

Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig
WALES • CYMRU
Council for British Archaeology

*Strata Florida open day excavation
of cobbled surface at Strata Florida
farmhouse*



COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY
CBA Wales/Cymru
CYNGOR ARCHAEOLEG BRYDEINIG
<http://britarch.ac.uk/cbawales>

Newsletter 54 Autumn 2017

A Royal visit, the Holy Grail and new mysteries in Wales

The Welsh launch of the CBA's 2017 Festival of Archaeology took place at the Celebrating Strata Florida event in Ceredigion. Strata Florida is the site of a former Cistercian monastery which was of immense importance to Wales during the Middle Ages. The current project has been researching the site and its environs for over 18 years and hopes to conserve the later farm buildings and house, built from the abbey ruins, as a training, accommodation and heritage centre. As part of the lead up to this event, Cy Griffiths (Director, CBA Cymru) was invited to meet with HRH the Prince of Wales who also had a tour of the buildings and examined the legendary Nanteos Cup, sometimes called the Welsh Holy Grail, which was discovered in the farmhouse. The cup is a late C13th battered mazer cup, made of wych elm. Records from the C19th state that anyone drinking from the cup would be cured of disease. The weekend of activities on the site was enjoyed by over 600 people and included talks, guided walks, displays, performances by the Freemen of Gwent and the Ledbury Waytes, exhibitions and hands on events such as our open excavation and geophysics demonstrations using new technologies, which discovered previously unknown buildings within the abbey precinct, including one with an apse. This could alter the entire interpretation and understanding of this part of the site and is an exciting find possibly leading to further excavation in the future. The festivities were rounded off with a traditional Twmpath (barn dance) in the local village on Saturday and a celebration of 1000 years of worship at Strata Florida on Sunday.

David Austin



Left: The prince visiting Strata Florida and meeting Cy Griffiths. Right: Excavating the cobbled surface by Strata Florida farmhouse as part of the open day activities

‘A Walk Through Time’

Earlier this summer Cy Griffiths (Director, CBA Cymru) held two well attended guided walks at Gilfach Nature Reserve, Rhayader as part of the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust’s ‘Exploring Gilfach’ project. The wild and apparently natural landscape contains the likely evidence of human occupation, use and management for over 3000 years with many hidden archaeological features from the Bronze age to the industrial era which were revealed to visitors on the day.

The majority of the abundant archaeological and historic sites within the Gilfach reserve are spread across the south facing slope to the north of the Afon Marteg. Many features have been identified but not dated or there are conflicts in the official records, providing opportunities for fieldwork and investigation, in order to unravel the story and historical development of the Marteg Valley. Many sites are also hard to recognise in the landscape but also provide opportunities for interpretation. It is hoped that this will form the basis of a community archaeology project in the future.

It appears that there was substantial pre-historic human presence, possibly as a ritual or funerary site with a surviving bronze age cairn visible on the southern slope.



A possible road and ford between marching camps outside the area provides evidence of the Roman occupation of Wales, while in the medieval period there seems to have been substantial rural settlement of the valley slopes which was later abandoned. Post medieval there is evidence of industrial use for quarrying and mining, while the Victorian period brought further change with the construction of the Mid Wales Railway through the valley.

Visitors learned about the formation of the existing landscape with the aid of historic maps and postulated on theories of earlier occupation.



The remains of Medieval longhouses and farming enclosures were identified on the ground by using human ‘corner posts’ and welcome refreshments were consumed at the farmyard complex, where we examined the cow byre of the surviving Medieval farmhouse. We followed the route of the Monk’s Trod, an ancient road across the Cambrian Mountains linking the C12th Cistercian religious centres of Abbey Cwmhir in Radnorshire to the Strata Florida Abbey in the west. We then explored the relics of the Mid Wales railway, engineered by Benjamin Piercy, a Montgomeryshire man with international credentials for railway construction, and notable for being involved with virtually every engineering project that brought railways into Wales and ended up with a fun mini quiz about the archaeology we had seen through the day.

Following requests from those who were unable to attend on the day, we hope to repeat the walks in the future and work with the Trust to further develop the heritage aspects of their project, especially by providing opportunities for community participation.

From Parch Marks to Community Project

The site at Blaen Bowi (SN 320, 350) is a working farm which has been in the same family since the early 1900s. In the dry summer of 2006, Melfydd Jones, the current owner's father, sketched parch marks from one of the fields that seemed to show rooms or enclosures.

