



Oswestry & Border History & Archaeology Group

Newsletter

Issue 4

August 2012



St Michael's Church, Lydbury

Sponsor: Shropshire County Joint Local Committee for
Oswestry with the help of Nicki Young—Community

Chairman`s Page

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter.

Firstly as usual our series of talks have got off to a good start again this year starting with a look at Saxon Shrewsbury. At the AGM in March, Margaret Hill our president gave us a very interesting talk about some surveying work she did at Monemvasia, an island just off the coast of mainland Greece founded by the Byzantines in the 6th Century. Also at the AGM two members were welcomed onto the committee, Mrs Margaret Harrison and Mr Derrick Winter.

The evening visits have again been a success with the weather staying fine on all occasions. The visits to Melverley and Erddig were very well attended. The Bishops Castle trip was extremely good, with firstly a visit to Lydbury North and then on to Bishops Castle itself.

The Oswestry Museum is now up and running and is open on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. There are many displays including some from the Llanymynech heritage site, Cambrian Heritage Railway and the Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital plus many others. There is also a timeline dating from earliest geological times with more detail from the Iron Age up to present history with continual updates.

It has come to our notice that plans have been put forward for a development along both the B5069 Gobowen Road and the A483/A5. If this is allowed then we will lose the visual aspect of the hillfort from both these roads. A letter of objection has been sent to the planning committee on behalf of the group, also our President, Margaret Hill has sent one jointly with the Civic Society on our behalf. Let`s hope that this will be enough to stop these developments from going ahead.

The autumn season is now upon us and we will be back indoors from September with our first speaker Mr Peter Francis who will give us a talk about “The Stiperstones Lead-mines”. I hope that there is something to interest all of you. Don`t forget there is also tea and biscuits after the meetings.

The programme for 2013 is now well under way with another year of talks and visits to look forward to.

I hope to see you all again soon.

Irene Milhench (Chairman)

Evening Visit to Molverley Church Friday May 11th 2012

There was a large group of 26 members and friends which turned out at St Peter's Church at Molverley.

Mrs Lyn Lloyd welcomed the group in place of the Rector Rosie Byers who could not attend. We had a tour of the church and then sat and listened as our guide told us about the history of this ancient church.

The church is timber framed with wattle and daub walls. The church now standing was founded in 1406 after a previous church was burnt down by Owain Glyndwr in 1401. It is the oldest church in Shropshire.

During renovations which included lifting the building to put concrete underneath they found an interesting item walled up which had been part of the Catholic Communion. This was a little wooden spoon shaped symbol which would have been passed around and kissed while offering the Peace. (It had probably been hidden after the reformation).

It was such a beautiful evening that we wandered around the churchyard and down by the river after the talk to enjoy the lovely spring flowers in the grass.

Gwyneth Winter

Seminar



'Ruling and Dividing'
Offa's legacy in the Northern Marches
Saturday 27th October 2012
10:15am to 4:00pm

The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry
Tickets £10.00

IFTON MEADOWS L.N.R.
ST. MARTINS, OSWESTRY, SHROP-
SHIRE



Following the closure of Ifton colliery in 1968 three shale tips were left. The site was typical of many spoil heaps in rural areas and stood out as an eyesore against the green of the surrounding area. Two of these tips containing some 1,955,000 cubic yards (1,804,615 cubic metres) of shale were obtained by Oswestry Borough Council in 1975 and became the subject of a reclamation project. They would have liked to include the large conical tip but this could not be obtained at that time.

The two shale tips obtained are what we now know as Ifton Meadows L.N.R. It had two long plateau like tips, with steep eroded side slopes and precipitously steep slopes extending into the existing water course at Price's Dingle. The spoil tipping had extended across two meadows, ending with a lagoon/slurry bed deposit near Pen-y-Banc Farm. Maps pinpoint 19 century shafts at this end of the site. To the east of the site, the overgrown remains of building foundations and the disused colliery railway line were found, along with cable, artefacts and backbats.

A big problem was the stream; this had been diverted from its natural course (so that the valley could be filled with spoil)

through pipes which ran around the southern and western boundaries, descending by a large ugly concrete flume into Prices Dingle. On top of the colliery debris the hedgerows had been used by people for fly tipping and several old vehicles were found.

The task of transforming this derelict area fell to Oswestry Borough Council. Who took advice from a London based Land Use consultant on the feasibility of a reclamation scheme, which was helped when in December, 1975 the Department of the Environment decided to give 100% grants to local authorities to help with the basic costs of reclaiming derelict land. 221,000 cubic yards (204,000 cubic metres) of spoil was removed by motor scraper and blade and the remaining meadow was stripped. Top soil from old dumps was recovered and conserved for the final surface treatment. Liming at the subsoil stage and then a programme of fertilizing followed. However although extensive excavations over a wide area took place the pit shafts were not found.

