

Oswestry & Border History & Archaeology Group

Newsletter

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Up and coming OBHAG all day visit July 2020

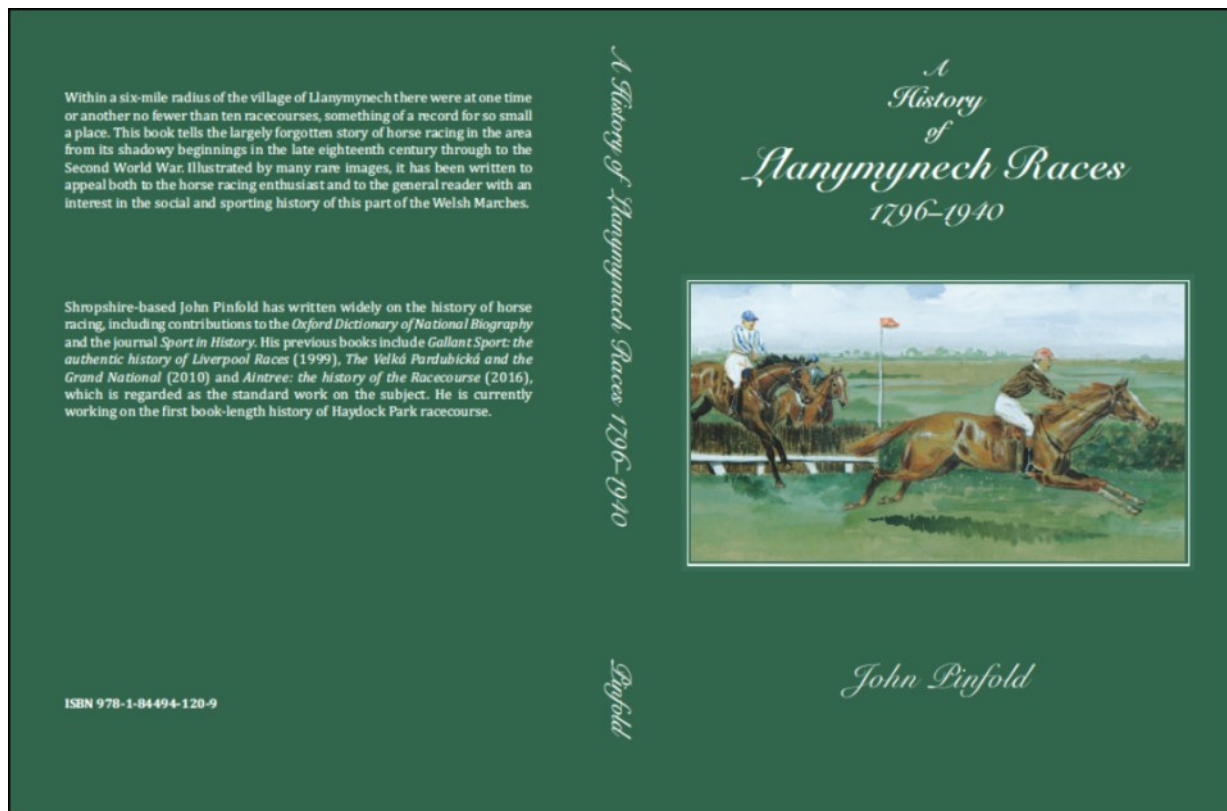
Beaumaris Castle and Penmon Priory

OBHAG 2020

The year has got off to an excellent start with Roger White's very well attended and informative lecture on Roman Shropshire and its society. Between 1987 and 1992 Roger wrote his report on the major excavations at Wroxeter and since then was instrumental in developing the ground breaking Wroxeter Hinterland Project which involved up to 400 volunteer including some of the current members of OBHAG.

In the period following the Roman departure resources are scarce or non existent but careful and painstaking field studies are providing new insights

The rest of the year's programme is unusually varied and we hope to have maintained the usual balance of history and archaeology. Four of the talks relate directly to Oswestry town and its castle while the summer visit allows a guided exploration of one of the most remarkable of the Welsh castles.



Special Offer for OBHAG members

Any member of OBHAG who would like a copy of John Pinfold's latest publication 'A History of Llanymynech Races' can have one at the reduced price of £5.00, plus £2 p+p (RRP is £7.99) If he has notice the copy can be collected at the meeting. To take advantage of this offer please contact John directly; Email johnrpinfold@gmail.com

Llanfechain Village, Friday 15th May (NB 3rd Friday due to VE Day holiday)



Meet at the Village Hall at 7.00pm.

