

Oswestry & Border History & Archaeology Group

Newsletter

Issue 20

Summer 2020



With none of our usual visits to report the contributors to this Newsletter have focussed on accessible local places which could be visited independently over the summer.

The virtual tour starts at Cae Glas Park , passes by Brogyntyn, and on to the Gledrid roundabout, makes a detour to Montgomery and returns safely to the Castle and Old Oswestry.

The Cae Glas Park is sometimes described as ‘the jewel in Oswestry’s crown’. It is perhaps a surprise to learn that, as a public park, it is little more than a century old, having opened to the public on 23 June 1910. The Memorial Gates will be one hundred years old next year: they were formally unveiled on 27 December 1921 by Colonel Campbell of Broom Hall, VC, assisted by Sergeant Harold Whitfield, VC, and by Major Parker Leighton of Sweeney.



But Cae Glas has a longer history. The name reflects the fact that the park was formerly the substantial gardens of a big house called Cae Glas situated on Church Street. Cae Glas lay between the parish church and the New Gate, its grounds immediately beyond the town walls. It is likely that the house was damaged in 1644, in the Civil War, and was repaired, or rebuilt, in the late seventeenth century. The house and its grounds were sold in 1810, and again in 1834, the old house being demolished shortly afterwards and replaced by the pair of houses which now stand either side of the park gates.

An advertisement for an auction due to take place on 3 October 1810 described Cae Glas as “an elegant and most desirable mansion house, with commodious offices, a coach house and stable, walled and kitchen gardens, and also a beautiful lawn and pleasure ground around it, containing in the whole about eight acres of rich land, formerly in the occupation of Mrs Barrett, and now of Miss Mytton”. The notice added that “the house consists of a vestibule, a small parlour, a spacious dining room fronting the lawn, butler’s pantry, kitchen &c. on the ground floor, a handsome drawing room (also looking into the lawn), several comfortable bed chambers and dressing rooms on the first story, and servants’ rooms in the attic story”.

Other sale particulars from the early 1830s provide more details, noting “excellent stalled stabling for five horses, two coach houses, saddle and harness room, granary, and groom’s chamber, cow-house, piggery, and dog-kennel, most of which have been lately erected”, as well as, in the gardens, a conservatory, hot houses, Dutch frames and a gardener’s cottage. Also, there were “three excellent seats” in the parish church which belonged to the house.

Watkin’s *Oswestry* tells us that the house and its grounds “in the seventeenth century formed part of the estate of the Kynastons of Maesbury” and that by marriage to Mary Kynaston in 1728 the property passed to Vaughan Barrett, gent., of Alberbury. In due course, other family members having died, Cae Glas and significant amounts of land and property elsewhere in Shropshire and Montgomeryshire passed to Letitia and Elizabeth Barrett, the surviving daughters of Vaughan Barrett and Mary Kynaston.

From the early 1780s, the two Barrett sisters formed part of the circle of friends of Miss Sarah Ponsonby and the Hon. Eleanor Butler of Plas Newydd, the Ladies of Llangollen. Numerous visits were paid both to Cae Glas and to Plas Newydd until unlucky circumstances meant that the Barretts fell out of favour. The Ladies’ journals include references to Cae Glas. For example, on 19 February 1788, they travelled to Oswestry,

in the chaise belonging to the Hand Hotel, “breakfasted with our Barretts, [and] walked round their grounds with Mrs Barrett”.

"A plan of Cae Glas in 1830, showing the house facing Church Street, and its grounds extending back to Welsh Walls. Copyright Shropshire Archives, ref. 7577/42/27. Reproduced here with permission"



Much later, the Ladies seemingly now reconciled with Letitia Barrett, these journals record a visit to Oswestry on 15 March 1802 when they had “stopped at little Edward the Bookseller’s, paid him his bill. Left some newspapers to be bound. Next to little Edward the Silversmith, bought a pen knife, a silver pencil and gold locket, and some honeysuckle soap. We then went to Mrs Barrett’s. Found her battling with a rebellious Tenant to whom she forgave thirty pounds arrears of rent. When the contest was over, she and Margaret [Davies] went with us round her ground”.

