



STRATA FLORIDA
YSTRAD FFLUR



Strata Florida Trust

Can you help us? We need your ideas and support for our proposed heritage development and outreach project!

Set up in 2006, Strata Florida Trust is a charity whose aim is to preserve the historical and architectural heritage of the Mynachlog Fawr farm buildings at Strata Florida and advance the education of the public with regards the buildings, Strata Florida and its surrounding landscape and heritage. The Trust aims to do this by restoring all of the buildings to create The Strata Florida Centre; a place that celebrates Welsh history, culture and landscape.



History & Background

Today, Strata Florida is made up of a variety of different elements, from the 12th century abbey ruins; to the early 19th century St Mary's church built on the site of original abbey chapel; through to the adjoining 17th century Mynachlog Fawr Farmstead bought by the Trust in 2016.

Strata Florida Abbey, now in the guardianship of Cadw, was known affectionately as the Westminster Abbey of Wales, and was once an important centre of culture, religion and trade, with connections spreading far across the Welsh landscape. Two of the most important surviving Welsh manuscripts, Brut y Tywysogion and the Hendregadredd Manuscript, were probably written at Strata Florida. Dafydd Ap Gwilym, Wales's most famous medieval poet, is buried in the churchyard, as are several medieval Princes of Wales.

The Grade II* listed Mynachlog Fawr farmhouse was originally built in 1670-80 as a gentry mansion out of the remains of the abbey refectory after the Dissolution in 1539. Following alteration, the ground-floor today consists of a panelled parlour containing features of its gentry past including a late-C17 panel painting and painted ceilings; a C17 staircase, and a large kitchen which preserves fittings from its use as a Welsh tenant farmhouse in the C19 and C20. Spanning several centuries, the house and objects contained within have a fascinating architectural and social history story to tell. Sadly however, today the house is in very poor condition and in need of urgent repair, with no public access permitted. The Ty pair and cart shed, stables, barn and beudy are grade II listed, dating from the later C17 to the late C19.



Current Projects

Arddangosfa Mynachlog Fawr Exhibition

Following the restoration of the first building, Y Beudy, to create a community meeting room and office space; in 2020 the Trust was successful in securing funding from a variety of sources for the conversion of the Grade II listed Tŷ Pair and cart shed into the Arddangosfa Mynachlog Fawr Exhibition. Work began on site at the end of September 2020 and we hope to open the site to the public in May 2021.

The project will create a free to enter space telling the story of the farm through the “Mynachlog Fawr in 30 objects” exhibition. Featuring a variety of objects and documents from the farmhouse and farm buildings, it will provide the opportunity for visitors of all ages to discover and engage with the social history of the house and community. In addition, the exhibition will be home to a digital interactive and educational experience that will allow users to travel back to see a day in the life of Mynachlog Fawr Farm during the 1930s and 40s. The building is also intended as a place for visitors to relax and enjoy the historic building, with chairs next to the magnificent fireplace, a coffee machine, and a selection of second hand and local history books available to read.



Strata Florida Archaeology Field School

The Strata Florida Archaeology Field School (SFAFS) opened its doors (and trenches) for the first time in 2019. Our 2020 school was sadly cancelled due to covid-19, but we have rescheduled for 2021.

SFAFS offers a fully accessible training programme and includes a wide variety of archaeological excavation and survey techniques; from understanding how to correctly use a trowel through to the collection of

geophysical data for archaeological mapping. We offer a mixture of residential courses and day courses and welcome people of all ages with no prior archaeological experience through to those wanting to build upon previous skills.

Our field school is like no other in that it aims to be the most inclusive archaeology school in the UK. We have partnered with Breaking Ground Heritage (BGH), who is our social inclusion partner. BGH specialise in promoting well-being and rehabilitation through heritage-based activities, specifically to individuals with severe physical/psychological challenges (largely, but not exclusively, veterans).

Our mission is to share Strata Florida's unique history, archaeology, heritage and links to Welsh culture, with as diverse an audience as possible, including members of the public, students, volunteers, veterans and others.



