

Offa's Dyke Journal

Volume 1 for 2019

Edited by Howard Williams and Liam Delaney



University of
Chester

Offa's Dyke Journal

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The Offa's Dyke Collaboratory and the Offa's Dyke Journal

Howard Williams and Liam Delaney

Opening the first volume of a new open-access peer-reviewed academic publication, we are pleased to introduce the Offa's Dyke Journal. This venture stems from the activities of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory, a research network founded in April 2017 to foster and support new research on the monuments and landscapes of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands and comparative studies of borderlands and frontiers from prehistory to the present. The proceedings of a series of academic and public-facing events have informed the character and direction of the Journal. Moreover, its establishment coincides with the Cadw/Historic England/Offa's Dyke Association-funded Offa's Dyke Conservation Management Plan as well as other new community and research projects on linear earthworks. Funded by the University of Chester and the Offa's Dyke Association, and published online by JAS Arqueologia and print-distributed by Archaeopress, the journal aims to provide a resource for scholars, students and the wider public regarding the archaeology, heritage and history of the Welsh Marches and its linear monuments. It also delivers a much-needed venue for interdisciplinary studies from other times and places.

Keywords: borders, borderlands, dykes, frontiers, linear earthworks, walls

Offa's Dyke does not explain itself to you. Whilst it is a superb walk, one learns surprisingly little from traversing its length. In fact, it is noticeable that the many visitors who are walking the long-distance footpath quickly accept the Dyke and become fixated on the number of miles they have covered. The Dyke has not inspired a Rudyard Kipling, who wrote of the garrison on Hadrian's Wall, nor do we have a mental image of the Saxons to put beside the Hollywood image of Rome, nor an understanding of the people of the kingdom of the Mercians over whom Offa ruled. (Hill and Worthington 2003: 9)

Introduction

For this first-ever volume of the *Offa's Dyke Journal*, we offer a three-part Introduction. First, we review recent work on linear monuments as frontiers and borderlands. Next, we survey the development and activities of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory to date. Finally, we introduce the *Offa's Dyke Journal* itself and the contents of Volume 1.

From the Devil's Dyke of Cambridgeshire to the Danevirke, from the Elbe to the Danube, early medieval frontiers and borderlands remain poorly researched. For example, Britain's



Figure 1: Offa's Dyke at Dudston Fields, Montgomeryshire, looking south. This is a well-preserved section of the monument with the bank and ditch surviving on a significant scale, but ongoing erosion caused by livestock is evident in the foreground (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2019)



Figure 2: East Wansdyke on Morgan's Hill, Wiltshire, looking east. (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2016)



Figure 3: Aerial photograph of the undated Row Ditch (Herefordshire) looking north-north-west. The continuous nature of the monument is evident; it survives in field boundaries but its near-obliteration in the foreground leaves only a subtle trace of its former route. (Musson, C.R. 03-C-1254. Herefordshire Archaeological Survey 2003: 31/08/2003)

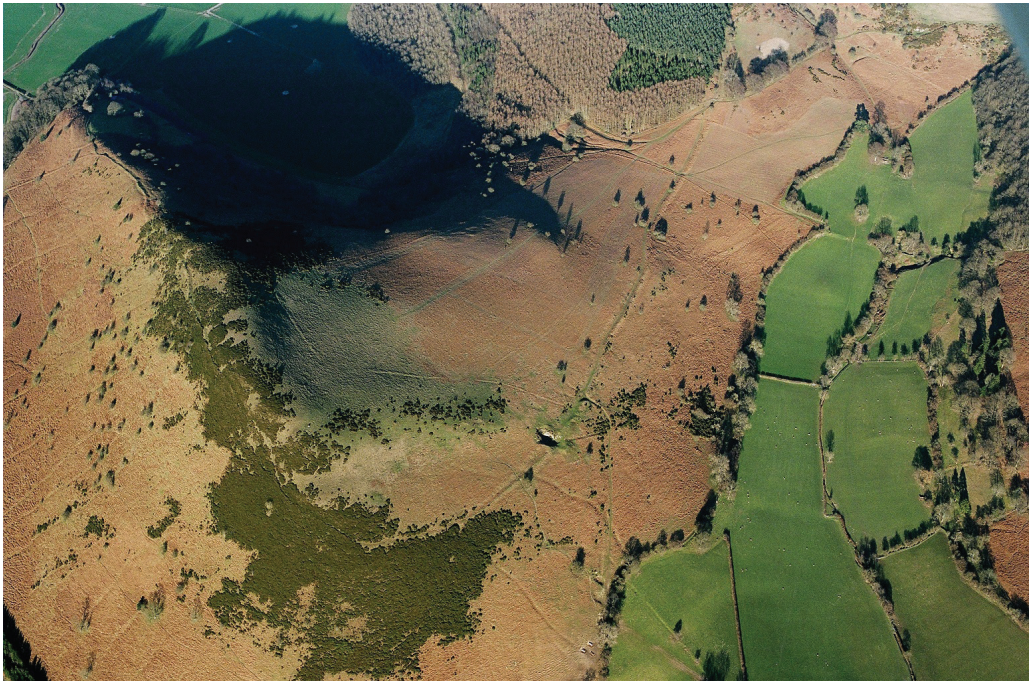


Figure 4: Aerial photograph of Herrock and Rushock Hills (Powys) orientated c. north-east. Offa's Dyke ascends (top-left) and wraps around the summit of Herrock Hill before running up to Rushock Hill (top-right). (Musson, C. R. 06-CN-1009. Herefordshire Aerial Archaeological Survey 2006: 04/05/2006)

longest linear earthwork, Offa's Dyke, has only received detailed modern survey in one well-preserved location (Everson 1991; Ray and Bapty 2016: 194–98; Figure 1). Linear earthworks are difficult to survey and map. Their impressive scale – running often for many kilometres – can make them notable landscape features, as with East Wansdyke in Wiltshire (Fox and Fox 1958; Reynolds and Langlands 2006) (Figure 2). Yet equally, their vast extent and monumentality can be a challenge to securely discerning the scale and character as they run over different geologies, topographies, and through different subsequent land uses. Whilst their banks, ditches and associated earthwork features are often expected to endure for centuries, they can be rapidly erased in only a relative short time, especially in the modern era (e.g. Belford 2017). The Rowe Ditch in Herefordshire illustrates this point: it survives preserved in field boundaries over a long distance, only to be replaced by a heavily denuded earthwork where it no longer is marked by a hedge (Figure 3). Likewise, Offa's Dyke can be charted on the ground and from the air as it dramatically wraps around Herrock Hill and continues eastwards to Rushock Hill (Powys) (Figure 4), yet the monument is lost where it crosses the river valley of the Riddings and Hindwell brooks to the north and it likewise has been lost where it drops off Rushock Hill to the east. Indeed, the continuance of the Dyke eastwards from this point is a topic of ongoing academic debate (Hill and Worthington 2003: 50, 129–33; Bapty 2004; Ray and Bapty 2016: 46, 49, 128).