Elizabeth Barrett had died in 1792. Letitia, the elder of the sisters, died in 1803, when visiting Bath. Both sisters’ wills survive and show that they were very wealthy, but also very generous, with sizeable bequests to each of their servants. The bulk of their assets went to distant Kynaston relations, in Derbyshire and Essex. Cae Glas was, as noted, sold off, being purchased by the Rev. Nathaniel Roberts who, a quarter century later, sold the property to Thomas Jones of Chester, a notable architect.

The scheme was abandoned: no new road and no houses were ever built. Cae Glas remained in the hands of Thomas Jones’ family until it was sold on, on generous terms, to the Town Council in 1909, for conversion to a public park. Once

lockdown comes to an end, I intend to look further into the reasons for the abandonment of the building scheme.

Oswestry is very fortunate that the proposals did not go ahead.

Continued...

In addition to demolishing Cae Glas and replacing the old house with two new houses, plans were drawn up in the early 1850s to drive a new road from Welsh Walls through to Church Street. In June 1854 advertisements in the local press announced the sale of “desirable and valuable freehold building ground ... adjoining the best part of Church Street”. Ten building plots were advertised, nine with a standard 63ft frontage “to an intended new street” and the tenth, at the proposed junction with Welsh Walls, with a frontage of 68 ft. The plots varied in size, with lengths between 35 and 50 yards. Further reference to Watkin confirms that the street, and the houses, were planned along the northern boundary of Cae Glas – so we can imagine the new road following the line of the present tarmac path from the park’s Welsh Walls entrance towards Church Street, with the ten new houses laid out so that they looked out across what remained of the parkland towards the parish church.