Take A495 from Llynclys to Llansantffraid , then fork right onto the B4393. Approx 2 miles to Llanfechain then right turn signed School & Community Centre.

No Booking Required. Cost to cover donation to our hosts
OBHAG members £2 Non-members £5

Llanfechain is an ancient Montgomeryshire village on the beautiful little River Cain Close by is the well preserved motte of Domen Gastell, thought to have been built by Owain Fychan ap Madog in 1166. St Garmon's Church with its circular churchyard also dates back at least to Norman times. Phillip Williams , our guide, will give an introductory talk at the Village Hall which happens to be just a step away from the picturesque 16th century Plas yn Dinas Inn, also well worth a visit!



Mid-Week Afternoon Visit to Pitchford Hall Wednesday 17th June



The hall is a large Grade I listed Tudor country house said to be one of the most beautiful historic houses in the country. Pevsner called it 'the most splendid piece of black and white building in Shropshire' It was built c.1560 on the site of a medieval building and has been modified several times since, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s when it was substantially restored, remodelled and extended.

The famous Tudor style tree-house which sits in a large lime tree is believed to be the oldest in the world. Queen Victoria recorded in her diary that she watched a visiting pack of foxhounds from the tree house during her visit to Pitchford Hall as a young princess.

100 metres north of the hall is a bitumen well, near a ford across the Row Brook, from which the village gets its name. The bitumen or pitch was once used for water-proofing the timbers of the house

The house has recently been reunited (2016) with the estate by Rowena Colthurst and her husband James Nason.

The cost of the visit is £20 and includes the tour and a cream tea with all proceeds going towards the costs of the hall's renovation.

Meet at Pitchford Hall at 2.30pm . Directions: Take a right turn off the Shrewsbury Bypass onto A458 Bridgnorth Road, 4miles further take a right turn onto the restricted access road signposted Pitchford Church.

Booking essential, cash or cheques made payable to OBHAG to David Stirling, treasurer ASAP at meeting or contact David by email: stirlings@waitrose.com or by post at 16 Kingfisher Way, Morda, OSWESTRY SY10 9LX .

Full day visit to Beaumaris Castle & Penmon Priory Anglesey
Saturday 11th July
With Roger Cooper and Tom Lerwill

Coach departs Oak Street Car Park 8.30am and will be back in Oswestry c. 6.00pm

At Beaumaris Edward the First and his architect, James of St George, took full advantage of a blank canvas: the 'beau mareys' or 'beautiful marsh' beside the Menai Strait.

By now they had already constructed the great castles of Conwy, Caernarfon and Harlech. This was to be their crowning glory, the castle to end all castles. The result was a fortress of immense size and near-perfect symmetry. No fewer than four concentric rings of formidable defences included a water-filled moat with its very own dock. The outer walls alone bristled with 300 arrow loops.

View of the castle looking across the Straits to the mountains of Snowdonia on the mainland (Anglesey pictures courtesy of Tom Lerwill)



Beaumaris has several excellent pubs and café's and the lunch break will allow time for members to choose their preferred venue or to eat picnic lunches and visit the town.

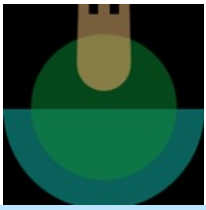
In the afternoon we will explore the area around Penmon which includes an old Celtic monastery established here in the 6th century by St Seiriol and the later church which has many exquisite medieval features.

The holy well (with reputed healing properties) bears the Saints name and is thought to be associated with the early period, though the 'cell' that houses it is a much later construction. The Priory is beautifully set beneath the backdrop of Snowdonia and Tom Lerwill who knows the area very well is our guide for the afternoon



Tickets c. £25 (Exact cost of coach and castle entry fee to be confirmed)

Booking is essential, payment at least 1 month in advance by cash or cheques made payable to OBHAG to David Stirling, treasurer ASAP either at one of the coming meetings or by post. Contact David by email: stirlings@waitrose.com or by post at 16 Kingfisher Way, Morda, OSWESTRY SY10 9LX



Oswestry Castle Update



Thank you from Roger Cooper and the Project Team

I think its important to formally thank OBHAG for their major contribution towards facilitating archaeological university students and their on site learning in 2018 and 2019. The sums not only went to allow them a daily subsistence allowance but also the reproduction of supportive training aids.

