your most recent e-mail address. Given the recent increase in online archaeological activity, if you would now like to provide us with an e-mail address which you are happy for us to use for CBA Wales mailings, please contact the Membership Secretary, kathy.laws@hotmail.co.uk

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Archaeology in Wales

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