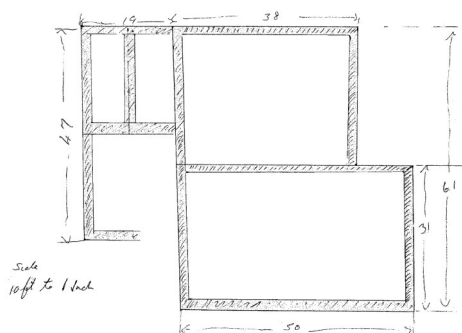


Figure 1. Sketch map of parch marks. M. Jones 2006

Whilst the First edition 1" OS map of 1830 seems to show buildings in this field, marked Llan Bowi, these do not appear in any subsequent or earlier mapping.

In 2015 the current owner, Guto Jones, arranged for a community group, Prosiect Archaeoleg a Hanes Cwmsidan, to be formed to co-ordinate the research/investigation into the site. They arranged for initial topographic and geophysical surveys to be made.

The topographic survey, over the area of interest, indicated a series of level areas and ridges suggesting buildings and paddocks.

The magnetometer survey, conducted by Dyfed Archaeological Trust, revealed several interesting features outside the area of the parch marks, but was not able to detect the presence of distinct walls amongst the rubble. It showed that the field boundaries are in fact three-part structures having a low magnetic response sandwiched between two areas of high responses suggesting that these boundaries were in a form akin to a track-way with banks/ditches on either side. The survey also indicated that north of the field boundary there are a series of enclosures on a slightly different orientation to those south of the boundary.

All available aerial photography was examined but has not revealed additional information on the area of the parch marks.

In 2015, based on the results of these surveys, and under the guidance of James Meek MCIa from Dyfed Archaeological Trust, an initial trench excavation was made. A wall was found amongst a mass of in-fill. This, on removal of the remaining in-fill, appeared to be the three sides of an inglenook fireplace.

The quality of the stone work was of good quality suggesting a high status building.

The finds comprise various sherds of pottery and the pottery recovered from within the backfill of the building predominately dates from the 17th to 18th Centuries, with the earliest datable evidence of occupation being a clay pipe stamped with the gauntlet mark, circa 1660.

Encouraged by this (and with assistance from our small band of volunteers and grants from Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society and Cambrian Archaeological Trust) the group has undertaken further excavations over approximately 20 days during 2016 - 17. These have revealed the single, multi-phase, structure shown in figure 2. Various possibilities for this building have been considered, (ie. long house, clove structure, mill), although no conclusions have as yet been reached.



Figure 2. View of excavated building. July 2017

It has been suggested the site may be one of a succession of farm buildings positioned progressively over time higher up the hillside from another site lower in the valley to the current Blaen Bowi farm.

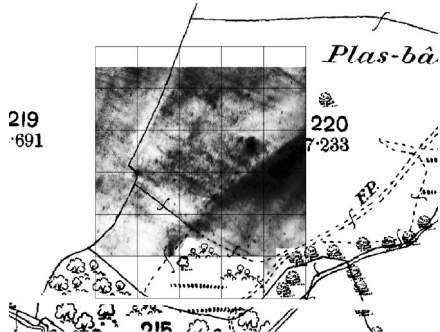


Figure 3. Resistance Survey or area north of excavation. White is high response. Overlay is O.S. 1st Edition County Series 1:2500 map.

A resistivity survey by Dr Tim Southern using a RM 15 (Geoscan Research Ltd. Basic model) attached, in order to get the best possible data response, to a new GST-02 Survey frame that has been developed by GST Ltd. (www.geophysicaltechnologies.co.uk). The survey was conducted in parallel walking mode with 1600 grid points per 20m square. The survey indicates a very complicated palimpsest which includes further possible rectilinear structures, tracks and enclosures. The data was processed using Terrasurveyor software and has only been clipped to improved presentation.

The community group hopes to undertake further excavations in the future as funding allows. They would welcome volunteers and they will post future dates on their Facebook page,



Figure 4. "Happy band of volunteers"

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/Prosiect-Archeoleg-a-Hanes-Blaen-Bowy-Archeology-History-Project-110339889396760/>

Tim Southern, Ed Ferriman, James Meek. Prosiect Archaeoleg a Hanes Cwmsidan / Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Community Archaeology in the Clwydian Hill Range