Changes at Brogyntyn Hall Derek R. Williams



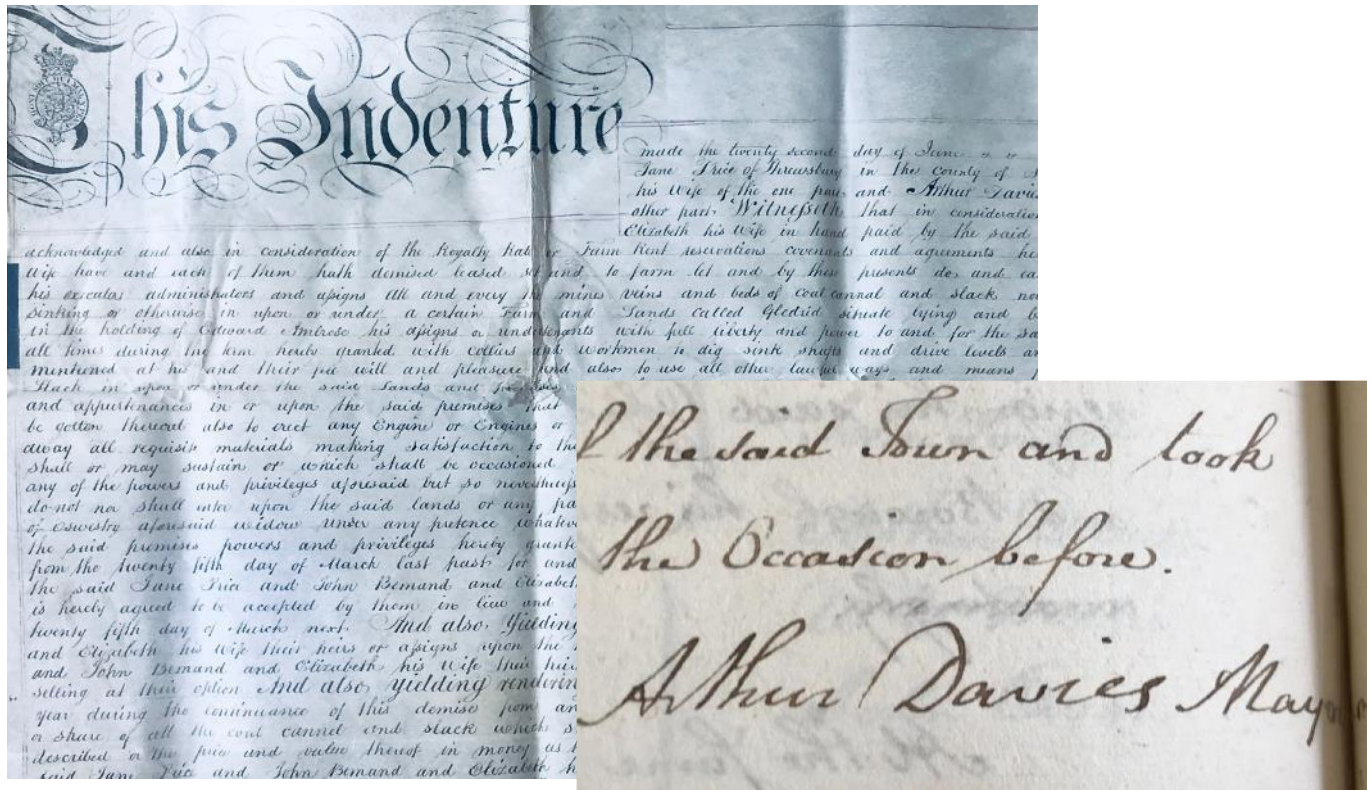
Since 2016, when listed building consent was granted for the demolition of its dilapidated east wing, Brogyntyn Hall has changed dramatically – arguably, for the better. With the living space reduced by a third, the aspect from the south east is of a more balanced structure. The restoration of the fabric of the walled garden is well under way, too. The public footpath through the estate was re-routed some time ago and now takes the walker around the back of the walled garden, rather than between the hall itself and the adjoining buildings. Brogyntyn Home Farm, just off the minor road connecting Mount Road and Pant Glas, remains untouched, with no sign of its intended restoration and the building of fifty new houses.

A circuit either from the footpath starting at the Brogyntyn (Home) Farm end of the estate or from Oakhurst Road (B4579) gives splendid views of the hall itself and takes in some of the adjoining woodland, including the lovely lime avenue. Thanks to some early, judicious replanting, this is now beginning to recover from the terrible storm that felled so many of its trees not so very long ago. The Oswestry-Selattyn road (B4579) is a difficult stretch to walk, being fairly narrow and busy, and having no pavement for much of the way. An alternative is to park half way up Mount Road, walk through the estate from the Brogyntyn Home Farm end, turn left at Oakhurst Lodge and complete that shorter circuit by turning left into Pant Glas and back to your starting place.

For photos of work on the interior of the hall, see <https://arrolarchitects.co.uk/work/brogyntyn-hall/>. For numerous photos of the changing exterior, see ‘Save Brogyntyn Hall, Oswestry’, <http://www.facebook.com/groups/1403761933247411/>.

Was this the first “industrial mine” in Saint Martins?

Pierre Sarre



In 1807, Arthur Davies (1754-1816) took up a 21 year lease to open a coal mine in Gledrid, Parish of Saint Martins. Arthur Davies had been a councillor of Oswestry from 1789 to 1801 and mayor in 1794-95. He is likely to be the same Arthur Davies, surveyor, who made the first detailed plan of Oswestry around 1790.

The lease itself shows that a proper industrial operation was envisaged:

He leases “the mines, veins and beds of coal... now open and discovered or that shall be hereafter found and discovered by digging, sinking or otherwise... upon or under a certain farm and lands called Gledrid in the Parish of Saint Martins...”. He is also authorised to “make roads and rail ways as may be necessary for mining, converting or carrying away all such coal... also to erect ... engines”.

