



**Oswestry & Border History & Archaeology Group**  
**Newsletter**

Issue 9

January 2015



Old Oswestry Hillfort as seen from the site of the ruined ornamental temple at Brogyntyn



## Chairman`s Page

In 2014 OBHAG's varied programme of events gave us one of our most enjoyable and successful years. In September we were busy with Oswestry's Heritage Open Day events, the Castle Dig attracted visitors to our display in the Guildhall and we even signed up some new members.

On the Friday evening Dr Roger White, long associated with the Wroxeter Hinterland Project and now Academic Director of Ironbridge gave a fascinating talk 'Researching Roman Shropshire, a new agenda' and stimulated plenty of questions and discussion.

The sun set amid dramatic clouds for the Old Oswestry hillfort walk and visitors were surprised by the magnificent views over Wales and the border. Comments included "we had no idea this was here", "how could people in the Iron Age with not even a JCB have dug these ramparts?" and "now we know about this we'll certainly be back and we'll tell our friends"

A big thank you to Mrs Jessie Hanson who negotiated access to Brogyntyn Hall Pleasure Gardens on the Sunday afternoon. We were astonished when at least 200 people arrived for her walk, with their cars competing for parking space. Jessie conducted an extensive tour which included negotiating the rather dark tunnel beneath the mound of what was perhaps an ancient Welsh castle. There were a few problems in relaying information to the masses but most people had a wonderful time.

In October I spoke about one of my obsessions, Joseph Jones, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Llanfyllin innkeeper and workhouse master and in November Fiona Gale, the Denbighshire County Archaeologist gave an inspiring account of recent excavations in North East Wales. OBHAG members including Irene and Terry have taken part in some of these and the talk brought home the need for more local initiatives.

The Christmas meeting will have Mr David Burton speaking on the Fabulous Mortimer Family, especially interesting as many of us visited Wigmore in the summer. We start 2015 with Matt Williams revealing what really went on behind the scenes at the much missed Time Team to be followed in February with an evocation of the Siege of Oswestry 1644 from Justin Soper of Activate History.

John Pryce Jones will address the AGM in March and in April Roger Cooper is speaking on Monastic Military Orders

The May evening visit, led by Margaret Hill, will trace the path of Wat's Dyke through Oswestry; a Dark Age wonder and one of the town's rather unappreciated monuments.

In June the usual evening visit has been moved to the afternoon as we will be taken on a trip by land rover up Criggion Quarry courtesy of Hanson Aggregates. This is a great opportunity to see the impact of the landscape at close quarters, to visit Rodney's Pillar without the climb, and to view the Iron Age hillfort. Numbers are limited to 32 and booking is essential.

The July summer visit is to the Mellor Archaeological Trust near Stockport. For many years the Trust brought displays to the October Seminar, and this is a chance for us to visit their project. Full details will be available on an information sheet nearer to the date.

Heather Hidden

Jessie shows the way



*An intrepid adventurer emerges from the tunnel at Brogyntyn*



## **Derrick Winter**

Our year ended with the sad news of the death at the age of 88 of Derrick Winter who has been such a mainstay of OBHAG for many years. A Yorkshire man by birth Derrick began his working life as a very young Chemistry master at Oswestry School and during his long career taught several OBHAG members. He was married for more than sixty years to Gwyneth our present secretary and they had a family of four, but he found time to be a Methodist preacher, an organist and composer and a railway enthusiast.

His great interest in history and archaeology was another aspect of his very full life and he was pleased to have taken part in the Roman Marching Camp excavation at Rhyn Park, and to say that Wat's Dyke ran through his very well kept garden. Derrick was OBHAG chairman for several years; he served on the committee and with Gwyneth gave the group unstinting support. He will be greatly missed.

## **Welsh National Eisteddfod 2015**

In 2015 the Eisteddfod is coming to Meifod and OBHAG have been invited to take part. We are hoping to produce a bilingual display focussing on Oswestry/ Croes Oswallt for the History Tent. If you would like to be involved please contact Heather for all the details. Volunteers helping out in the tent during Eisteddfod week and will be given a free entry pass for the day.