Whether called ‘earthworks’, ‘walls’, ‘ramparts’ or ‘dykes’, linear monuments may remain ‘lost’ or uncertain over long distances, suspected only by references in place-names, old maps, or preserved in the lines of later features. Many short dykes survive in a fragmentary state, are elusive to the observer, and many remain undated (Malim *et al.* 1997; Hankinson and Caseldine 2006; Worthington Hill and Grigg 2015; Grigg 2018).

These are some of the reasons why linear monuments can often languish undated and only partially defined. Consequently, many have floated outside of historical and archaeological narratives as enigmas in the landscape, or else tied to narratives of warfare and territoriality without solid and detailed evidence for their date, design or disposition. Hence, as Hill and Worthington (2003: 9) note in the above quotation, even dedicated and knowledgeable visitors as well as those living in their proximity for decades often struggle to apprehend and appreciate where they are and what they are. Furthermore, dykes are often situated within and beyond individual locales, defying clear and simple senses of affinity and place-making by local people and visitors, and frustrating recognition by those attempting to chart their course. Despite a long history of antiquarian and archaeological investigations, enquiry and speculation since before the birth of the modern disciplines of history and archaeology, linear earthworks remain a fascination yet inherently ambiguous and mutable among the public and scholars alike (Rahtz 1961; Hill and Worthington 2003; Erskine 2007; Lennon 2010; Bell 2012; Tyler 2011; Ray and Bapty 2016). Indeed, studies dedicated to linear monuments remain relatively scarce. Again, Offa’s Dyke is a case in point; in a century it has had numerous individual book chapters and journal articles, but only four book-length studies exist (Fox 1955; Noble 1983; Hill and Worthington 2003; Ray and Bapty 2016). Meanwhile, Britain’s second-longest early medieval monument, Wat’s Dyke, has received even more sparse treatment (Fox 1934; Worthington 1997; Malim and Hayes 2008; see also Hill 1974; 1991; 2000; 2001).

Yet there remains considerable potential for charting the lines of dykes, revealing their shifting monumentalities and significances via multiple lines of cross-disciplinary enquiry (e.g. Hardt 2005; Reynolds and Langlands 2006). Broader questions regarding how these monuments operated as parts of early medieval frontiers and borderlands, and how they were managed, evolved, abandoned, and repurposed remain to be explored, as ably demonstrated in recent work on Offa’s Dyke (Ray and Bapty 2016; Belford 2017, this volume). Linear earthworks would have no doubt used parts of topographically defined and transformed frontiers which would have included other forms of natural marker, coasts, rivers and wetlands, heaths, woods and hills (Squatriti 2004). Not all early medieval frontiers and borderlands would have required linear earthworks to demarcate them, or even monuments of other kinds deployed in relation to a host of adapted natural features (Hardt 2005; Pohl 2005). Broader still, we need to appreciate early medieval frontiers and borderlands as more than lines or swathes in the landscape, but as zones of both mobility and control, which would have included settlements and fortifications, land and water routes (Brookes 2013; Baker and Brookes 2015). The

potential for intensive and extensive archaeological investigations of linear monuments and their landscape context was reiterated and extended most recently by Ray and Bapty (2016), and the results of such work are evident in the rich results of fieldwork: both surveys (e.g. Everson 1991) and excavations (e.g. Allen 1988; Malim *et al.* 1997; Hankinson and Caseldine 2006; Malim 2007; Malim and Hayes 2008; Belford 2017; Ladd and Mortimer 2017). Place-name evidence can be incredibly revealing (e.g. Gelling 1992; Hardt 2005) and landscape contexts for monuments require further detailed attention, taking into account those affected by, and in opposition to, frontiers as much as a focus on their creators (e.g. Edwards 2009; Murrieta-Flores and Williams 2017). The study of these linear monuments therefore requires us to investigate their construction and placement, broader multi-scalar landscape contexts and their biographies of use and reuse (Belford 2017; Ray and Bapty 2016; Murrieta-Flores and Williams 2017).

Interpretive barriers to understanding early medieval frontier works are often as significant as practical and methodological challenges. For instance, there remains a tendency to consider dykes as hard borders and military barriers rather than permeable, fluid and transformative zones of social, economic, political and cultural interaction. Whether they are constituted as enduring formulations with lasting legacies through into the modern world or elements of seemingly fleeting and fluctuating arrangements, we increasingly understand the challenges of imposing modern ideas of borders, as well as presuming contemporaneous or later literary conceptions reflect past realities (Curta 2005: 2–3). Rather than stark dividing lines between peoples and kingdoms, between 'barbarians' and 'civilization', they are more profitably considered as complex borderland zones and frontier networks. Some regard early medieval linear works as related to frontiers, but primarily as defensive military features, and indeed there are many profitable directions for considering their military uses and contexts (Grigg 2014; 2018; Reynolds 2013). Yet many entertain their potential socio-economic, political and ideological roles, and more complex relationships: monuments used to create and transform borderlands into frontiers, and monuments with multiple roles and significances (Ray and Bapty 2016: 334–64; see also Squatriti 2002; 2004; Wileman 2003). Considering how dykes were built and used to control and manage, facilitate and foster, interactions and communications as well as the movements of people, animals and resources helps us to put these monuments into the landscape and back into history (Brookes 2013). Moreover, frontier zones and their built dimensions were elements of sophisticated and shifting practices of spatial manipulation and territoriality invested with ideological and symbolic associations (Squatriti 2002; 2004; 2006; Curta 2005; Pohl 2005: 261–262; ; see also Hingley 2012; Maldonado 2015). This formulation of ethnic and social groupings might be seen as helped, as well as hindered, by the formulation and perpetuation of frontier zones from Late Antiquity to the later Middle Ages (e.g. Brather 2005). Adapting and reconfiguring Roman ideas and material traces, early medieval frontiers were complex and varied in scale and form, use and enduring significances. Furthermore, as physical traces of past times, earthworks and other monuments in frontier zones might foster and perpetuate all manner of fantastical, legendary and



