

## News feature



Participants of the 2019 field school



Above: Post graduate finds officer Tim Jones and Prof David Austin, director of the Strata Florida Project, looking at a bottom of a jar found at the dig



Niamh Barry and Julian Pitt during last year's field school. Below: Ceramics dating from the 12th to the 16th century were found

# 'Thrilling prospect' to unearth the rich history of Wales



## The awe-inspiring Strata Florida Abbey provides the backdrop for the return of an archaeology field

SPECIAL digs will be held at the historic Strata Florida site this summer following successful excavations last year.

The Strata Florida Trust announced this week that The Strata Florida Archaeology Field School will reopen its doors – and trenches – this summer following the huge success of the field school's first year in 2019.

Last year they welcomed participants from right across the UK, as well as France, Taiwan, Sweden, Japan and Ireland.

The school takes place in Mynachlog Fawr, the historic farm adjacent to the 12th century Strata Florida Abbey which is a captivating, evocative and internationally important site, affectionately known as the Westminster Abbey of Wales, in Pontrhydfendigaid.

The second year of the field school will run for four weeks from 30 June - 26 July.

Following completion of the school, daily dig site tours will be held to coincide with the National Eisteddfod which is being held in nearby Tregaron.

Strata Florida is rich in historical detail and is deeply significant to Welsh heritage.

The Cistercian monks who founded the abbey made it an important centre of trade, religion and culture in the 12th and 13th centuries, with connections spreading far across the Welsh landscape.

One of the foremost early Welsh historical sources, the Brut y Tywysogion was written at Strata Florida and the site has many important connections with Welsh culture and identity.

Dafydd Ap Gwilym, Wales' most famous medieval poet is buried in the churchyard, as are several medieval Princes of Wales.

An Allchurches Trust grant, secured by The Prince's Foundation, is helping to fund the field school for three years during the summers of 2019 to 2021 under its heritage grants programme.

The school is being delivered by the Strata Florida Trust in partnership with The Prince's Foundation, Allchurches Trust, University of Wales Trinity St David, Breaking Ground Heritage and Sacred Landscapes Research Project.

Grants officer, Paul Playford, who co-or-

dinates Allchurches Trust's heritage grants programme, said: "The first year of the field school attracted such a diverse range of 'diggers' and it was wonderful to hear the stories of their finds and how much they enjoyed the experience."

"The Strata Florida site provides a unique opportunity for people of all ages, from different backgrounds, with and without experience of archaeology, to take part in all aspects of an archaeological excavation in an awe-inspiring setting."

"I'm sure the field school will be even more popular in its second year."

The 2020 field season will focus on continuing excavations started in the yard of Mynachlog Fawr farm in summer 2019.

In 2019, participants were successful in discovering ceramics dating between the 12th and 16th centuries, including 13th century medieval imported French polychrome wares.

They were also able to play a part in defining the precinct area of the abbey, tracing the number of buildings in the precinct and understanding the size of the abbey, which is known to be much longer than the site Cadw currently displays to the public.

Speaking about this year's dig, Andrew Green, chair of the Strata Florida Trust, said: "An exciting opportunity awaits those who join the field school to unearth our past and discover the rich history of Wales that has shaped our future."

"Guided by our expert archaeologists you will learn the skills and techniques needed to solve questions about our ancestors and their lives."

"Whether you are new to archaeology or an experienced archaeologist that is a thrilling prospect."

Full details of the field school are available through the school's brochure, and can be downloaded from [www.strataflorida.org.uk](http://www.strataflorida.org.uk)

People can register for a place via the website or get in touch via email at [info@strataflorida.org.uk](mailto:info@strataflorida.org.uk)

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