

CAC Kids in the Wye Valley

February 1st 2015

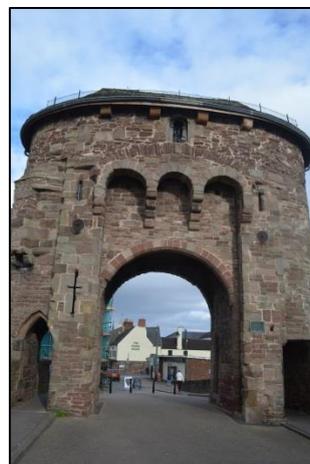
It was a small yet most eclectic group of CAC Kids that met at Brockwier on a crisp winter afternoon on the first day of February. Given the size of the group and the fact that we had walked Offa's Dyke several weeks beforehand, the itinerary was changed to explore the magnificent Medieval Monmouth.



Monmouth Castle was built shortly after the Norman invasion, the site being selected by William Fitz Osborn sometime between 1067 and 1071. William Fitz Osborn was steward to William the Conqueror and fought with him at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The remains we see of the Great Tower date to the first half of the 12th Century, maybe around 1120. The large windows in the tower were inserted around 1350.

Henry V was born at this now small but fascinating site in 1386.

The next stop was the slightly less historic Coffee No.1 (although it is one of many shops on the High Street that are still laid out in Medieval style) for a delicious coffee and carrot cake and then on to Monmouth's finest site; Monnow gate and bridge



This is the only remaining fortified bridge with tower in the whole of Britain. Originally a wooden bridge occupied this site, timbers from which have been dated to around 1180. The current stone bridge was constructed in the late 13th century – maybe 100 years after its wooden predecessor. The gatehouse was constructed in the 14th century, and has been put to many uses, including a gaol.

From Monmouth, we headed back to Tintern, stopping on route at Harold's Stones, after which the village of Trellech takes its name. Three huge stones lie in a field by the road. Made from Pudding Stone this is a fantastic Bronze Age, or possibly late Neolithic site.



There are potentially cup marks on the stones, and reference has been made to an engraved cross, although we struggled to spot either.

For a small village, Trellech is stuffed full of history. St Nicholas Church dates from the 13th and 14th centuries, and is home to two amazing features. Within the church is a sundial, depicting three historical features of Trellech, Harold's Stones, the Virtuous Well and Tump Terret. The sundial is dated to the 17th century and although, situated as it is indoors, the sun has not cast its rays on the gnomon for many years, it gives away some historic clues to Trellech.



The amazing sundial at St. Nicholas Church

Equally as interesting in the churchyard is found a preaching cross, possibly dating back to the 8th or 9th century when it is thought that a small wooden church occupied this site.



A short walk away is Tump Terret, a medieval motte and bailey castle dating to the Norman invasion. The ditch is clearly visible and a climb atop affords a lovely view of the landscape.



The Virtuous Well is a later site, a spring with plenty of water bubbling away under foot. The water is rich in iron and was being used for medicinal purposes well into the 18th century.



And finally the magnificent Lion Inn. Built in 1580 and retaining many original features, is well worth a visit, obviously for its historical significance and nothing to do with its many CAMRA awards.

Our final stop in Tintern was to spend an hour browsing the amazing selection of rare and second hand books at the expansive Stella Bookshop. Some amazing books, including a fantastic copy of Cyril Fox's Survey of Offa's Dyke proved a little out of reach of our pockets. Specialising in children's books, this was a veritable trip down memory lane for the grown-ups. If anybody has any of those lovely old Observers books, keep hold of them, they now seem to sell for upwards of £50.00

All in all, a rather splendid afternoon.