Strata Florida Heritage Development & Outreach Project

Our next proposed project aims to engage both local and national communities across Wales with the Arddangosfa Mynachlog Fawr Exhibition, Strata Florida Archaeology Field School and the wider rich history of the site and landscape; from its medieval Cistercian beginnings through to its social and agricultural significance. We want to work with schools, universities, groups and visitors alike.

The Trust will be applying to the National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) for funding to appoint a Heritage Engagement Officer (HEO) for 3 years to ensure that people can learn and experience Strata Florida, both on site and out and about across Wales. The Project Officer will deliver an exciting activity and events programme in the following key areas:

Schools, Universities and Outreach: We want the HEO to engage children and adults of all ages with the project through a programme of on-site and off-site visits, activities, workshops and events. People can learn about a variety of topics, from the site's medieval archaeology and its importance in Welsh history through to the more recent farming and social history stories as told by our exhibition and digital recreation. Being closely aligned with the school curriculum, this variety of topic areas would provide an alternative and engaging method of enabling school children to learn about Welsh culture and history. In addition to schools, the HEO would seek to work in a similar way with universities and a broad selection of interest groups.

Arddangosfa Mynachlog Fawr Exhibition: Following the opening of the Arddangosfa Mynachlog Fawr Exhibition in May 2021, we will have a space where visitors will have the opportunity to delve in to the farming and social history of our site. Since the house is currently in a very poor condition and unsuitable for visitors, this will be our first chance to properly engage visitors in this way. The HEO will use the exhibition and digital recreation to educate groups and schools on and off site, enabling a more immersive understanding and exploration of the site.

SFAFS: The field school aims to increase archaeology skills, engage the local and wider community with the archaeology and history of the site and crucially, improve the wellbeing and mental health of its participants and encourage inclusivity. The HEO will form part of the delivery team to ensure SFAFS benefits participants seeking to gain additional skills and training (through an accredited module), those with an interest in archaeology and history, individuals suffering from mental health issues, those who have previously faced exclusions either physically or socially.

Volunteers: Volunteers are already a crucial element of our work at Strata Florida, providing their skills to help with onsite project delivery, whilst gaining enjoyment and experience. The HEO would work to expand our volunteer numbers, and engage these existing volunteers more fully, providing them with a greater variety of roles and events, such as conducting tours of the excavations, archiving and collection management and exhibition development.

Young people heritage training volunteer programme: The HEO would begin an online distance volunteer programme to help people aged 16-25 gain volunteer experience in heritage to increase their skills and employability. This could include volunteer roles in transcription of archive materials; creating an accessible online digital catalogue of photographs and documents; development of social media and blogs; and fundraising in heritage. This would enable young people from A-levels through to post-university to gain experience in their field of interest, fit around their commitments, regardless of location, and despite physical, travel or Covid restrictions, improving their employability.

Traditional Building Courses: The HEO alongside other colleagues will work to create and develop a number of traditional building courses, utilising the historic built fabric of the site to help increase local skills in techniques such as dry-stone walling. 2021/22 would be a trial year to test out this concept with smaller day courses, leading to the possible expansion of the number, length and variety of courses on offer in subsequent years. This will benefit the community through increasing the skills of local trades and craftsmen, providing economic benefits, in addition to higher quality conservation and repairs as a result of greater knowledge of traditional skills. Furthermore, local skilled craftsmen and contractors would deliver the courses, providing further economic benefit to the community. Initially 3 courses would be run over the next 12 months, with approximately 15 participants on each course.

Wellbeing: Mental health and wellbeing are a key focus of the SFAFS, and we hope to expand this across more of our activities. We know how beneficial heritage and natural spaces can be to wellbeing, and the enjoyment these sites can bring as has been heightened during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through a partnership with the Fathom Trust, the HEO would help deliver a number of activities on site and within the locality to benefit participant's mental health.



How can you help?

If you think you or your organisation would like to get involved with our heritage engagement and outreach project, we'd love to hear from you. We'd welcome any suggestions or feedback, for example, what activities you'd like to see or how you think we can work with your organisation in practice? All comments will be taken on board when finalising out bid to the NLCF.

We'd really appreciate it if you could get in touch via post, email or social media by Monday 1st March 2021.

Contact

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