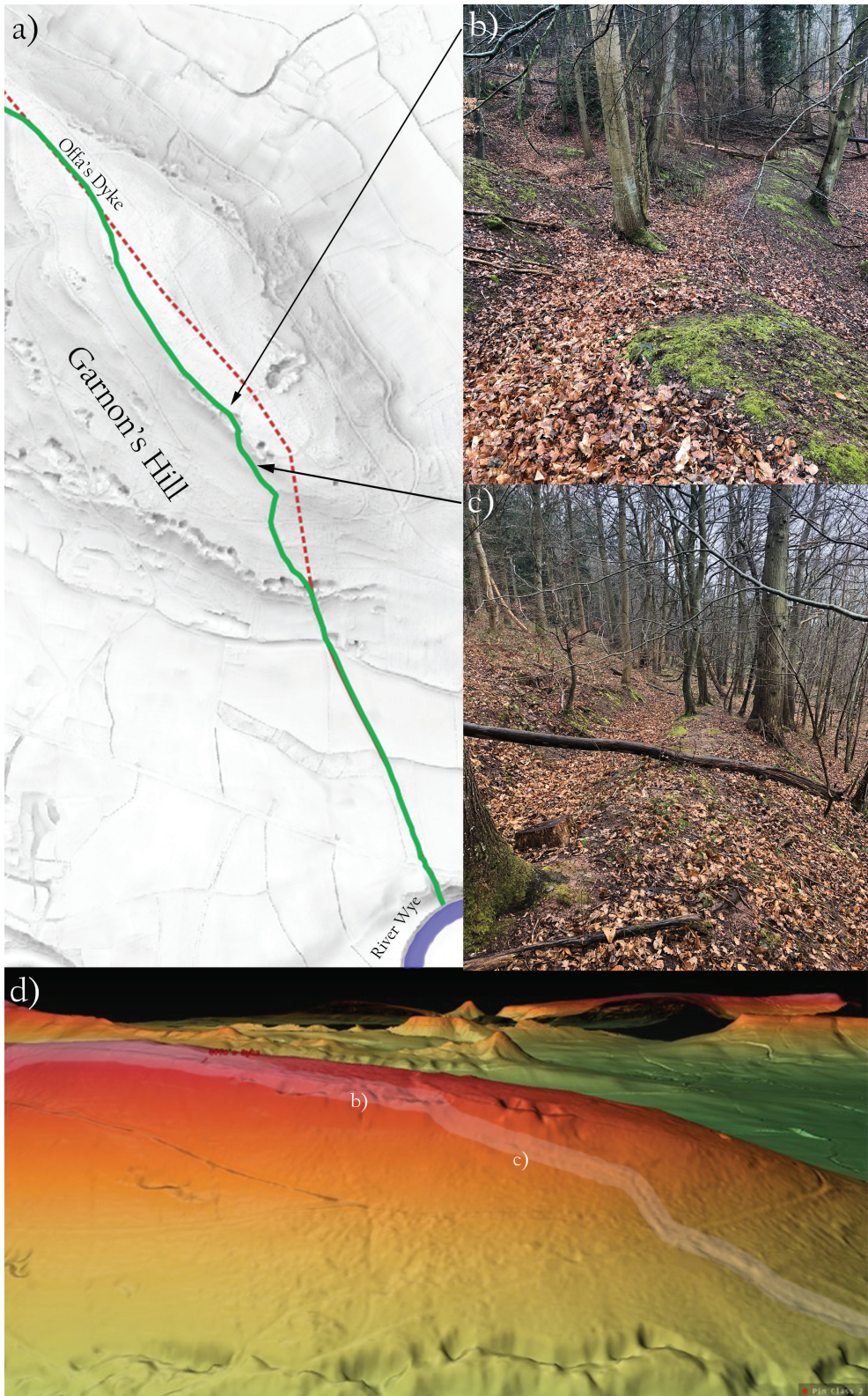
Figure 5: Drone photograph of Cwmsanahan Hill (Shropshire) where Offa's Dyke ascends and incorporates a summit, adapting to the steep topography by taking a series of stepped angled turns. N to top of the image. (Photograph: Julian Ravest)

historically grounded stories for early medieval communities and kingdoms (Pohl 2005: 257; Wileman 2003). Notwithstanding, the after-lives of these monuments are as intriguing as their construction and use, sometimes setting up traditions of frontier organisation of a very different nature and context both in the Anglo-Welsh borderlands and elsewhere (Swallow 2016; see also Bartlett and MacKay 1989), in other instances becoming powerful and evocative in myth and legend, mobilised in varied social and ideological contexts through their incongruity and redundancy.

Researchers are beginning to tackle these questions afresh, armed with a wider set of comparative perspectives. In recent decades there has been a clear growth in research on frontiers and borderlands across disciplines and time periods. These include well-established and varied research foci: prehistoric territorial divisions (DeAtley and Findlow 1984; Lewis 2012: 49–57); time-depth of frontier works (Bowen 1990: 15–41); frontiers of ancient empires, especially of Roman frontiers (Hingley 2008, 2012; Breeze 2018); and the afterlives of frontiers (Collins 2012; Hingley 2012; Maldonado 2015); the emergence of medieval frontiers (Dobat 2008), but also investigating the frontiers of modern nation-states and the complex issues with contemporary borders (Konrad and Brunet-Jailly 2019), mobility in relation to those (see Fryde and Reitz 2009; Mullin 2011a and b; Hamilakis 2018) and identity (Flynn 2008: 311–330). These include rich and varied approaches to the study of borders, borderlands and frontiers in the contemporary world in both material and metaphorical terms (e.g. McAtackney 2015; McWilliams 2013). Due to the nature of borderlands and frontiers, this topic can also cover discussions around imperialism and nationalism. Hence, our work should not shy away from evaluating the contentious topics of the construction and maintenance of borders to restrict freedom of movement (Boozer 2018: 206–39, Fauser *et al.* 2019: 483–88) From a research perspective this topic is energised in many different disciplines, debating issues around linear earthworks which includes why frontiers were created, how they functioned and the occurrence of their demise.

This growth in research interest has been bolstered by advancements in field survey including improvements and large-scale acceptance of new digital heritage technology and survey techniques of data collection, resolution, access, processing and visualisation (Bennett *et al.* 2013: 197–206). In addition to the long-term use of a host of survey methods, including aerial photography and satellite images to chart their courses (e.g. Alibaigi 2019; see Figures 4 and 5), now it is possible for large landscape monuments, such as linear monuments (including dykes) to take on a whole new life when they are visualised digitally. Due to their size, these monuments are incredibly difficult to comprehend on the ground, and this is further complicated when in woodland or

Figure 6 (next page): Re-Mapping Offa's Dyke on Garnon's Hill: (a) Garnon's Hill with dashed line indicating previously projected route of dyke and solid line indicating new route of dyke after investigation. SVF DTM created from 2m lidar model; (b) Offa's Dyke on Garnon's Hill, having just crested the ridge, facing south; (c) Offa's Dyke on Garnon's Hill, ascending the hill, facing south-east; (d) 3D Relief Model in planlauffterrain, Offa's Dyke is highlighted



equally impassable or visually restrictive environments, which hampers traditional survey greatly. Utilising digital models means these earthworks and landscapes can be explored, measured and visualised in a way that would have been impossible prior to the advent of these tools. This dataset is boosted by the accessibility of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, which are able to, very rapidly, capture images of these features from low altitudes. This results in stunning and informative images and models allows us the ability to see and study in a way which is impossible to do on the ground and before would have required expensive chartered flights (see: the work of Julian Ravest (2019); Figure 5). Lidar, especially, facilitates the quick creation of accurate digital terrain models that have been stripped of vegetation and land-cover, allowing an unobstructed view not only the earthworks but of minor topographical and surface expressions. This is especially useful when looking at large linear earthworks, whose route may be obscured by thick woodland, or potentially have been ploughed out and destroyed in later periods. The utilisation of digital survey methods is allowing discovery and precise mapping of archaeological landscapes like National Parks (Hesse 2013: 171–83, New Forest National Park 2018,), large landscape monuments like hillforts (Murray 2018) and linear earthworks such as the Antonine Wall (Hannon 2018) or the Black Pigs Dyke (O' Drisceoil *et al.* 2014: 32–34) for possibly the first time.

