

Council for British Archaeology

Cyngor Archaeoleg Brydeinig

Wales/Cymru



Some of the volunteers who helped with digging and organisation during the community dig at Llanfechell, Anglesey. Drone photograph by Brendon Croud.

Newsletter 67 Spring 2024

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

Community Dig at Llanfechell, Anglesey

Jane Kenney and Mike Woods (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust)

In August 2023 Cymdeithas Hanes Mechell/ Mechell History Society ran a community excavation in a field known as Cae Penrhyn next to Brynddu House, Llanfechell, Anglesey. The field had previously been surveyed with magnetometry by Monolith Archaeology, and the aim of the excavations was to test the geophysical survey. This provided an opportunity for the local community to be involved in the process of archaeological investigation to better understand the history and prehistory of Llanfechell. The project was funded by grants from the Magnox community fund, Brynddu Estate, Llanfechell Community Council, the Anglesey Trust, and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust staff provided guidance and supervision.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE TRIAL TRENCHES SHOWING LOCATION ON THE EDGE OF LLANFEHELL VILLAGE. DRONE PHOTO BY BRENDON CROUD.

Five trenches were excavated over two weeks. These were opened by machine and cleaned and excavated by volunteers under GAT supervision. A metal detecting

survey was carried out alongside the excavation, with the metal finds being precisely located. Seventy-three people volunteered to dig or sieve for finds. Some came for a day, while others committed to the full two weeks. Digging took place through both wet and hot weather with volunteers working hard in difficult conditions as well as on fine days and maintaining enthusiasm and good humour throughout. Other volunteers provided refreshments and ran the Llanfechell Dig Facebook page to keep everyone informed.

The site lies on the eastern edge of the medieval village of Llanfechell and in an area rich in prehistoric monuments, such as standing stones, a destroyed chambered tomb, and a probable round barrow cemetery. Archaeology of various periods was therefore expected. Some of the geophysical signals proved to be produced by natural features such as bedrock, but several archaeological features were discovered. A ditch, up to 0.65m wide and 0.30m deep, ran from north to south across trenches 2 and 3, before curving gradually towards the south-east. The curve of the ditch suggests that it may have formed a ditch or drain around an enclosure, perhaps to create a dry area for a haystack. It was cut through the lower part of the ploughsoil and contained two sherds of post-medieval pottery, suggesting a post-medieval date.

Two large, parallel ditches ran across trench 3. The largest was 2.4m wide and up to 0.65m deep, and it is likely that these formed a substantial double-ditched boundary. An estate map of 1805 shows this to be the southern boundary of the field prior to 19th century regularisation of the



SECTION OF ONE OF THE DITCHES OF THE DOUBLE-DITCHED BOUNDARY.

boundaries. This appears as a sinuous boundary on the estate map and it may have been a survival from the medieval field layout, possibly using the line of a furlong boundary of an open field, meaning that the excavated ditches may have originally

been dug in the medieval period. In trench 2, two flat stones are suggested to have formed the base of a wall next to a possible hollow-way, which must also have fitted with an earlier field layout.

A small, rather poorly defined feature contained a sherd of pottery that may be of Bronze Age date. A flint transverse arrowhead was also found and some flint debitage scattered across the site, with a concentration in trench 5.

The metal-detecting survey discovered two medieval lead spindle whorls. Numerous later artefacts were also recovered including coins, tokens, buttons, and a lead toy soldier. The artefact assemblage therefore suggests activity in the area from the Neolithic period, with the spindle whorls providing hints of medieval activity and possibly the proximity to a medieval settlement. The double-ditched boundary and possible hollow-way indicate earlier field layouts, possibly going back to the medieval period. More importantly the volunteers enjoyed the experience with some continuing to study archaeology after the dig itself.



STONE 16,
BARCLODIAD Y
GAWRES. PHOTO BY
GEORGE NASH.