The only caveat the student attendees had was to run our facebook page whilst on site which they did well. In addition, all parties involved (Historic England, Andy Wigley and Oswestry Town Council) felt this was a worthwhile activity and a great success. Indeed we had to turn some students down due to our capacity to cope with the number of applicants in 2019.

I will add, that this year and 2021 we will minimise our activities on site due mostly to the need for smaller investigative trench sizes and the amount of post excavation we need to undertake. So on that basis, we will not encourage student participation unless they are self funded.

The recent excavations revealed an unexpected structure to the East of the Keep. It is clearly a building, but its purpose is unknown. The nature of the construction is clearly not defensive as its location would have undermined the effectiveness of the Keep as a defensive structure. What is certain is that the structure post-dates the keep. One possibility is that it was a chapel, as we know from period records that a free Chapel dedicated to St Nicholas was built on the site, but the records do not say specifically where it was located. The comprehensive demolition of the building, the paucity of finds, and the possibility that the Eastern end of the building was partially removed to make way for Victorian garden developments makes a definitive identification very difficult. . If another excavation here is possible in the future we would welcome the opportunity to excavate more of this building.



For full reports and many more pictures see website Oswestry Castle Community Research Project oswestrycastleexcavations.org.uk and the OCCRP Facebook page.

The project has recently received a prestigious Special Award from the Oswestry and District Civic Society, for the extensive discoveries and greater understanding of the scale and nature of the castle that the project has produced.

Offa's Dyke Collaboratory Event at Trefonen

The research network exploring the archaeology, history and heritage of Britain's greatest linear earthwork and its landscape context - is organising a **free** public event on Saturday 4th April 2020 at Trefonen Village Hall

Register from 10am for talks from 10.15am-1pm. The morning will comprise a series of talks by researchers and community groups exploring Offa's Dyke and its environs from Prestatyn to Chepstow.

There will also be stalls selling relevant books and with information about the landscapes of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands past and present.

A buffet lunch will be available free of charge. After lunch, at 2pm, expert guides will lead a walk along Offa's Dyke near Trefonen Free but registration essential

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/special-offa-communities-offas-dyke-tickets-91131136683>



Old Oswestry Hillfort Update

The **Save Our Setting** campaign thanks all OBHAG members who have provided support. The date for the planning meeting is awaited.

Oswestry Heritage Gateway in association with **English Heritage** is developing new volunteering and management plans for the hillfort.

To register as a volunteer please contact Neil Phillips: email obgateway@gmail.com or

OBHAG Membership

Contact the Membership Secretary at one of our meetings, by post or by email

Anne Swire: Email: aswire39@gmail.com

6 Newnes Barns, Ellesmere SY12 9HQ

Tel 01691 622906

Membership fees: Adult £12 Family £16 Concessionary £10

Please make cheques payable to OBHAG

OBHAG Programme 2020

- 13th March** **AGM and talk ‘Oswestry’s Castle Bank: its history over the past two hundred and fifty years’**
John Pryce Jones, OBHAG President
- 17th April (3rd Friday due to Easter)**
An Oswestry Squire: “Mad Jack” Mytton of Halston’
David Thornycroft
- 15^h May (3rd Friday due to VE Day holiday)**
Evening visit to the ancient Montgomeryshire village of Llanfechain
Meet at the Village Hall at 7.00pm.
- Wednesday 17th June Afternoon visit to Pitchford Hall**
Guided Tour & Tea. £20 Booking essential. Meet at the hall at 2.30pm.
- Saturday 11th July Full day visit to Beaumaris Castle & Penmon Priory Anglesey with Roger Cooper and Tom Lerwill**
Coach from Oak Street Car Park at 8.30am. Booking essential.
- 11th September** **‘Old Oswestry(s), boundaries and ancient routes’**
Tim Malim, Technical Director, SLR Consulting
- 9th October** **‘Medical Insights into Poor Law Records’**
Andrew Pattison Friends of Shropshire Archives
- 13th November** **‘Oswestry’s medieval bards: the first urban Welsh poets’**
Eurig Salisbury, University of Aberystwyth
- 11th December** **The findings and significance of OCRP’s research on the Marcher castle at Oswestry**
Roger Cooper, Project Director

**Meetings are held at the Methodist Church Hall, Castle Street
on the second Friday of the month at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated**

Entry fee: Members £2 Visitors £5