This approach to linear earthworks is no better exemplified by the ongoing doctoral research by one of us (Liam Delaney) on Offa's Dyke, looking at the route through Herefordshire. Garnon's Hill, on the north banks of the River Wye, is classically recorded as the last hilltop that Offa's Dyke navigates before it descends, and crosses the plains until hitting the north banks of the Wye. It is not to be seen again until north Gloucestershire (Fox 1955: 181). Garnon's Hill is in an area of incredible dense woodland which makes terrestrial survey especially difficult here. This has possibly contributed to why it has been questioned whether it have was present across the Herefordshire plain. Notably, during the Offa's Dyke Project, David Hill and Margaret Worthington Hill undertook exploratory excavation here in the 1970s but could not find any sign of the earthwork and subsequently ruled out of the existence of the dyke here (Hill and Worthington 2003: 137–39). However, their excavation location was based upon early mapping of the route of the dyke which imagined the monument had run along the ridge of the hill – an unusual behaviour for the dyke because elsewhere it can be shown to have repeatedly navigated the western sides and shoulders of hills. To investigate the Dyke on Garnon's Hill a digital terrain model was created from lidar data. The model showed an earthwork which was continuous from the north banks of the Wye. It can be seen ascending the hill on the south side before taking a sharp right-angled turn and skirting the ridge, before descending again on the north side (Figure 6). These are all behaviours of the dyke which are regular on other lengths and hills. GPS points were taken off the digital model, which facilitated a ground-truthing survey to confirm the digital mapping predictions. This meant that Offa's Dyke was accurately mapped and confirmed on this hill for the first time. Repeating this methodology is producing results along the route of the dyke and is opening up new research possibilities for the study of large linear earthworks elsewhere.



Figure 7: The Offa's Dyke Collaboratory bilingual logo designed by former University of Chester student Jonathan Felgate



Figure 8: Presenters at the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory Inaugural Workshop organised by Howard Williams, Patricia Murrieta-Flores and James Pardoe, University Centre Shrewsbury, 28 April 2017: Tim Malim (top-left), Stuart Brookes (top-right), David Parsons (bottom-left) and Rachel Swallow (bottom-right). For details see: <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/offas-dyke-collaboratory-the-university-centre-shrewsbury-inaugural-workshop/>



Figure 9: Delegates attending the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory Inaugural Workshop, 28 April 2017 (left-to-right: Rachel Swallow, Bob Silvester, David McGlade, Peter Reavill, Tim Malim, Andy Seaman, Jeremy Haslam, Bill Klemperer, Charles Insley, Mark Redknap, Keith Ray, David Persons, Christopher Catling, John Hunt, Roger White, Louise Barker, Rhiannon Comeau, John Baker, Will Davies, Tim Hoverd, Alison MacDonald, Ian Dormer, Rob Dingle, Alice Thorne, Morn Capper, Hugh Hannaford, Giles Carey, Gary Duckers, Patricia Murrieta-Flores, Andrew Blake, Brian Costello, Jessica Murray, Kate Biggs, Stuart Brookes, Alessandra Perrone, Mel Barge, Margaret Worthington Hill, Alex Langlands, Sue Evans, John Hoyle, Andy Wigley, Paul Belford, Caroline Pudney, Seren Griffiths, Howard Williams); inset: the afternoon 'round table' discussion at the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory Inaugural Workshop

The public remain at the heart of many studies of linear earthworks, although there is debate about how public archaeology and heritage can potentially contribute to the study of linear earthworks and their borderland context. For instance, many people and communities have engaged directly with the archaeology of Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke over the years, including the production of its archaeological narrative. Notably, volunteers worked with David Hill and Margaret Worthington Hill on their projects over thirty years (Hill and Worthington 2003: 8). More recently, projects with the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust and partners and the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty illustrate the continuation of this legacy for the study, promotion and conservation of both monuments. There are also those who have no immediate interest in the archaeology but nevertheless appreciate the many layers of landscape history which are revealed when walking the trails along both dykes. For many members of the Offa's Dyke Association, for example, the earthworks themselves are just one part of a much broader experience that includes ecology, biodiversity, and physical and mental wellbeing. There are therefore many wider issues in public engagement, from working with specific vulnerable groups to engaging with communities to foster their sense of ownership, place, history and identity.

The Offa's Dyke Collaboratory

Following a series of meetings during 2015 and 2016, the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory was established. The formation of the Collaboratory was born from discussions between its

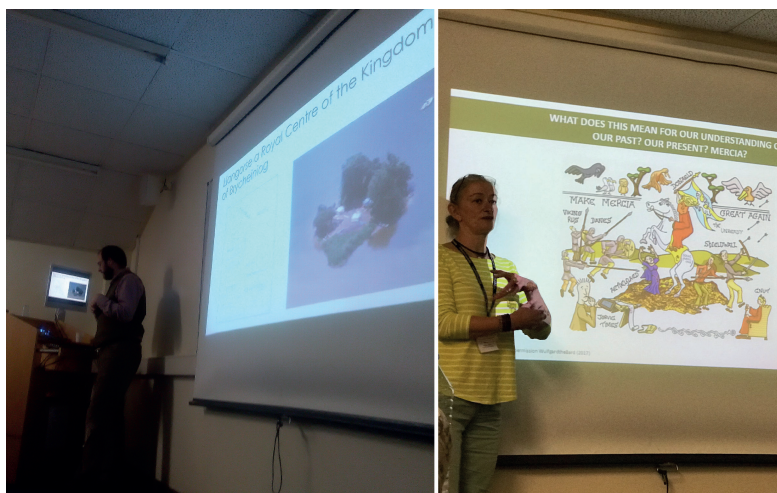


Figure 10: Andy Seaman (left) and Melanie Roxby-Mackay (right) presenting at the Dykes through Time: Rethinking Early Medieval Linear Earthworks session at the 39th annual Theoretical Archaeology Group conference, Cardiff University, 18–20 December 2017