Advance Notice - CBA Wales Trip to Ynys Mon

CBA Wales are organising a visit to Ynys Mon, **17-19th May 2024**. Subject to confirmation the visit will comprise:

Saturday

- Oriel Mon Museum: chat and look in the Museum archive
- Bryn Celli Ddu and landscape
- Llangaffo Church

Lunch at the Museum or the National Trust Cafe at Plas Newydd

- Ty Newydd
- Barclodiad y Gawres
- The Llanerchymedd Complex (including Esgob Farm)

Afternoon tea at Esgob – there would be a small charge

Sunday Morning

- Exploring the Cromlech Farm landscape, followed by debriefing with **tea/coffee and cake** (of course)

TRAVEL

Either assemble at a hotel/B&B in Llangefni on the Friday evening or at the Oriel Mon Museum at 10am, Saturday morning

Further information & booking available on our website:
<https://cbawales.org>



Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology

Sian Rees (Heneb)

The next six months sees a change in the way we in Wales look after and explore our cultural heritage, archaeology and ancient monuments. For the last 50 years Wales has benefitted from the work of the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts – Clwyd-Powys, Dyfed, Glamorgan-Gwent and Gwynedd – set up first of all by the Welsh Office to excavate ancient sites which would be destroyed by development: new roads, housing schemes and so on. The Trust system was unique in the UK, as it covered the whole of the country equally ensuring that all areas had access to specialist archaeological projects.

Since their birth, the Trusts have flourished, continuing their excavations but expanding their work to include the development of the Historic Environment Record, a vital tool in making known to the public and to planners alike the presence and position of archaeological and historic places that needed protection. They have put onto their websites reports on extensive fieldwork, studying topics such as the farms and farmsteads of Wales, the development of the iron and water industries, (where Wales was so important a player) and the castles and palaces of the Welsh princes. And, critically, they have reached out

to Welsh people involving volunteers, schools and diverse communities to enthuse them in the discovery, care and enjoyment of their country's past.

Looking back, some amazing sites have been explored. Excavations at Roman Caerleon, Cowbridge



EXCAVATIONS AT TAI COCHION, ANGLESEY.

and Carmarthen in advance of development, and the astonishing Roman complex at Tai Cochion on the Menai Straits in Anglesey told us so much about the extent of Roman penetration into Wales, far greater than hitherto appreciated. The large-scale study of the Walton Basin in mid-Wales revealed how rich was the history of human settlement from Welsh prehistory onwards within this fertile agricultural area, where the traces of archaeological sites have mostly been buried by ongoing agricultural activity. Studies of places associated through legend and documents with the early Welsh princes have opened our eyes to the complex history of these often enigmatic sites. The vital part the maritime past of Wales played in the development of towns, cities and ship building has been revealed by the Trusts' coastal studies. And recent excavations at the late Iron Age chariot burial and the medieval Haverfordwest Friary, both in Pembrokeshire, show us just how much in our landscape remains for us to discover.



EXCAVATIONS AT HAVERFORDWEST FRIARY, PEMBROKESHIRE.

Wales is rightly proud of these achievements. But it has been decided that if the Trusts merged to form a bigger organisation, they would be able to offer more – more large-scale excavation, more flexibility, greater specialisations such as geophysics, standing building recording, the understanding of finds, all of which are becoming more sophisticated and technologically challenging. So they have agreed to merge to form one national body called Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology. This new Trust will be able to coordinate planning advice, recording, fieldwork and archiving and produce a better service to the whole of Wales. It will retain the

strong regional presence of the individual trusts, their staff and offices and appoint Regional Advisory Groups to ensure that regional expectations are met. And Heneb will strive to continue to involve everyone in the excavation and care of the monuments of Wales that are so dear to us all.

Heneb has now appointed new staff: a new Chair, Dr Carol Bell, and a new Chief Executive Officer, Richard Nicholls, and an additional Trustee, Steffan Williams. We will be looking for people to serve on Regional Advisory Panels and volunteers to join us to ensure the Trust reaches out to as wide an audience as possible.

Maritime Archaeology in Wales



The following is the abstract from an article that has just been published in The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology (IJNA). A full copy of the article can be viewed at:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/NWB58CK5QIHIK2IGXAI3/full?target=10.1080/10572414.2023.2299803>

The Misidentification of a Shipwreck in Cardigan Bay, West Wales, Designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973

Author: Ian Cundy (Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit)

Published online: 25 Jan 2024

Cite this article / <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572414.2023.2299803>

ABSTRACT

In 2002, the site of a shipwreck in Cardigan Bay, west Wales, thought to be the final resting place of the fully rigged ship Diamond, was designated by Cadw under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973. Subsequent investigations into the remains of the vessel on the seabed by the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit, together with comparisons made against documented historical research relating to Diamond, led to the conclusion that the identity of the ship on this underwater site was almost certainly mistaken. This deduction is, however, not the end of the matter, as while it answered the long-standing question relating to the validity of the name Diamond being ascribed to this shipwreck, it neither threw any light upon the actual identification of the vessel on the site, or the possible location and final resting place of Diamond. This article is an attempt to answer both these two pertinent and outstanding questions.