All this for a cost of £50 at signature plus £100 on 25th March 1808, and in subsequent years, 10 tons of coal plus 1/6 of the coal produced, or a minimum payment of £50

The lease also shows some early environmental concerns as “when... any pit or pits shaft or shafts ... shall become useless... Arthur Davies... shall fill and level in the best possible manner ...and cover the same with soil six inches deep so that the land may be rendered productive in tillage and pasture”.

Arthur Davies died in 1816, in 1818 his widow, Judith, gave notice to terminate the lease because of “the said mines of coal ... having become so reduced in quantity and attended

with so much expense in the working that the same cannot be gotten to profit...". The venture had not been a success: on April 1820 Judith Davies receives a letter from Thomas Kyffin (executor of Mr Davies' will) saying that "The concern has been so very unfortunate that I fear the sale of the tools etc will not be enough to pay the debts due from the company...".

Montgomery's Town Well

Shelagh Hampton

Montgomery's Grade II listed old town well is situated by the Dragon Hotel and faces east over the Market Square. The site is marked as a wellhead on John Speed's 1610 map of the town and is often referred to as 'the conduit' as it is believed to have acted as an outlet for Montgomery's reservoir which had been privately built by the Powis Estate, originally to feed the Estate's properties

The main, gritstone structure, of later 19th century date and in the 'Tudor style' consists of short, curved retaining walls either side of a projecting central feature capped with a shouldered gable and framing a shallow, arched recess. The stone probably came from Montgomery's second gaol, decommissioned in the 1870s then partly demolished. Towards the top of the recess a delicate sandstone shield features the arms of the Earls of Powis, topped by a coronet, and bears a date of 1777. This stone may be a survivor from an earlier wellhead. Also within the recess, below the shield, is affixed a wrought-iron arrangement of unknown purpose but almost certainly connected with the provision of water

Atop the gable is attached a handsome, scrolled wrought-iron support for a Victorian lamp with iron finial. The lamp, originally gas-fed, was later converted to electricity. It served as a street light until 2019 when its power was cut after storm damage but not reconnected because of a dispute between the Town and County Councils, and the Lymore Estate (a Powis Estate subsidiary) which owned the underlying stone structure but felt that the lamp's role within the public electricity circuit meant that one of the Councils should take responsibility for financing its repair and reconnection.



OBHAG Visit 2013

However, the matter was resolved in January 2020 when the site was purchased by a local benefactor. Both stone and iron elements are in process of being repaired in preparation for reconnection and a future visit is definitely recommended.