convenors,¹ who between them bring a range of expertise in archaeology and heritage from across the Anglo-Welsh borderlands and who represent a range of organisations, to build momentum for new research into Offa's Dyke, Wat's Dyke and their landscape contexts. These discussions took place in the light of the soon-to-be published monograph by Keith Ray and Ian Bapty (2016). Following the book's release, the convenors set about establishing workshops and conference sessions to develop dialogues across Wales, England and beyond to investigate Britain's largest and longest ancient monuments and, more broadly, the landscapes, monuments and material cultures of other frontiers and borderlands. Membership to the Collaboratory is free and open to anyone actively researching frontiers and borderlands; currently a host of organisations and a significant number of individual members have joined this network.² Its name is intended not to focus exclusively or even primarily on the components of linear earthworks traditionally dubbed 'Offa's Dyke'. Instead, Offa's Dyke is considered as a fulcrum around which broader research into archaeological, heritage and historical questions regarding linear monuments can pivot. This is also reflected in the use of the cross-section of the Dyke's bank and ditch in the design of the Collaboratory's logo, designed by former University of Chester student, Jonathan Felgate (Figure 7).

The Collaboratory exists through its Wordpress website and blog, which contains static pages about the Collaboratory, including links, resources, details of members and convenors, as well as links to the *Journal* and activities and notes on research questions, projects and agenda. In addition, it provides a platform for regular blog-posts on themes relating to the activities and work of the convenors and members: at the time of writing there have been 91

¹ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/convenors/>

² <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-members/>



Figure 11: Presenters at the Offa's Dyke Heritage workshop organised by Howard Williams at the Offa's Dyke Centre, Knighton (Powys), 23 March 2018

posts.³ Facebook⁴ and Twitter⁵ pages also help disseminate the Wordpress site's posts.

Collaboratory events

The events of the Collaboratory have directly informed the *Journal's* content and character, and therefore they deserve a brief review in this first volume in order to provide context for this publication. The Collaboratory has already instigated a series of public-facing events and academic workshops/conferences. The first of these was the inaugural event held at University Centre Shrewsbury on 28 April 2017, organised by Howard Williams with Patricia Murrieta-Flores and James Pardoe.⁶ This involved a morning of research papers outlining the latest thinking and discoveries on linear earthworks and their landscape contexts (Figure 8), and an afternoon round table

chaired by archaeologist Caroline Pudney (University of Chester), featuring an important contribution by veteran investigator of Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke, Margaret Worthington Hill, and closing remarks by early medieval archaeologist and landscape researcher Andy Seaman. Over 70 individuals attended from a range of local societies, governmental bodies and heritage organisations from both Wales and England (Figure 9).⁷

This opening event set the precedent for a series of subsequent workshops and conferences, each with a different venue and focus. A second event took place as an

³ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/OffasDykeCollaboratory/>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/ODCollaboratory>

⁶ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/offas-dyke-collaboratory-the-university-centre-shrewsbury-inaugural-workshop/>

⁷ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/offas-dyke-collaboratory-the-university-centre-shrewsbury-inaugural-workshop/>



Figure 12: Presenters at the Offa's Dyke Conference organised by CPAT on behalf of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory, Marches School, Oswestry, 15 September 2018: Paul Belford, Keith Ray, Ray Bailey, Melanie Roxby-Mackay, and Dick Finch

academic conference session at the 39th annual Theoretical Archaeology Group meeting, held 18–20 December 2017 at Cardiff University. Entitled 'Dykes through Time: Rethinking Early Medieval Linear Earthworks'. The session was organised by Howard Williams with papers tackling the biographies and landscape contexts of linear monuments and their public perception today (Figure 10; see also Seaman this volume).⁸

⁸ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/dykes-through-time-rethinking-early-medieval-linear-earthworks-cardiff-tag-18-20-december-2017/>



Figure 13: Visiting the CPAT excavations near Chirk Castle. Above: five of the six co-convenors of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory: (left-to-right) Keith Ray, Howard Williams, David McGlade, Paul Belford and Andrew Blake. Below: Ian Grant of CPAT presents the results of the findings from the excavations (see Belford this volume)

Archaeological Trust, the event brought together experts, local societies and enthusiasts with a focus on community archaeology and heritage activities taking place up and down the length of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands (Figure 12).¹⁰ Presentations considered work in the Wye Valley, around Trefonen, Wrexham and Flintshire, followed by an afternoon trip to see the CPAT excavations at Chirk Castle (Figure 13; see also Belford this volume). They then visited the CPAT excavation of Offa's Dyke in the Chirk Castle estate.

The fifth principal Collaboratory event was a public day conference at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, organised by University of Chester final-year archaeology students and

The third event was again organised by Howard Williams and shifted the focus to heritage dimensions. The day-workshop hosted by the Offa's Dyke Centre at Knighton, Powys on 23 March 2018 was entitled 'Offa's Dyke Heritage'.⁹ Papers and discussions here explored new strategies for management, conservation and interpretation of Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke, as well as considering the contemporary uses of linear monuments as landscapes of death and memory (Figure 11; see also Swogger this volume).

Having organised an inaugural gathering for specialists, an academic conference session and a heritage workshop, the next event was aimed to be a public-facing day conference, simply called 'The Offa's Dyke Conference'. Taking place 15 September 2018 at the Marches School, Oswestry and organised by Clwyd-Powys

⁹ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/offas-dyke-heritage-23rd-march-2018/>

¹⁰ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/the-offas-dyke-conference-oswestry-15th-september-2018/>

