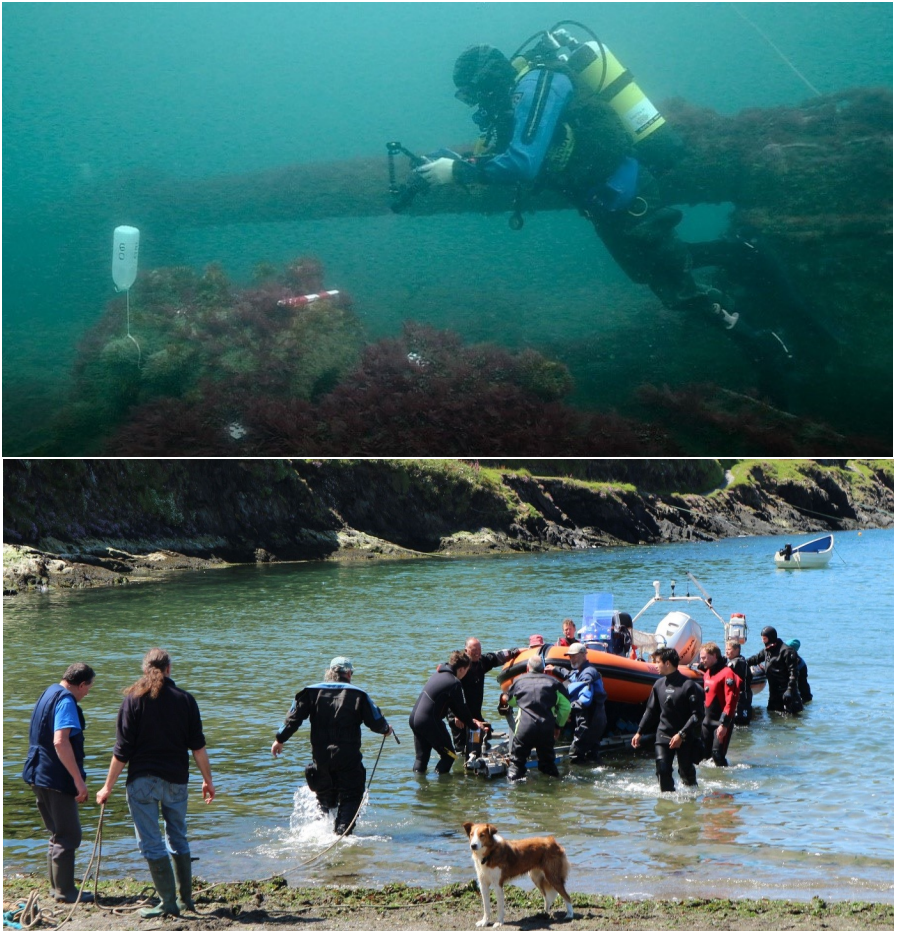


Council for British Archaeology

Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig

Wales/Cymru



Newsletter 58 Autumn 2019

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

Volunteers unlock Chirk's past

Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) returned to Chirk Castle in June to continue community archaeological investigations in the parkland and grounds around the castle. Funding for the project was provided by Cadw, the National Trust and the Clwydian Range and Deeside AONB.

This year's work focused on re-visiting Offa's Dyke to answer outstanding questions from excavations in 2018 which revealed a 3m deep steep sided ditch along with a shallow pit or ditch terminus beneath the remains of the bank. Investigations were also carried out to assess the potential remains of lost formal gardens in the lawns to the north of the castle. These are indicated on an 18th Century drawing and suggested by parch marks seen in the 2018 dry spell. A trench was also excavated to confirm the location of a building, of unknown date and function, which appears on Estate maps dating to the 1700s. A finds lab/exhibition space was also set up to allow volunteers to get experience of finds processing and to provide a point for visitors to call in and examine finds from the excavation, view information about the estate and the project and to ask questions.



Over 40 volunteers took part over a two-week period. The beginning of the dig saw some truly dreadful weather and credit must go to the team for sticking with it. The team was made up of National Trust volunteers, CPAT volunteers and students from Chester University. Guided tours were offered every afternoon for visitors to see the Offa's Dyke trench, along with the options to call into the finds lab, to view trenches near the castle and talk to the volunteers at any time. The excavation also hosted two budding archaeologists, winners of a Council for British Archaeology Young Archaeologist Club competition, who joined the team for a day as part of their prize.