The Clwydian Range Archaeology Group (CRAG) has completed another productive excavation season on Moel Arthur. This 456m-high hill lies on the border of Flintshire and Denbighshire, forming part of the Clwydian hill range, and is crowned by a hillfort of probable Iron Age date. As in previous years, the group has continued to investigate the upland plateau area lying just to the north of the hillfort. The previous CRAG digs have indicated human activity in this upland area spanning thousands of years; flints are associated with the Mesolithic period onwards, and a structure thought to be a burnt mound has been dated to the early Bronze Age. This year's excavation concentrated on an area immediately adjacent to the burnt mound feature that was found in 2013. The main feature revealed by the 17m x 7m trench was a central palaeo-channel - possibly the location of the ancient river bed which would have supplied the water for activities taking place at the burnt mound site. A large quantity of stone tools was found during the excavation, and particularly exciting was an unusual collection found in association with the palaeo-channel. These unusual tools are made from limestone and appear to have been used as pecking tools – the range of sizes and shapes suggest this was an extensive prehistoric tool-kit!

The excavation site lies close to the Offa's Dyke national trail and many of the passing walkers were fascinated by the archaeology which was unfolding! Many more visitors walked up the hill specifically to visit the excavation.

The Clwydian Range Archaeology Group is a group of volunteers who aim to share their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for local archaeology with the wider community. The group was fortunate this year to receive Heritage Lottery funding which has enabled Ian Brooks of Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd to act as Site Director and to provide training for seven site supervisors. It is intended this training will allow the group to continue further archaeological exploration of the Moel Arthur area in coming seasons. A geophysical survey, carried out by EAS Ltd and CRAG in 2014, has revealed several interesting anomalies which warrant further investigation.

An excavation report for the 2017 season is forthcoming and an exhibition will be held at Loggerheads Country Park later this year. Thanks are due to the excavation volunteers, CRAG steering committee, Ian Brooks, Fiona Gale and Denbighshire Countryside Services.

Some of the stone tools found during CRAG's 2017 excavation



Cardiff Archaeological Society
The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain & Ireland

The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland Achievements and Aspirations

by Dr Ron Baxter FSA and Dr David Robinson FSA

Thursday 19 October 2017, 7.15pm
Main Building, Cardiff University, Park Place, Cardiff CF10 3AT



St Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr (Powys), mid-12th-century Romanesque tympanum above the south doorway
(© Crown Copyright: RCAHMW).

The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland (CRSBI) was launched with British Academy support in 1988, and is today affiliated to King's College London. The aim is to record all of the stone sculpture produced in our islands between about 1066 and 1200.

This lecture will review the achievements of the Corpus to date. The sites already online (www.crsbi.ac.uk) are supported by more than 90,000 images. The second half of the lecture will outline aspirations for Wales, looking at Romanesque sculpture from across the country.

On Friday 20 October, Ron Baxter and David Robinson will be running a training session at Llandaff Cathedral, from 10.00am to 3.00pm. The day is open to all who may be interested in becoming a fieldworker for the Corpus, or in simply finding out more about our work.

Dr Ron Baxter is the Research Director of CRSBI
Dr David Robinson is an independent historian and writer

Archaeology in Wales Conference 2017-18 - Book the Date!

CBA Wales will be holding its first annual archaeological conference on the 13th, 14th and 15th April 2018 at Lampeter, Ceredigion. On offer will be an assortment of special trips out, presentations, activities, speakers, CPD and social events all set in lovely Mid-Wales and suitable for professionals, amateurs or simply anyone interested in the archaeology of Wales. We will be presenting findings from some of the last year's most exciting projects and visiting some exceptional places. Arrangements are ongoing but there will be a choice of day tickets or full residential, with CBA members getting a special discount! Booking will be available later in the year but put the date in your diary now, so you don't miss out.

News from YAC at the Garden

I am glad to announce that the new Young Archaeologists' Club at the National Botanic Garden of Wales is a great success! Club members keep returning and learning and enjoying themselves, and so far there have always been between 20 and 25 attendees per session, with a total of 35 enrolled.

The YAC's advertised age range is 8-16, but there were many under-eights who were very keen to join in (often younger siblings) so I decided that as long as their parents stayed with them it would be alright. It has turned out to be the right decision: The club has a real family feel now, and the parents are all eager to assist when they can and I value their input immensely. We currently have members who are mainly between the ages of 8 and 11, but the youngest is 4 and the eldest 14. The age range of the volunteers who help me run the club is also broad – we have a 17-year old history student at one extreme and a 70-year old retired pilot at the other. Nine people volunteer on-and-off and provide invaluable mentoring and support.