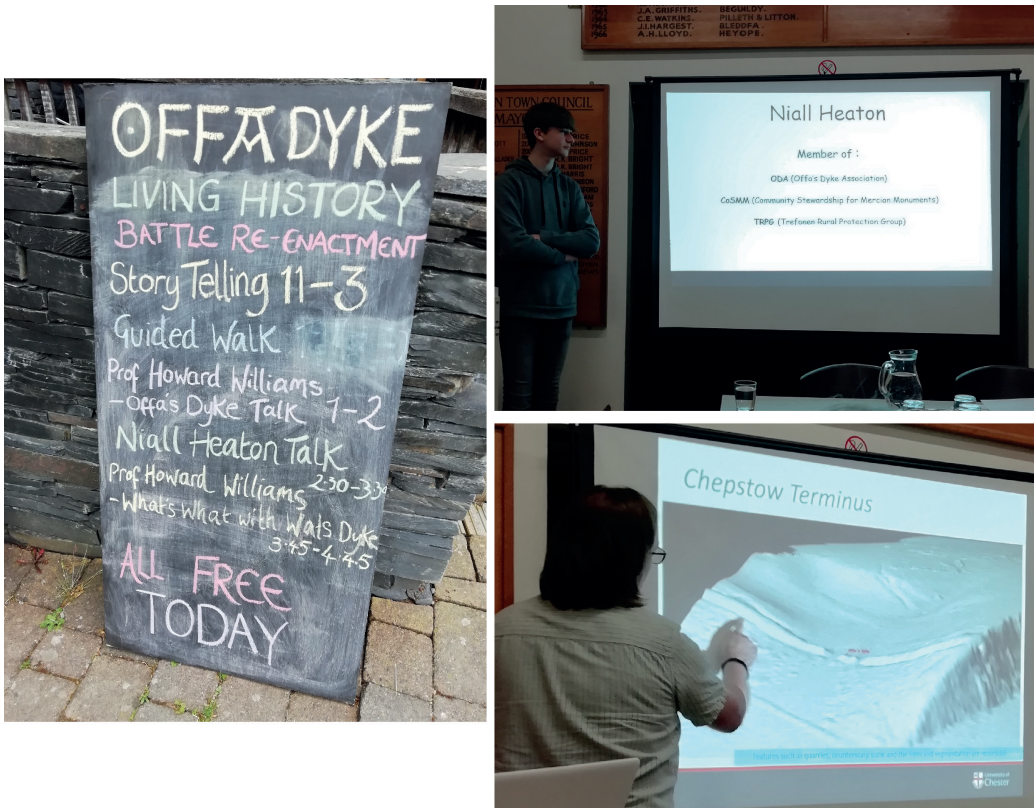


Figure 14: Organised by CPAT at the Offa's Dyke Centre: The Offa's Dyke Living History Weekend, 13 July 2019. Advertisement for the event plus presentations by Niall Heaton (above) and Liam Delaney (below)

facilitated by Howard Williams on the theme of The Public Archaeology of Frontiers and Borderlands, 20 March 2019. As well as student presentations, there were special guest talks by Penelope Foreman, Keith Ray and John G. Swogger.¹¹ Together, these events have served to provide a basis for fresh perspectives and new research on the Anglo-Welsh borderland in comparative perspective and taking archaeological, heritage and interdisciplinary viewpoints.

It is important to recognise that these Collaboratory-organised events have been matched by a wide range of public-facing and academic activities and talks at which convenors have presented their research from 2017 to the present. Most recently these have included the CBA conference 'New Work on the Dyke', 30 March 2019,¹² and the Offa's Dyke AGM 50th Anniversary Weekend,¹³ and CPAT's Living History Weekend,

¹¹ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/odc-events/1473-2/>

¹² <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/2019/04/04/the-cba-wales-conference-new-perspectives-on-the-dyke-30th-march-2019-offas-dyke-centre-knighton/>

¹³ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/2019/04/29/offas-dyke-association-50th-anniversary-agm-weekend/>



Figure 15: The Offa's Dyke Association 50th Anniversary Exhibition and Heritage Walk at Trefonen, Shropshire, with displays of the new marker posts to be raised at either end of the village on the Offa's Dyke Path (left) and display about Offa's Dyke by the local primary school

13–14 July 2019,¹⁴ each taking place at the Offa's Dyke Centre, Knighton (Figure 14). Each co-convenor has been busy promoting and conducting research in different capacities. For example, one of us (Howard Williams) opened the Offa's Dyke Association 50th Anniversary Exhibition and Heritage Walk at Trefonen, Shropshire.¹⁵ As well as exhibitions on local heritage, history, crafts and nature conservation, there was a display of Offa's Dyke by the local primary school, and the unveiling of two new heritage posts to mark the Offa's Dyke Path at either end of the village (Figure 15). Furthermore, future Collaboratory events have been proposed and planned, with possible sessions taking place at international academic conferences as well as public-facing events during 2020: details will be announced via the Collaboratory website.

The Collaboratory in context

We recognise that the Collaboratory has developed alongside other endeavours currently underway relating to linear monuments of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands. The Offa's Dyke Conservation Management Plan (CMP), for example, was initiated alongside the Collaboratory by a triumvirate of agencies (Cadw, Historic England and the Offa's Dyke

¹⁴ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/2019/05/31/knighton-living-history-festival-at-the-offas-dyke-centre/>

¹⁵ <https://offaswatsdyke.wordpress.com/2019/09/29/opening-the-offas-dyke-association-50th-anniversary-exhibition-and-heritage-walk-at-trefonen/>



Figure 16: The Offa's Dyke Journal logo by Howard Williams, adapting the design of Jonathan Felgate for the Collaboratory (Figure 7)

Association) to create a detailed and critical evaluation of the future of Offa's Dyke as an ancient monument. Now completed, the plan identifies the state of the monument and recommendations for its future conservation (Haygarth Berry Associates 2018). There is now the potential to extend this initiative to Wat's Dyke and other linear monuments in the Anglo-Welsh borderlands (D. McGlade pers. comm.).

Conservation work needs to be done proactively, and issues that were outlined in the CMP need to be addressed. In order to make a positive impact upon conservation, the ODA have taken the step to introduce the Offa's Dyke Walker's passport scheme.¹⁶ The passport encourages walkers to obtain stamps from twelve stamping station boxes, which are only open between May and October, by encouraging walking between these months it is hoped will reduce the wear and tear and erosion that is exaggerated during the wetter winter months.

Recognition must also be given to a further initiative: the CoSMM project (Community Stewardship of Mercian Monuments).¹⁷ This is a crowd-sourced research initiative aimed at working at a community level up and down the Anglo-Welsh border. There is palpable untapped potential for this broader network to create active local engagements with Offa's Dyke, Wat's Dyke and the various short linear earthworks found across mid-Wales and western Britain more broadly, and provide a model for community-based research elsewhere. The Collaboratory wishes to support this initiative.

Moreover, the Collaboratory aims to create synergies with the revitalised and fresh initiatives for public engagement taken forward by the Offa's Dyke Association, with

a rich set of resources on its website¹⁸ and social media presence via Twitter¹⁹ and Facebook.²⁰

The Offa's Dyke Journal

In addition to the creation of online resources, including a blog and a host of activities and events, a further initiative of the Collaboratory was to establish a research venue to collate and disseminate key past studies of frontiers and borderland monuments and landscapes, as well as to provide a high-quality peer-reviewed venue to provide readily accessible venue for new research (Figure 16). Published in collaboration with JAS Arqueología and funded by the University of Chester and the Offa's Dyke Association,²¹ the *Journal* has its own digital publishing platform.²² *Offa's Dyke Journal* is thus not only a free, open-source venue for research but also it is at the forefront of the field initiative to create an annual publication of high-quality research promoting cross-disciplinary discourse beyond the remit of other journals. Hence, the *Journal* plans to incorporate research investigating dimensions of Offa's Dyke, Wat's Dyke and the short dykes of western Britain, including their life-histories and landscape contexts, but also investigations of frontiers and borderlands from elsewhere in Britain, Europe and beyond from prehistory to the contemporary world. Moreover, we do not wish to emphasise just the monuments themselves or the visions and realities of their design and implementation, but also their use, abandonment and reuse. Integral to this work is considering active and passive resistances to linear monuments and the wider networks of control and surveillance associated with them. In this regard, we aspire for the *Journal* to explore mobility in terms of control, but also in terms of its subversion.