Ian Cundy (Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit)



Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association

Tintern Abbey Study Day

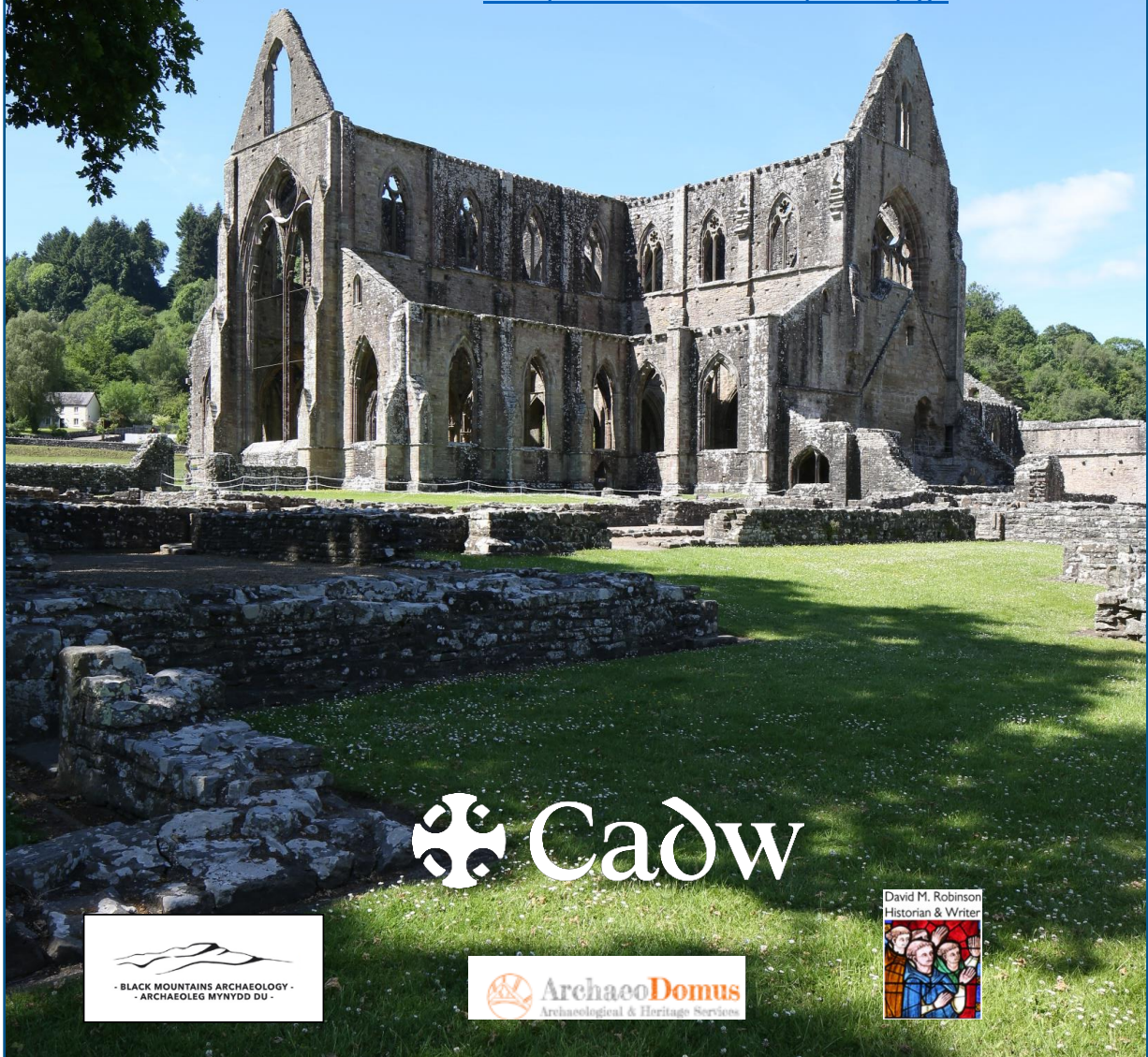
Saturday 6 July 2024

9.30 am until 5.30 pm

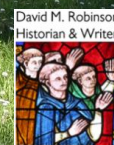
Tintern Village Hall, Tintern, NP16 6SZ

Booking website

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/monmouthshire-antiquarian-association/t-vvkqxgv>



 **Cadw**



The study day at Tintern is going to be a key event in the summer. It will bring everybody up to date with the work sponsored by Cadw that has taken place so far, and future plans for the conservation of the monument.