The Garden has welcomed the club with open arms, providing free entrance for YAC members and a parent, and use of their science classroom and its equipment. Bit-by-bit we are learning about the extensive Post-Medieval history and archaeology of the Garden and it is easy to find activities to complement it. For example, it is thought that brick-making and -firing took place south of the walled-garden, so we have learned about brick kilns and excavated five small test pits as part of the Festival of Archaeology. We did find brick, and also lots of clay and the walled-garden rubbish-dump! Leading on from this we will make small clay pots and bricks and then fire them outside in a pit-kiln.

If you know of any other youngsters in the area who would like to join in please do pass them my contact details: Alice Day; yacatthegarden@gmail.com; 07484 142886. Thank you all for continuing to support the CBA and the running of the YAC. With funding-cuts and no-more-A-level-archaeology it seems more important than ever that there are places where young people can learn the stories and science of their heritage and reap the benefits for themselves and their future society.

Other activities so far have included washing and learning about all manner of different archaeological artefacts, augering, dam-building, designing a coat of arms, analysing aerial photography and exploring archaeological sites named after Merlin. Archaeological fieldwork is currently ongoing at the Garden, which also helps to keep us occupied. Dyfed Archaeological Trust is due to start a programme of geophysical survey and trial-trench evaluation in the area north of previous excavations that explored the elder 17th-century Middleton Hall. This is taking place ahead of large-scale works to restore two dried-up lakes during the HLF-funded re-creation of Sir William Paxton's stunning Regency-era water park and the parkland landscape around it. YAC at the Garden will be given many opportunities to take part in the project.

Louise Austin and Angharad Phillips of the Regency Restoration team at the Garden are two of the club's volunteers and this really enhances our special link with the Garden. They each made a large contribution to running the Festival of Archaeology Day, which aside from test-pitting also involved several related activities such as finds washing, walks, talks, and the organisation of stands for local history and archaeology groups.



Test-pit excavation at the National Botanic Garden of Wales during the Festival of Archaeology (permission of Cliff Day)

The Offa's Dyke Collaboratory

The publication of Keith Ray and Ian Bapty's book *Offa's Dyke: Landscape and Hegemony in Eighth-Century Britain* (Windgather, 2016) provides a valuable impetus for fostering new collaborative projects on the linear earthworks of the modern Anglo-Welsh border. In this context, five convenors (Dr Paul Belford, Director, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust; Andrew Blake, AONB Officer, Wye Valley AONB; Christopher Catling, Secretary, RCAHMW; Dr Keith Ray, Director, Nexus Heritage; Professor Howard Williams, University of Chester) have established the 'Offa's Dyke Collaboratory' (ODC).

The ODC aims to be a research network of individuals, groups and organisations working to promote and support the investigation of Offa's Dyke, Wat's Dyke, and related monuments including the Whitford dykes and the 'short dykes' of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands. We hope the ODC will promote and sustain investigations of their date, composition, monumental biographies, landscape situations and settings, as well as parallels with other monuments elsewhere.

The ODC was launched via a day workshop at the University Centre Shrewsbury on Friday 28 April 2017, co-organised with Dr James Pardoe (Director of Design, Heritage & the Built Environment, University Centre Shrewsbury) and Dr Patricia Murieta-Flores (Director, Digital Humanities Research Centre, University of Chester). To this workshop, we invited over 70 academics, heritage practitioners and representatives of institutions and organisations actively involving in managing and researching dykes. This coincides with the development of a Conservation Plan for Offa's Dyke by Cadw, Historic England and the Offa's Dyke Association.

The programme for the day included a keynote by Dr Keith Ray setting out the foci and parameters of the ODC, and a rich and varied series of short talks on key issues relating to recent and ongoing research. The talks revealed exciting new information on a wealth of topics, including a consideration of the challenge of dating dykes, new evidence from the distribution of Old English and Welsh place-name evidence, the latest stray finds associated with the environs of the monuments, and the relationship with Anglo-Norman castle locations. Papers also considered the latest work on overland communication routes and their relationship with linear earthworks, and comparative work on Wansdyke. The history of work on Offa's Dyke and the many unanswered questions about it, and progress on the Offa's Dyke Conservation Plan were also presented.

The afternoon involved a roundtable discussion of key themes that drew out both common understandings, but also some stark differences of opinion, regarding potential future strategies for surveying and excavating the dykes. Concluding thoughts on the day were presented by Dr Andy Seaman (Canterbury Christchurch University).

One key result of the first workshop was a strand running through many of the presentations: to question the primacy of attention on Offa's Dyke given the rising importance of Wat's Dyke for understanding the Anglo-Welsh border during the 9th-11th centuries AD. Still, the discussion identified many important questions for all of these linear earthworks that will drive current and future research.