A further dimension of the *Journal* that deserves mention is the character of its production. As primarily a digital venue, we have worked hard to foster tabular and figural support for the contents in a fashion unrivalled by many traditional studies of linear monuments and their landscapes. These include tables, maps, colour photographs and diagrams to help explain the complex and often ephemeral character of the sites and monuments under investigation. Too often, even archaeological and landscape studies leave the readers unclear regarding the scale and character of their discoveries.

While there are plenty of venues to publish research on the archaeology, history and heritage of frontiers and borderlands, few consistently incorporate a deep-time focus on material culture, monumentality and landscape in equal measure. Certainly, one of the recognised problems with existing venues is over-respect towards regional and national borders, with Wat's Dyke and Offa's Dyke, as well as the shorter linear earthworks of the Anglo-Welsh borderlands, suffering from being treated and considered simply as fragments straddling modern political and administrative boundaries. For early medieval linear earthworks, the literature has been sporadic, appearing in diverse venues such as county and regional journals, as well as national and international themed and period specific journals. As mentioned above, Offa's Dyke itself has only received four book-length studies (Fox 1955;

Noble 1983; Hill and Worthington 2003; Ray and Bapty 2016), the first two of which have long been out of print. Meanwhile, broader studies of linear earthworks have been sparse too (but see Bell 2012; Grigg 2018). Looking farther afield in geographical terms, there exist no multi-period journals dedicated to frontier and borderlands, including studies of the design, development, afterlives and landscape contexts of frontier work. Hence, notwithstanding the specific needs for the Anglo-Welsh borderlands, the Offa's Dyke fills an important niche for European and global studies of frontiers and borderlands from prehistory to the present.

The first two volumes of the *Journal* will be initially co-edited by Howard Williams and doctoral researcher Liam Delaney (both of the University of Chester), but the editorial composition may well evolve with subsequent volumes in response to the other commitments and priorities of the convenors and members of the Collaboratory. Its editorial board comprises the convenors of the Collaboratory with the invited addition of further individuals with disciplinary, thematic and geographical research expertise pertinent to the aspired scope of the *Journal*. As with the editorial responsibilities, we are looking to augment the Board through subsequent issues with individuals offering further relevant expertise and perspectives.

The Journal's name

In this light, we must say a word about the title of the journal, which might at a first glance be seen as valorising the exceptionalism attributed to Offa's Dyke, and together with this the focus on the rulers and builders as opposed to those affected by their construction. To avoid this, one option was to select a geographically and temporally neutral thematic title such as 'Journal of Frontier Studies in Archaeology, History and Heritage'. However, it was felt such a title might be overly ambitious, inevitably misleading and cumbersome, as well as failing to articulate both the early medieval and the Anglo-Welsh borderlands foci of the initial venture. Moreover, the terms 'frontier' and 'border/borderlands' are frequently deployed in different fashions across and within disciplines, giving a geographical and material focus retains flexibility in the scope of contributions, rather than restricting it. The *Offa's Dyke Journal* thus creates and affords the cross-disciplinary intellectual space for ongoing debates about the terminology and significance of frontiers and borderlands, including those traversing and inhabiting them past and present.

We wish the *Journal* to be considered open to original contributions offering fresh theories, methods and data in the comparative and interdisciplinary study of frontiers and borderlands. Hence, as with the Collaboratory, the 'Offa's Dyke' of our title is a lens through which all frontiers and borderlands, great or small, past or present, might be considered afresh and from interdisciplinary perspectives. The 'Offa's Dyke' of our title is thus an archaic allusion and intellectual focus, rather than a strict description of the *Journal's* primary subject matter. In other words, the title uses Britain's longest linear earthwork as an iconic focus for a venue that seeks to explore afresh different linear earthworks and other frontier works in comparative terms, from prehistory to the present, and across the globe.

The Sponsors

The Department of History and Archaeology is one of many academic departments at the University of Chester which has long fostered engagement with the built and natural environment. The Department's staff have a rich track record of public engagement and institutional collaboration within the city of Chester, the county of Cheshire and neighbouring counties and regions, including communities and stakeholders on both sides of the modern Anglo-Welsh border. The University of Chester, through the auspices of the generous support of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, thus provides an appropriate and fitting sponsor for this new venture. Specifically, the *Journal* answers the University's vision to grow scholarship and research, as well as to engender pride and shared ownership in its endeavours. Specifically, the *Journal* maps onto the University's foundational values to apply academic knowledge and skills to benefit in the regions it represents, and foster well-being and creativity for all, in this instance through an appreciation and engagement with the historic environment.²³

Sponsorship by the University of Chester is matched by the Offa's Dyke Association, a volunteer-led organisation who manage the Offa's Dyke Centre.²⁴ They are not only facilitating and sustaining the online journal's creation but also plan to promote the dissemination of the *Journal* through its sale at the Offa's Dyke Centre in Knighton, Powys: the only visitor centre associated with any of Britain's long-distance footpaths. Furthermore, we are proud and pleased that the *Journal* is to be launched to coincide with the 50th anniversary year of the Association and hope that its members might regard it as long overdue academic recognition of their long-standing and dedicated endeavours to promote both Offa's Dyke and the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. From this perspective, it is clear that Offa's Dyke Association, which in response to the research of the Offa's Dyke Collaboratory has extended its charitable aims to encapsulate Wat's Dyke and the Wat's Dyke Way,²⁵ is also supporting academic research and public engagement as well as many important conservation initiatives for the path and the monument. Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke are thus increasingly appreciated as only of interest and benefit to long-distance walkers and local communities, they have stories and significance to tell about the past and present frictions and fables, flaws and follies, of marking, building and using boundaries as borders which are of global import.

Reviewing volume 1

In addition to this Introduction, the first volume of the *Offa's Dyke Journal* contains six articles. Two are 'classics revisited' contributions: by Ann Williams and Margaret Worthington Hill. Meanwhile, four are original peer-reviewed articles: by Paul Belford, Andy Seaman, Astrid Tummmuscheit and Frauke Witte, and John Swogger.