On the 12th May 1978 ten years after the closure of the colliery an official opening took place on the 48.3 acre (19.6 hectare) site and Ifton Meadows was born. Sir Ian Bancroft K.C.B. (Head of Home Civil Services & Permanent Secretary of The Civil Service Department) unveiled a plaque donated by the contractors 'Quinroy Specialist Contracts Ltd'. The National Coal Board also donated a coal tub from the mine at Bersham Colliery, which was placed at the colliery entrance to the site (Scrap yard/ Industrial estate entrance).

Over the following years Oswestry Borough Council continue to maintain the site but also rented out the land for grazing. This did not prove successful due to the poor soil structure and over the last few years it has been used primarily by the local people to walk their dogs or just to walk and admire the scenery and wildlife.

Over the next 27 years nature worked its magic, the flora and fauna increased, endangered skylarks started to breed on the site and its importance as a 'nature reserve' was recognised on the 5th January, 2005 when Councillor David Cooper signed the formal declaration on behalf of Oswestry Borough Council and made Ifton Meadows the first Local Nature Reserve (L.N.R.), in North Shropshire

In 2002 a group of local people decided that they would like a say in what was happening and Ifton Meadow Management Committee was formed.

On 29th February and 11th March, 2004 a new hedgerow/wildlife corridor was planted in memory of a young man who as a child played in these fields. The planting of this hedgerow between Price's Dingle and Bramble Wood replaces the one destroyed when the meadow was used for spoil; (the mature trees that can be seen are part of the original hedgerow). It was completed with the help of children from the local schools, volunteers and North Shropshire Countryside Rangers.

2006 saw the main entrance opened up and a roadway extended into the site for a short distance. However this did not allow access into the site for disabled, mothers with buggies and those with mobility problems etc. Following a successful application to Breathing Places in 2007/8 the path was extended to the top of the Meadows, which did enable the site to be used by these groups of people.

2008 was also a special year as it was the 30th Anniversary of the opening of Ifton Meadows as a 'green space' and also the 40th Anniversary of the Closure of Ifton Colliery.

Events to mark both these anniversaries were held throughout the year which were supported by 'Awards for All, Big Lottery' and St.Martins Parish Council.

St.Martins Youth Club also marked the year by making a 'Memorial Mosaic which sits at the view point at the end of the new pathway

The Shropshire Disabled Group also launched their new 2nd edition leaflet of trails suitable for use by the disabled at the site in November 2008. Ifton Meadows features on the main cover. Since then we have obtained grants from 'Breathing Places' Big Lottery and also grants from Local Joint Committee for a second notice board at the top of the Dingle and to help fund the Jubilee Picnic in 2012 also it helped with St.Martins Parish Council to run our annual 'Lantern Parade' which remembers the miners walking to and from the pit using their

Walking around the 47 acres site listening to the skylark's singing and enjoying the scenery it is hard to believe that 44 years ago Ifton Meadows was a colliery spoil heap. A full circle has evolved on the site, from farming to Coal Mining back to a green space for everyone to enjoy.

Our thanks to Oswestry Borough Council for their foresight in those early years, without it we would not be able to enjoy the peace and beauty that this lovely site offers.

Summary of Ifton Meadow by Ann Williams – June 2012

Evening Visit to Erddig Friday June 8th 2012

After raining all day it had stopped just in time for our visit to Erddig. It was quite a good size group of about 12 or 13 people which started out on our walk through the landscape surrounding the house and gardens with our first stop by the river Clwydog. Here Blair Poole, our guide explained how the river's course had been changed in the early days of the estate to allow the mills which were in use at the time to make use of the water. Walking through the fields he told us how the field system had been raised along the river to help prevent flooding and to allow better use of the landscape.

When we reached the bridge we turned right and walked along the Black Brook which flows into the Clwydog at this point. On our left was Big Wood on which the Motte and Bailey Castle stands although we could not see it from here as it was shrouded in trees but we did manage to see part of Wat's Dyke through the trees. On the right was a slight hill with a farmhouse on the top, this is where it is thought the first Erddig Hall had been before being built in its present position in the late 17th century. Just past here we stopped at a set of gates which led into Big Wood. Blair showed us the decorative reliefs on the sandstone pillars at the side of the gates, these appear to be a wicker horn filled with fruit similar to the horn of plenty and an item which is difficult to describe, on first appearance it looks like a syringe but is probably a honey spinner or seed bow.