To provide a digital platform for the ODC, already containing a series of documents linked to the workshop, and a blog open to ODC members, we have set up a website: <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/>. Future events organised in relation to the ODC include:

Saturday 21st October 2017 – A second workshop, provisionally booked for at the Offa's Dyke Centre, Knighton. Check the ODC website for details;

Wednesday 13th December 2017 – Frontiers & Archaeology – Past & Present. This will be a one-day free & open-to-all conference. It will be organised by University of Chester archaeology students and held at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester;

18–20th December 2017 – Dykes Through Time: Rethinking Early Medieval Linear Earthworks. Conference session to be held at the Theoretical Archaeology Group conference, Cardiff University.

The ODC is open to all those actively involved in researching and conserving the Anglo-Welsh dykes and those investigating comparable monuments. Contact Professor Howard Williams (howard.williams@chester.ac.uk) if you wish to join.



EMWARG Colloquium 2017: Recent Research and Excavation in Wales, Saturday 7 October – Sunday 8 October 2017

Recent Research and Excavation in Wales, Saturday 7 October – Sunday 8 October 2017

This group (EMWARG) brings together all those with an interest in the archaeology of Wales c. AD 400–1100. EMWARG aims to promote research on early medieval Wales and meets biannually in different parts of Wales to discuss new projects, recent excavations and other discoveries.

It last met in Welshpool in 2015. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the group a multi-disciplinary conference on 'The Archaeology of Early Medieval Wales – IN CONTEXT' was held in Bangor in 2009. For news of meetings, events and discoveries, find us on Facebook.

Deadline for registration: Wednesday 20th September 2017. To register go to: <http://emwarg.bangor.ac.uk/register.php.en>

And to view the program go to: <http://emwarg.bangor.ac.uk/programme.php.en>

This colloquium has been organised by:

Professor Nancy Edwards (School of History and Archaeology, Bangor University)

Marion Shiner (Dyfed Archaeological Trust/ Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield).

The Colloquium is sponsored by:



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES
CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

Home Front Legacy 1914-18

Home Front Legacy 1914-18 is your opportunity get involved in archaeology and record the forgotten remains of the First World War Home Front.

Home Front Legacy 1914-18 is a UK wide archaeological recording project coinciding with the centenary of the First World War (World War One), co-ordinated by the Council for British Archaeology with funding from Historic England.

We need you to research and record your local Home Front sites, buildings and events. You don't need any prior experience to get involved, and everything you need is provided free through the Home Front Legacy website. Your research can help us to better understand the impact the Great War had on the buildings, landscapes and people back home on the Home Front.

Investigating your local area may reveal forgotten practice trenches, dug by soldier's during their training, like those at Penally (Grid reference: SS11249858). You could stumble across a First World War explosive factory on your doorstep, such as the Nobel Dynamite Factory at Pembrey (Grid reference: SN41320006). Or discover your house was turned into a Red Cross hospital to treat wounded soldiers, like the Balmoral Hotel (Grid Reference: SH7841882105) in Llandudno.

So far, our volunteer contributors have recorded over 3,000 sites throughout the UK; but there's still much more to be re-discovered. Who knows what you might find!

Find out more and register at www.homefrontlegacy.org.uk to find out more and access our browser based recording app.

You can also follow us on Twitter [@HomeFrontLegacy](https://twitter.com/HomeFrontLegacy) and give our Facebook page a like at [/HomeFrontLegacy](https://www.facebook.com/HomeFrontLegacy) to keep up to date with all things Home Front Legacy. Like the sound of Home Front Legacy 1914-18? Why not become a Home Front Legacy Champion! We are looking for dedicated volunteers to promote the project and encourage others to record sites in their local area. Contact the Home Front Legacy team at homefrontlegacy@archaeologyUK.org to find out more.



**CBA WALES/CYMRU Autumn Business Meeting and Symposium
Saturday October 14th 2017**

The Royal Oak, The Cross, Welshpool SY21 7DG

Business meeting: 10:45
Annual General Meeting CBA11.30
Annual general meeting CIFA 12.00
Lunch Break 12.45
Symposium 13.45-16.00

Future meetings

The spring meeting will be held at Lampeter during the Archaeology in Wales Conference on the weekend of 14th and 15th April 2018. For further details check the website www.cbawales.archaeologyuk.org

Newsletter Editors

Items for inclusion in the newsletter should be sent to:

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