Fonmon Castle Landscape Archaeology Project: Excavations at Llancadle South II Early Medieval Cemetery

Andy Seaman and Tudur Davies (Cardiff University)

The Fonmon Castle Landscape Archaeology Project was initiated in 2021, with the initial aims of enhancing understanding of the environs and long-term historical context of Fonmon Castle (eastern Vale of Glamorgan) by identifying and characterising evidence for multi-period activity, settlement, and land-use within the castle estate. Fonmon Castle (in origins a late 12th century ringwork that has been continuously occupied since construction) lies within a rich archaeological landscape, but comparatively few sites have been examined in detail and very little is known about the elusive early medieval period. One of the project's primary objectives is to focus fieldwork on the castle's demesne, as this could provide a fruitful window into the early medieval period. Following detailed desk-based assessment a programme of extensive geophysical survey was undertaken in July 2021. By using a GNSS-linked cart-based survey system

(Figure 1) it was possible to survey almost all of the demesne and the data (a summary of which is published in Archaeology in Wales) revealed a series of sites,



FIGURE 1: GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY USING A CART-BASED MAGNETOMETER.

including enclosures of varying forms and sizes. Work has now started on evaluating these sites through targeted excavation. Our aim is to sample and date all the sites, thus providing a detailed snapshot of the evolution of settlement in the locality.

One of the first sites to be evaluated was Llancadle South II, which has previously been identified as a possible prehistoric settlement enclosure. However, evaluation excavation and radiocarbon dating undertaken in 2022 determined that the enclosure was early medieval in date and surrounded a substantial cemetery displaying good preservation of bone. Since the site displays very significant research potential and is actively suffering degradation through cultivation a project has been initiated to fully excavate the cemetery over a four-year period and undertake comprehensive programmes of osteological and bioarchaeological analysis. The first full season of excavation was undertaken in August/September 2023, during which a trench was opened over half of the cemetery enclosure. Eighteen burials were excavated, most of these were in the extended supine position (which is typical of this period in western Britain), but a number were also in crouched and flexed positions (see Figure 2).



FIGURE 2: AN EARLY MEDIEVAL CROUCHED BURIAL FROM LLANCADLE SOUTH II.

This material is currently undergoing a programme of post-excavation analysis, including stable isotope analysis. The excavation also revealed evidence for non-funerary activity, including an extensive animal bone assemblage and three fragments of imported glass vessels with a similar date range to radiocarbon

dates obtained from the 2022 excavations. The latter had been incorporated into the material that backfill the graves and attests to access to material culture of a high-status that appears to be contemporary with the funerary activity. Smaller-scale evaluation excavation of two adjacent enclosures (known as a Llancadle South A and Llancadle South III) suggests that the cemetery lies within a wider complex of early medieval activity (see Figure 3). These will be explored further in subsequent years.