A little further on we crossed the Black Brook which is a man-made watercourse and walked up towards the staircase weir. Again this is another piece of engineering to manage the landscape for agricultural use. Just past the entrance to the House we passed some fields on our right which Blair told us were medieval, these had features from the medieval period including ridge and furrow and also the remains of a drovers road which could be seen very clearly towards the rise in the landscape.

From here we turned left down a narrow lane which took us to the back of the house towards the bailey. A walk up a slight rise took us onto the bailey itself where we found the two lines of trees which had been landscaped to create a walkway from one end of the bailey to the other. No-one is sure exactly what it was used for because it does not lead anywhere.

We then worked our way up to the Castle Motte which appeared to be very small indeed. The Castle was mentioned originally in the pipe rolls of Henry the second in 1161, it is thought it had been built by Hugh Lupus 1st Earl of Chester. It was captured by the Welsh leader Owain Gwynedd in the 12th century but after 1472 there are no more references to it. Blair explained that there had been a tower on the top of this mound which would possibly have been very high. Again we could see Wat's Dyke running alongside and below the mound. We finished the tour with just enough time to return to our cars before the rain started again.

It was a very enjoyable and interesting tour and although we ran over time it was well worth it.

Irene Milhench

Visit to Bishop's Castle and Lydbury **Saturday July 14th 2012**

Quite a few members turned up along with raincoats etc, for the coach trip to Bishops Castle and Lydbury. We went to Lydbury North first, arriving at about 11.15am. We were greeted by Terri Greene who is a member of the Lydbury Field Archaeology Group. She led us into St Michael's church where the archaeological displays were held. Here they offered us some refreshments by the way of tea and cake and we had a look round at the different displays from various excavations and other local archaeological information. Terri then gave us a small talk about the Norman church itself, telling us about the two families who had chapels built inside the church on either side of the aisle. One family by the name of Plowden who had a catholic chapel built on the north side and the other family of Walcot from Walcot Hall had an Anglican chapel built on the south side. Other interesting features were the Jacobean pews and the rood screen. We had a few minutes to look round the church before going on down to the fields where the group have done excavations on a mill within the agricultural landscape of the Walcot Estate. Here we gathered round the remains of stone walls while Mike Greene explained the reasons for the dig and what they had discovered. Unfortunately we could not stay too long as we had to set off for Bishops Castle for lunch.

After lunch we split into two groups, one going with Margaret Hill up to the castle and the other going into the House on Crutches museum with Heather Hidden.

On the walk up to the castle Margaret stopped to show us the houses that had been built into the ditches outside the town walls. We then walked onto the bailey and she explained what was found when the area had been cleared of all undergrowth. These were remains of walls belonging to the inner and possibly outer baileys. Bishops Castle is a Norman castle of the Motte and Bailey type. The original castle was thought to be approximately 2 miles further from the town before a new one was built on the hill above the town. The stone castle was built in its present position to replace the old fortification in 1167.

At the House on Crutches which now houses the museum we were given a talk by someone from the museum about the history of the town. This was a planned town being laid out with burgage plots which one can still see remnants of today. The 18th century Town Hall also housed the local prison underneath. The town itself was given a Royal Charter for a market by King John in 1249.

After the talk we had a look round the museum which had an array of items from different periods on show. At the end of our visit we walked down through the town to meet the coach and make our way home.

It was a very extremely enjoyable day with a nice mixture both of historical and archaeological interest to suit everyone.

Irene Milhench



New Members

Welcome to new members:

Mrs Mavis Griffiths, Mr Christopher Jobson,
Mr Malcolm Andrew and Mrs Jane Fineron.



Autumn/Winter Talks

2012

Friday September 14th at

7.30pm

“Stiperstones Lead Mines”

Peter Francis

Friday October 12th at 7.30pm

Recent work by the Clywd Powys

Archaeological Trust

Lecturer: Jeff Spencer

Friday November 9th at 7.30pm

“Ysgeifiog Dig”

Maria Blagojevic & Bev Webber

(St Asaph Archaeology)

Friday December 14th at

7.30pm

“Tithe Maps”

Jessie Hanson

2013

Friday January 11th at

7.30pm

The Temperance movement in

Shropshire

Carol James



Membership Renewals

Subscriptions will be due on the 1st January.

Junior (15-17 yrs) £7.00	Senior Citizen	£8.00
Adult	£10.00	Family £12.00

Payment can be made at any of the meetings or by cheque payable to the membership secretary:

Mrs Margaret Ward, Greystones Court, Shrewsbury Road,

Oswestry. SY11 2RT

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