## *CPAT Archaeology Day School*

On October 25th, the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust held its new annual archaeology day-school at the Marches School in Oswestry. Over 120 people attended the event, with the day focusing on new results from work at Offa's Dyke, Wroxeter, Llangollen and Ironbridge, as well as reports on longer-term projects in the Marches covering a wonderful variety of archaeological remains – from Neolithic ritual landscapes to twentieth-century aircraft crash sites. Our director, Paul Belford opened the seminar with a welcoming speech and introduced the speakers who explored over 6,000 years of history and archaeology on both side of the border. The seminar followed a basic historical sequence and it was structured around the results of CPAT's recent projects, and the work conducted by other professional archaeologists on the borderland, including Dr Roger White (University of Birmingham), Professor Howard Williams (University of Chester), Dr Keith Ray (Nexus Heritage) and Shane Kelleher (Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust). The event also included a photographic exhibition which was designed to tell the story of CPAT's work from the late 1970s to the present day, by looking at some of the most fascinating archaeological sites of Wales. A small area was dedicated to a rich exhibition of artefacts excavated at Borrás Quarry, which included some beautifully decorated prehistoric pottery. Attendees also had the opportunity to visit displays by other groups and societies. An area was dedicated to the Marches Young Archaeologists' Club branch where young people had the chance to try some hands-on activities looking at artefacts and replicas, as well as recording a Roman burial! The day received positive feedback and the useful comments left by the public will contribute to make next year event even more successful.

Viviana Culshaw (Community Archaeologist CPAT)

## Oswestry Castle Dig

**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September to Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September**

During the very fine weekend of the Oswestry and beyond heritage open days an archaeological excavation took place at Oswestry Castle. This had been organized by one of our members Mr. Roger Cooper who had applied for permission from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport to open up a trench on this site. The aim of the excavation was to identify the possible location of a wing wall which may have originally run up Castle Bank.

A small team made up of 3 OBHAG members, several local archaeologists and one or two local volunteers carried out the four day excavation.

The trench measuring 1m x 4metres was placed on the raised grass area to the right of the steps at the front of the castle. The team worked hard throughout the weekend digging down to a depth of approximately 1.2 metres.

During this time there was plenty of Victorian pottery and glass excavated including a small child's thimble.

There was a lot of interest in the excavation from the general public. Margaret Hill was on hand to talk to visitors and give out information on the dig and also previous excavations that she had conducted herself in the 1980's in the same area.



Caroline and Josh Surveying



Sally finds washing

A table was set up to allow the finds of pottery etc. to be washed and analyzed. There was a lot of interest in this especially from the children who came to visit, some even spending a full half day helping to wash finds..

On the Sunday evening a small crowd of approximately 30 people turned up to hear Roger give a talk on the excavation, the reasons why we were doing it and results we have had so far.

Unfortunately we did not expose any walls or remains of walls during this excavation. However, this does not mean that it is not there.

Roger will be writing up the report for the excavation during the coming year.

Thanks must go to Roger and the team of volunteers for a very enjoyable weekend.

Irene Milhench



Graham putting the first barrow load back.

### **Reminder**

Membership is now due.

Adult £12 Family £16 Concessionary £10

Cheques payable to OBHAG can be paid at one of our meetings or sent to:

Membership Secretary: Mrs Margaret Ward, 3 Llanforda Rise,  
Oswestry Shropshire. SY11 1SY

Tel: 01691 653355

email: [margaretjward@live.co.uk](mailto:margaretjward@live.co.uk)



## **Spring/ Summer Programme**

### **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January at 7.30pm**

Behind the scenes at Time Team

A talk by Matt Williams

### **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm**

The siege of Oswestry 1644

Justin Soper, Local Historian from Activate History

### **Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm**

A.G.M

Presidential Lecture

John Pryce Jones (President)

### **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm**

Monastic Military Orders

A talk by Roger Cooper

### **Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May**

Evening Visit

‘Wat’s Wonder’ Walk tracing Wat’s Dyke in Oswestry

Led by Margaret Hill

Meet at Cambrian Health Centre Car Park at 7.00pm

### **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June**

Afternoon visit

Criggion Quarry and The Breidden

Meet at the quarry entrance at 2.00pm

Free but booking required, please contact secretary

### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July**

Full day visit to Mellor Mill Archaeological Trust near Stockport

Information Sheet available.

Charge to cover coach. Booking required, please contact secretary.

Meet at Oak Street Car Park at 10.00am

All talks are held in the Memorial Hall