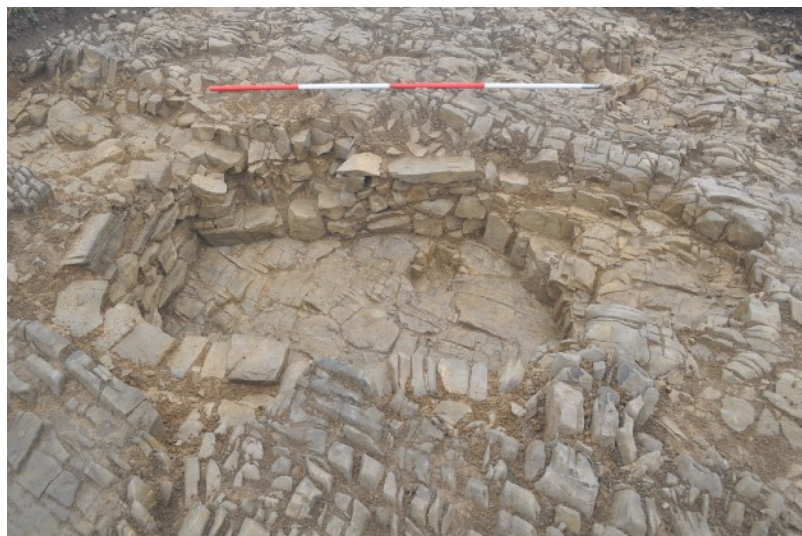


FIGURE 3: AN EARLY MEDIEVAL CORN DRYING KILN FROM LLANCADLE SOUTH III.

Early medieval archaeological sites are notoriously difficult to identify in Wales and few have been examined at scale and with modern techniques of excavation and analysis. The sites at Fonmon therefore offer very significant research potential and we hope that the project will make a significant contribution to our understanding of the early medieval period in western Britain. Prior to final publication annual fieldwork summaries will be published in Archaeology in Wales.

Committee Vacancies

At this year's AGM in November the posts of Chairman, Secretary, and Membership Secretary will all be up for elections. All the current post holders have reached the end of their second three-year term, and so by the constitution are not eligible to stand again at this year's AGM. There will also be four committee places to be filled.

If anyone would like to stand for any of the offices or is interested in joining the committee please get in touch with either the Chairman, Mike Greene (chair@cbawales.org) or Secretary, Evan Chapman (secretary@cbawales.org).

Advance Notice - CBA Wales Trip to Rowen Prehistoric Landscape / Graig Lwyd Neolithic Axe Factory

CBA Wales are organising a field trip to this fascinating prehistoric landscape, **21-22nd September 2024.**

Subject to confirmation the visit will comprise guided walks by Jane Kenney (Gwynedd Archaeological Trust):

1. Circuit of Tal y Fan from Rowen YHA (12.5km, 463m total ascent)

Includes: 2 Neolithic tombs, standing stones, mini stone circle, Roman road, roundhouse settlements, burnt

mound, Bronze Age cist, cairn circle, Druid's Circle stone circle, old reservoir, Maen Penddu standing stone, quarry, Caer Bach mini hillfort

2. Neolithic axes walk (9.5km long, 426m total ascent)

Includes: possible axe-working sites, Dinas hillfort, burial cairns, roundhouse settlement, Graig Lwyd Neolithic quarry / main cliff face, Druid's Circle stone circle

Accommodation: Rowen YHA (entire hostel)

Cost: £5 per walk, plus accommodation

Contact for further information & booking: Simon Timberlake, simon.timberlake@gmail.com

Volunteering Area on CBAW Website

Each year there are many opportunities throughout Wales for volunteers to take part in different aspects of archaeological work. Excavation, site survey, finds processing, monument management and local heritage group organisation are just some of the areas where volunteers can get involved.

We have now added an area to our website where volunteering opportunities are advertised:

<https://cbawales.org/volunteers/>

If you are planning a project or event and are looking for volunteers, please do consider sending in a call for help. Please get in touch initially via the contact page on the website: **<https://cbawales.org/contact/>**

Safeguarding Pembrokeshire Coast's Archaeological Heritage: A Community Archaeology Approach



HERITAGE VOLUNTEER VISITING A COASTAL PROMONTORY FORT.

Contributor: Tomos Jones works as a community archaeologist for the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.

Since 2020, a group of heritage volunteers have been monitoring publicly accessible scheduled monuments across the National Park area. This includes almost half of all scheduled monuments in the National Park. These range from the prehistoric to more recent times and from small to landscape scale types. By January 2024, over 450 visits had taken place, with a range of issues identified including vegetation encroachment,

coastal erosion and heritage crime. The data collected enables the National Park Authority and others to carry out conservation work at affected sites. Ultimately, the scheme leads to heritage that is better protected and enhanced. It also provides communities and the public with opportunities to engage with their heritage, leading to a greater sense of place.