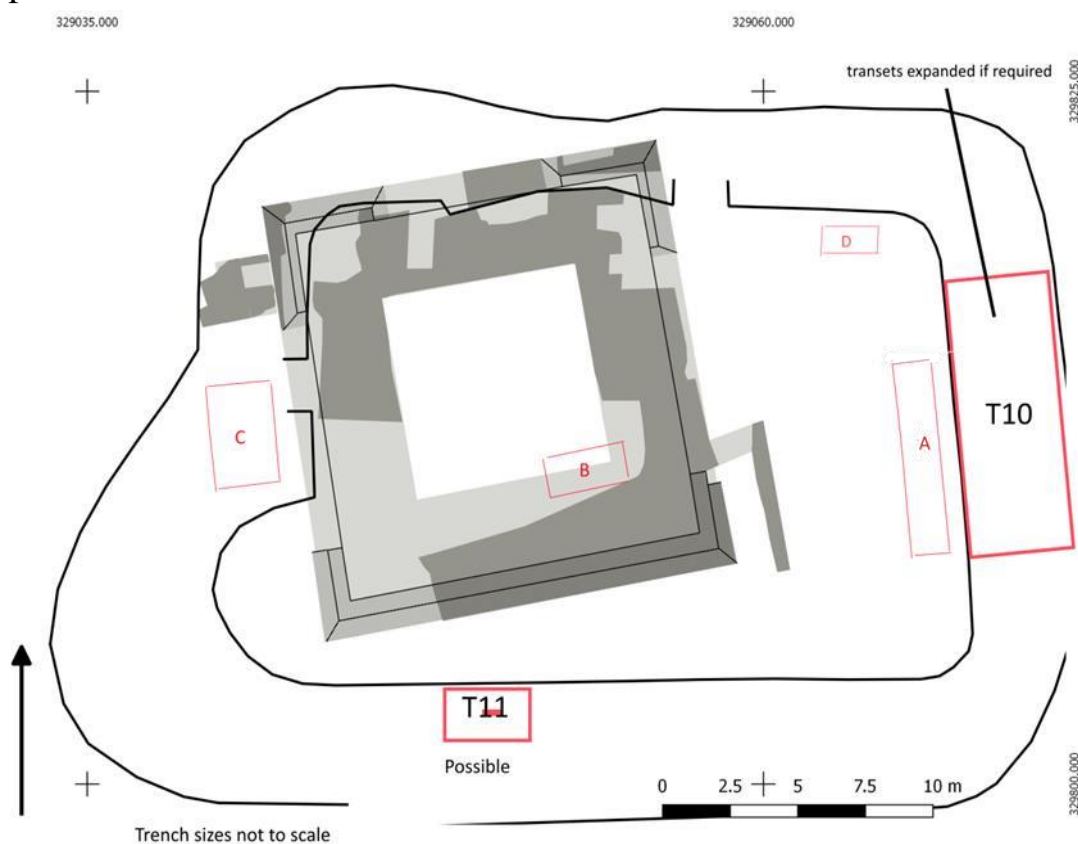
Oswestry Castle Update Roger Cooper



We had to consider many factors before deciding that the a duty of care to our team was of paramount and we should cancel the planned 2020 excavations.

We were mindful of the fact that quite a few of us would be considered high risk and it would be extremely difficult to for example, socially distance, wear masks and use the towns facilities.

Assuming this virus is under control, we are working on a plan for next year and yes, we intend to excavate in May and September in 2021 .Within our capacity and time these are the proposed trenches, 10 & 11 must be undertaken and the others in finer lines are in order of importance.



Trench 10 has two aims

- 1 To investigate the suspected wing wall in the northern area of the trench.
2. By means of small sondage's, to discover if the suspected chapel wall extends under or into the retaining wall on the eastern edge of T10.

Trench 11, An investigative trench to see if there is any southern extension to the keep's face.

T (A), maybe undertaken if T10 does not resolve the eastern limits of the chapel wall . T (B), we have not seen the south- eastern internal corner of the keep?

T (C), this area is worthy of further excavation particularly because I don't understand it!

T (D), worth a small trench to reveal any unforeseen structure.

Old Oswestry Update

Kate Clarke

The bid to build in the setting of Old Oswestry rumbles on as we faced a third planning application for housing while COVID-19 took its grip.



HOOOH would like to thank OBHAG members for their ongoing support and efforts in opposing the latest set of plans for 91 houses. The total number of objections has now passed 250 (as of 7 July 2020).

The campaign was dealt a blow in April when Historic England, following meetings with the planning agent, Berrys, and Shropshire Council, softened its stance and effectively gave the green light to the latest revision. This is despite the development proposals still breaching a northern limit agreed and adopted in the Local Plan. HOOOH compiled a comprehensive challenge to Historic England's response. The campaign is now waiting to find out when the proposals will go before the northern planning committee. Shropshire Council currently has no idea, according to their latest communication with us. However, it is unlikely to be before September as Highways England has requested a 3-month deferral on a planning decision due to ongoing highway issues. We will endeavour to keep members updated. (Read it here: http://oldoswestryhillfort.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HOOOH-response-to-Historic-England-representation_FINAL_04MAY2020.pdf)

On a different note, we are delighted to see that Old Oswestry's amazing heritage is celebrated in a new book from Archaeopress, edited by Tim Malim and Dr George Nash.

Its ISBN is: 978-1-78969-611-0 .