Above: Bailing out

Right: 3m deep Offa's Dyke ditch section

In the garden, the team uncovered a lost Ha Ha (a sunken fence), and evidence for a made surface, perhaps a path or base for a garden feature where they were looking for formal gardens.

The location of the lost building, below the stable yard, was also confirmed. This appeared to be a reasonably substantial building with the remains of at least two hearths surviving in the floor. It was the most productive in terms of artefacts both associated with its use and rubbish thrown into it after it had gone out of use, it being close to the Castle. This “rubbish” included ceramic tiles and painted window glass associated with decorative schemes installed by the architect AW Pugin and his son EW Pugin in the 1840s. Further examination of the artefacts and review of historic records will help to tell its story but it seems likely that the building was some sort of workshop.



Uncovering a hearth within a lost building at Chirck castle

At the same time excavation of the sequence of deposits in the Offa's Dyke excavation trench was completed. The excavation revealed that the Dyke embankment was approximately 11m wide at the base. The lower layers survived up to half a meter at the centre of the bank. The pit beneath the Dyke embankment was found to be at least 3m in diameter and 0.45m deep. Charcoal material together with OSL (Optically Stimulated Luminescence) samples, sufficient for dating purposes, were recovered from the Dyke embankment and from the base of the pit.

The programme of post excavation analysis is now underway. CPAT will assess all the results and send off samples for analyses to complete the excavation report later in the year.



Excavating a lost Ha Ha in front of Chirk Castle

Clwydian Range Archaeology Group

The Clwydian Range Archaeology Group returned to the northern flanks of Moel Arthur, Flintshire, to continue their excavation of a site of possible Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date. This year's trench extended last year's trench excavation to the south-east with a trench 20 x 20 m being dug. In previous years activity associated with an abandoned stream channel paleochannel (can you briefly explain what that is?) was investigated including and a series of unusual stone pecking tools were found on the stream bed itself. This year's excavation was further away from the head of the paleochannel and recorded a number of features suggesting a continuation of the activity.



Plate 1: "Oval" Structure from Moel Arthur.

Along one side of the trench was a flat platform cut into the slope of the hill, unfortunately no structures were located on this platform.

However, within the main area of the excavation an oval structure (Plate 1) was located. This was 6.7 x 5.3 m in size and was defined by a shallow, slightly irregular gully with a series of stake-holes along its inner lip edge. Whilst this may be a building, no door posts were located and there were no associated finds to suggest a possible date. It did, however appear to sit within the one corner of a fenced enclosure with a series of post-holes defining an “L” shape. with the oval structure in the corner. A second line of post-holes ran parallel with the longer leg of the “L” with some suggestion that the post-holes were paired with those within the main fence line.



Plate 2: General view of the site

A small “scatter” (four artefacts) of flint artefacts was also found in one corner of the trench, Whilst three of these were simple flakes one had invasive retouch over its dorsal surface suggesting that it was part of the debris from a broken tool which had been re-used as a raw material source.

The project is supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

CBA Wales at the Royal Welsh Show 2019

On four scorching hot days in July, CBA Wales once again encouraged visitors to the Royal Welsh Show to interact with archaeologists – this time including a super popular mini excavation. Our kind friends at CPRW gave us part of their stand, whilst sponsoring the wool handling and shearing competitions. To fit this theme, we joined with Clywd Powys Archaeological Trust to provide a small exhibition about the impact of sheep on our landscape, examples of the archaeological evidence and finds handling, and a number of wool and sheep related ‘have a go’ craft activities including a peg loom and drop spindle. It was, of course, our mini-sheep themed excavation which proved to be the most popular activity with participants aged between 2 and 80 (ish!). Sheep bones and associated artefacts were unearthed again and again, whilst learning how to examine and interpret the evidence we found. Many families returned several times to dig up the past and hopefully we have recruited quite a number of future Young Archaeologists Club members.





Membership News

Kathy Laws was appointed as the new Membership Secretary at the last CBA Wales/Cymru AGM. Membership enquiries can be addressed to Kathy at Afallon, Tanygrisiau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd LL41 3RH, kathy.laws@hotmail.co.uk.