If you'd like to find out more, get in touch by emailing

archaeology@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

or stay up to date by signing up to the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park archaeology mailing list:

[https://
www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales/
about-the-national-park/
archaeology/archaeology-mailing-
list/](https://www.pembrokeshirecoast.wales/about-the-national-park/archaeology/archaeology-mailing-list/)

Making the March: Contesting Lands in the Early Medieval Frontier

Andy Seaman¹, Charles Insley², Ioan McCarthy¹, Keith Ray¹ and Marion Shiner¹

¹ Cardiff School of History, Archaeology and Religion, John Percival Building, Colum Drive, Cardiff CF10 3EU; ² Department of History, School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

Researchers at Cardiff University and Manchester University have been awarded Leverhulme funding for a three-year, interdisciplinary project that will investigate the frontier landscape between Wales and England known as Y Mers/The March. The award includes funding for two post-doctoral research posts and one PhD studentship.

During the later first millennium AD, this region became a contested frontier zone between opposed Brittonic and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and as such is of fundamental importance for our understanding of early medieval Britain. The name of the region (from Old English *mearc* – a limit or boundary) reflects its borderland status. The March extends for over 200km between Cheshire and Gloucestershire, contains the longest frontier zone linear earthwork in Britain (Offa's Dyke) and is the largest such frontier zone in Britain. Despite this, the origins of the March have rarely been considered in major studies of early

medieval Britain and Europe.

Through a combination of archaeological, landscape, place name and historical research, building on previous research and drawing upon newly available data and methodological innovation, *Making the March* will explore the origin and evolution of the frontier landscape.



FIGURE 1: AT THE AFON MORDA (NEAR TREFONEN, WEST OF OSWESTRY) LOOKING EAST TOWARDS THE NORTH SHROPSHIRE PLAIN.

It will address questions that are fundamental to its articulation, such as how hegemonies were achieved, and communities governed; resistance to domination was sustained; and how complex hybrid communities emerged. It will put the archaeological evidence into dialogue with a disparate array of textual sources that are themselves seldom discussed or analysed together, and situate the evidence within a wider and comparative European context to realise its full potential.

A further strand of the project will be the analysis of unpublished evidence from New Pieces, a small, multi-phase defended hilltop enclosure, which is one of the few early medieval sites within the frontier to have previously been examined archaeologically.

These excavations recovered material culture characteristic of assemblages from a group of high-status power

centres, such as Dinas Powys, but which has not previously been fully assessed and analysed. The project will undertake comprehensive analysis of the finds and site records and carry out a closely targeted programme of radiocarbon dating of excavated material. It will also assess newly available LiDAR data and undertake non-intrusive drone survey to better understand the site and place it within its regional context.

Describing the project, the PI, Dr Andy Seaman, said 'Although many modern European frontiers originate during the early medieval period, they do not feature prominently in scholarship. As the first interdisciplinary, multi-scalar, cross-border analysis of the creation and development of this significant early medieval frontier, *Making the March* will address this interpretive and data lacuna, creating a new agenda for medieval frontier studies and a revitalised platform for research'.



FIGURE 2: VIEW FROM 'THE STUBB' (FORDEN, OPPOSITE WELSHPOOL) SOUTH-WEST TOWARDS BERRIEW AND NORTH-EAST MONTGOMERYSHIRE, LOOKING ACROSS THE MIDDLE SEVERN VALLEY - WITH THE CAMBRIAN MOUNTAINS WEST OF NEWTOWN ON THE HORIZON AND THE (HERE, MASSIVE) BANK OF OFFA'S DYKE IN THE FOREGROUND.

From the Membership Secretary – Change to Subscriptions

After holding membership rates at the same level for over ten years we have taken the difficult decision to increase subscriptions. The new rates as approved at the AGM in November 2023 are as follows.

Ordinary membership is increased from £12 to £15.

Joint/family membership is increased from £15 to £20.

Institutional membership is increased from £22.50 to £25.

A student membership is introduced at £5 (digital copy only of Archaeology in Wales).

Please can we ask members to adjust their standing orders or cheque/online payments accordingly.

Full information about membership is available on the website: <https://cbawales.org/>

Kathy Laws, Membership Secretary, membership@cbawales.org

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: membership@cbawales.org

Newsletter Editor

We welcome items up to 600 words in length, with up to 3 illustrations, for inclusion in the newsletter! Please send your contributions to Emma Wager: newsletter@cbawales.org

Archaeology in Wales

Items for inclusion in the journal should be sent to: aiw@cbawales.org

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