

FIELD TRIP – 25 SEPTEMBER 2011 – MOEL Y GAER, BODFARI

The Society had received an invitation to visit the nearby hillfort of Moel y Gaer, Bodfari where the University of Oxford were undertaking a survey of the hillfort.

The hillfort is situated on private land, owned by the Pennant Family, above the village of Bodfari in the Vale of Clwyd. Moel y Gaer is a prehistoric hillfort at the northern end of the Clwydian range, located on a summit overlooking the valley of the River Wheeler. Moel of Gaer is roughly translated as 'bald hill of the fortress'. The Offa's Dyke Path passes along the foot of the hill.

The hillfort was noted by various early antiquaries including Edward Lhuyd and Thomas Pennant from the 17th century onwards.

The fort is one of the smallest of the chain of six hillforts found on the Clwydian Range, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It probably dates from the Iron Age, although there is no definitive evidence to establish the exact period during which it was occupied. It has a single entrance on its northern side and is defended by a steep slope on the eastern side of the hill.



Inside the hillfort © Maria Blagojevic

A group of people joined Fiona Gale, the County Archaeologist and one of the Oxford University students to walk to the hillfort.

The walk took us up some steep slopes, through gentle woodland and meadows and along the Offa's Dyke Path to reach the hillfort and Fiona told us about the history of the area, but

although strenuous, the visit was well worth the effort.

Oxford University is currently undertaking archaeological survey work on the ancient enclosure, which is thought to date back to the Iron Age, around 2,500 years ago.

Hillforts are giant enclosures which were built by digging huge ditches and large banks with the tools of the time – possibly bone and wooden shovels and antler picks.

It was hoped that the work being undertaken by Oxford University would shed light on why the enclosure was built, which was inside, the construction of the fort and its ramparts.

We look forward to accessing the published works following the dig in due course.

At the end of the visit, a small group left the main group and were invited to visit the haematite mines at Minehead, Bodfari by the daughter of the owner. A number of Society Members had previously visited the mine. The mine had been worked between 1877-1909 and visible remains still exist ie a number of converted buildings including the former agent's house and workshop, together with mine shaft and horse whim.

This proved to be a very interesting end to the day.



Haematite mine © Maria Blagojevic