If you are receiving this email as a printed copy through the post this is because you have requested a printed copy or because the e-mail address you have given us is out of date. If you would prefer to receive your Newsletter digitally via email (saving printing and postage costs) please notify Kathy on kathy.laws@hotmail.co.uk of the address you would like it send to.

Data Protection

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the General Data Protection Regulations which came into force in May 2018.

Under the regulations CBA Wales/Cymru needs to make sure that they have the permission of members to hold information on them. We hold names, postal addresses and e.mail addresses for our members. We only hold information that you have sent directly to us through application forms and correspondence either by post or electronically. We use your contact information to send newsletters, Archaeology in Wales and to provide information about forthcoming events. We do not share the information we hold about you. You have the right to withdraw your consent by contacting the Membership Secretary by e.mail or by post at the address above.

OPPORTUNITY

CBA Wales are looking for a new volunteer Editor for our journal Archaeology in Wales. The journal is published once yearly although the latest editions have been delayed due to the vacancy. We are planning to publish combined 2017 and 2018 volumes later this year in order to catch up. The role of editor is voluntary but software will be provided and reasonable expenses paid. A mentor can be allocated if required. This is an ideal opportunity for someone who either has some experience or would like to gain some in the editing of an established national publication.

The new editor would have the support of the CBA Wales committee for the various tasks which include:

Oversee the production of the annual volume of Archaeology in Wales

With the approval of the committee, appoint such assistant editors and other assistance as is beneficial to the production of Archaeology in Wales. All such appointments will automatically lapse at the end of the term of office of the Editor

Work with the Treasurer to ensure publication grants are received

Specific tasks may include:

Liaising with contributors and dealing with enquiries

Organising gazetteer contributions

Allocating book reviews

Arranging for proof reading

Layout and formatting of the journal

Liaising with the printer

The role would initially be for three years with an option to continue for a further three or possibly move positions or retire after that period.

If you are interested in this opportunity or would like further information please contact our Chair: Mike Green,

E-mail: greenefate@hotmail.co.uk

or our Secretary: Evan Chapman, E-mail:

evan.chapman@museumwales.ac.uk.



U-Boat Project 1914–18
(Commemorating the War at Sea)
Nautical Archaeology Society
Field School
(Abercastle 7th - 17th June 2019)



In the Spring Newsletter we outlined plans for a 10-day field school being organised by the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) to be held in Abercastle during June. The event forms part of a 2-year U-Boat Project to commemorate the centenary of the end of World War I that is being coordinated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The main aim of the field school was to record the wreck of the SS Leysian which wrecked in Abercastle Bay on 20th February 1917. However, despite some very cold and unseasonably inclement weather! resulting in diving activities being severely disrupted for 4-days with torrential driving rain, and winds gusted between Force 7-8, straight into Abercastle bay, the field school did still manage to achieve most of its objectives.



Diver photographing the spare propeller boss next to the prop shaft on the wreck of the SS Leysian.

The weather did deter a few people who had planned to attend, but despite the conditions, 90 people turned up representing 14 dive clubs (3 from Wales, 10 from England and 1 from Holland). They brought with them 12 boats, and over the course of the 6-days, when diving was possible, 208 dives were recorded with over 100 man-hours spent underwater, and over the course of the field school almost 10,000 photographs and videos were captured.



Launching & recovering dive boats in Abercastle Bay



The field school based itself in the delightful surroundings of Garn Isaf at Abercastle, where the camp site, B&B and self-catering farmhouse were taken over for the duration, and proved to be the perfect location for the event.

The farmhouse was set up as the event's head-quarters, and the morning briefings & evening de-briefings took place in the informal surroundings of the farmhouse's back garden.

For non-divers, and for divers when diving was blown-out, alternative tasks and activities were offered including:

- visiting local existing known terrestrial heritage sites to record and enhance the existing Welsh Historical Monuments Records.
 - Inspecting three previously un-recorded sites for possible inclusion into the records, including a local derelict granary, collection of cannons and an old sailors Tap House.
 - Using metal detectors on the beach to search the intertidal zone and to record the location of any finds using a total station.
 - Recording the remains of possible foundations on the cliff top above the wreck site that may have been the location of a steam winch used in some of the *Leysian's* salvage operations.
- and a variety of alternative training activities including:
- NAS Recorder & Surveyor Skills courses.
 - An Introduction to Underwater ROV Design, and the practical construction & testing of home built ROVs.
 - Hands-on piloting of a commercial VideoRay ROV
 - An Introduction to Direct Survey Methods (DSM) & using Site Recorder software to process data.
 - An Introduction to Intertidal Surveying using a Total Station and Plane Table.
 - A NAS Tutor / Volunteer training course.

A full report on the field school is currently in the process of being compiled which will include an outline of the historical research leading up to the *Leysian's* wrecking and an ecological analysis of the flora & fauna found on and around the wreck site.

Ian Cundy (Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit)



Obituary: John Masters Lewis

John Masters Lewis, who died on June 4th 2019, was Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments in Wales (1955-1965) and later held the post of Assistant Keeper of Post-Roman Collections at the National Museum of Wales (1965 until his retirement in 1986). It is in this latter job that he will be best remembered, not least because his

John Lewis at Loughor Castle, 1973 invariably cheerful outward appearance and modest approach to his subject paved the way for the archaeology department of the NMW to become a more approachable institution.

In the Spring of 1970, early in our acquaintance, John gave me a lift to a CBA meeting in Swansea, thereafter I excavated with him at Loughor on two occasions and we remained good friends. On one occasion I recall a supermarket foray: John stopped in the tea and coffee aisle. Holding up a jar of instant coffee, his brow furrowed in a feigned effort of remembrance, he looked up to me (he was a short man) and said questioningly 'Douwe Egbert – dunnee play for Neath?'. Music had an important place in John's life. Among the team of Loughor diggers was Malcolm Keogh, who had been an archaeology student at Queen's, Belfast, where he had acquired a patina of Irishness that included a felt hat and a penny flute. In 1970 John gave him a lift down to the dig, all the way Malcolm in his hat playing the flute and John singing alongside as he drove. At the National Museum John revived the Early Christian monuments display and created a new Medieval Gallery. He also wrote the illustrated booklets *Welsh Paving Tiles* (1976) and *Medieval Pottery and Metalware* (1977) and

others, completing a catalogue of The Medieval Tiles of Wales and sections of the revised Early Christian Monuments in retirement. Externally the NMW was a forbidding building, beyond the public areas of the interior in the 1970s the museum was a honeycomb of grey and dusty passages, with occasional offices lit by fluorescent tubes. Hubert Savory and George Boon, with whom John worked, were scholars who were approachable if you knew the difference between a bronze axe and a palstave, or the chronological difference between the Hadrianic and Antonine periods, but could be formidable if you did not. John was readily approachable, diffident about his own learning, which was considerable, and the person to seek out if you had a somewhat vague or only partly thought-out request. He would guide you through the museum galleries or its maze-like subterranean areas, and then introduce you to the relevant colleague in terms which would pave the way for a more fruitful conversation than might otherwise have been accomplished. John Lewis will also be remembered for his work in encouraging, in the mid-1970s, the establishment of a mostly youthfully-constituted Welsh Medieval Pottery Research Group (WMPRG), whose Journal he edited for a decade. John also wrote a study of a South Wales country pottery, *The Ewenny Potteries* (1982) – for years a Ewenny mochin jug occupied the Lewis mantlepiece.

John's impish sense of humour, his friendship, encouragement and helpful advice were appreciated by many visiting archaeologists. The hospitality which he and Clem provided at Howells Crescent, Llandaff was appreciated not only by archaeologists, but also by a succession of cats and the occasional rough sleeper in the mood for a cup of tea and a sandwich.

Blaise Vyner

CBA WALES/CYMRU

Autumn Business Meeting and Annual General Meeting

Saturday 26th October 2019

Bangor University: 10:30am for 11am start, terrace conference room 3 at Bangor University (This is on the ground floor of the University, overlooking Bangor).

It will form part of the Four Nations Bangor History Festival
For further details and booking links for this please see
<http://fournations.bangor.ac.uk/>

You of course do not need to attend or book for the conference if you are just attending the CBA Wales AGM and Business meeting.

The meeting will be followed by a committee meeting to include any newly elected officers and members.

Newsletter Editor

Items for inclusion in the newsletter should be sent to:

Nikki Vousden: nikkivousden@gmail.com