²³ <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/about/the-university/our-mission-vision-and-values>

²⁴ <https://offasdyke.org.uk/offas-dyke-association/>

²⁵ <https://www.watsdykeway.com/>

We start with a re-titled, re-formatted and revised version of a relatively recent publication. Ann Williams published her 'Offa's Dyke: a monument without a history' in 2009 in an edited collection tackling the history of fortified borders: *Walls, Ramparts, and Lines of Demarcation: Selected Studies from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Williams 2009). Ten years on, this chapter merits a broader audience through open-access digital publication, providing as it does a much-needed and critical review of the scant and problematic historical evidence for Offa's Dyke. In the newly titled 'Offa's Dyke: 'the Stuff that Dreams are Made of' Williams has worked hard with the journal editors to update her research, published here with the blessings and support of her former editors. Moreover, the article originally appeared without illustrations, potentially restricting the article's ability to present the monument's form and character to those unfamiliar with it. The new version of the article appears with much-needed visual support, namely ground-level photographs and drone photographic images, as well as a map of the monument designed and created by Liam Delaney showing the current presumed route of Offa's Dyke from the Wye Valley (Gloucestershire) to Treuddyn (Flintshire). As it now appears, the article provides a valuable introduction to both the historical evidence and the material form of Offa's Dyke. Williams challenges us not to be so confident in our estimation of precise political and administrative contexts for the building of the Dyke, but to consider its potential significances beyond 'purpose', thus providing an essential foundation for fresh work on linear earthworks and other lines of borders and frontier works in other times and places as extending beyond the motives of their makers.

Next, we have a second 'classic revisited' article, namely Margaret Worthington Hill's 1997 'Wat's Dyke: An Archaeological and Historical Enigma', originally appearing in a special guest-edited issue of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* edited by Gale Owen-Crocker called *Anglo-Saxon Texts and Contexts*. At the time of its publication, this was the only significant piece of work on Wat's Dyke since Sir Cyril Fox's field survey (Fox 1934; 1955). Wat's Dyke has been repeatedly side-lined and overlooked by subsequent researchers (but see Malim and Hayes 2008; Ray and Bapty 2016). Worthington Hill was writing before radiocarbon and OSL dating of Wat's Dyke at Gobowen to the early ninth century, thus suggesting Wat's Dyke was a *successor* monument to Offa's Dyke, rather than a predecessor as many had speculated (Malim and Hayes, contra Fox 1955; Hill and Worthington 2003). Hence, the article might be superficially dismissed as now out-of-date for continuing to favour a view of Wat's Dyke as pre-Offan. However, her review, based on sustained fieldwork, demonstrated the integrity of the linear earthwork from Basingwerk in Flintshire south to Maesbury and perhaps beyond. Therefore it is an important statement regarding the continuous and coherent monumentality of its design and construction, which Fox (1955) had already considered as comparable to Offa's Dyke in form if not overall length. Likewise, Worthington Hill's documentary research drew a key observation from the relationship between the line of Wat's Dyke and hidated and unhidated manors recorded in Domesday Book, the former to the Dyke's eastern (Mercian) side, the latter to the western (Welsh) side. If we now read Worthington Hill's article in relation to Malim and Hayes' (2008) research on dating

Wat's Dyke, we can underscore the notion that Wat's Dyke might have been built to face a unified opponent and may have had a more enduring legacy through the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries in this borderland landscape than its Offan predecessor. The original article was again supported by few illustrations; a key contribution of this re-publication is not only to make it available to new audiences via open-access digital publication, but also to enhance the visual character of the article's argumentation. Here, the study is supported not only by Worthington Hill's original two maps, but also by photographs by Howard Williams showing the Dyke's present-day condition as it passes through farmland, woodland and suburbs. Furthermore, thanks to a CPAT photograph taken by Chris Musson, identified and supplied by Gary Duckers (Clwyd-Powys HER), Worthington Hill's arguments regarding the southern extent of Wat's Dyke are afforded additional support. Future research will benefit considerably from this revised and enhanced version of the article.

Complementing this pair of re-published articles, Paul Belford presents and contextualises the interim results of recent archaeological investigations on the pair of linear earthworks in Wrexham county borough, each within the present-day grounds of National Trust properties. The excavations at Wat's Dyke close to Erddig Hall, and Offa's Dyke at Chirk Castle were conducted by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. The quality of the fieldwork is notable given how few previous investigations of either monument in cross-section have revealed both bank and ditch together and have effectively followed the ditch down to a demonstrable and convincing base. The inclusion of community volunteers on both projects within landscapes which are popular destinations for tourists and locals alike is a further notable feature of the work. Regarding the nature of the archaeology itself, the excavations revealed in detail the nature of these monuments through systematic small-scale investigation (Belford this volume). Notably, it revealed how both bank and ditch could survive in locations outside of scheduled areas and where surface traces are limited. A further key point is that, in each excavation is that underlying and thus earlier archaeological features were found which might help with dating the monuments and identifying prior land uses.

The fourth article, the second original contribution, tackles a different landscape, but one also closely bound up with the conflicts between the early medieval Mercian and Welsh kingdoms. Rather than their military or territorial role, Andy Seaman focuses on the myths and legends that might have accrued around linear earthworks in politically contested early medieval central place zones. The dyke of Llywarch Hen is the focus of Andy Seaman's article, a 4km-long head dyke that framed the eastern approaches to the royal estate of Llan-gors. The crannog upon the lake to its west has been archaeologically proved to be a royal site of the Kingdom of Brycheiniog, and Seaman reflects on the role of the dyke in accruing legendary associations, mobilising ancient heroes as ideological tools of political legitimisation in the landscape. Seaman contextualises his argument in relation to other 'short dykes' of the Anglo-Welsh borderland which might

have also had both territorial and mnemonic significances, suggesting that histories and mythologies were layered via oral and literary traditions in the early medieval landscape setting. This argument has significant and far-reaching implications for considering the names attributed to other dykes across Britain, including Wansdyke, Wat's Dyke and Offa's Dyke. Place-names associated with linear earthworks might give us more and different information than the names of their supposed builders: they might constitute enduring ideological discourses on landscape and memory in their own right.

The *Offa's Dyke Journal* seeks not only to explore linear earthworks in Wales and England, but to provide a venue for comparative studies, past and present, from across Europe and the globe. It is to the Continent that we next turn, and the third original article constitutes a valuable English-language summary of the recent fieldwork conducted along the complex of linear earthworks known collectively as the Danevirke. Tummuscheit and Witte provide a new set of dates and a revitalised sequence for this important set of monuments which evolved to control maritime transportation across, and land routes through, the stem of the Jutlandic peninsula. Thanks to their work, we have a better understanding of the monumental biography of these linear features. Moreover, having achieved UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2018, the Danevirke is now telling a story on a global scale regarding how linear monuments can be used and reused, extended and augmented, accruing and shifting its function and significance for almost two millennia from at least the 2nd century AD to the present day. The eighth-century phase was incomparable on mainland Europe, and its parallels, and differences, with linear earthworks in Britain are ripe for reevaluation.

It should be clear from the contents reviewed thus far that the *Journal* sees not only to publish past and fresh research on frontiers and borderlands, but also to provide a venue for critical evaluation of how we engage audiences in their stories in the contemporary world. Our fourth original article is by archaeologist and artist John G. Swogger: drawing on his worldwide experience at the intersection of art and archaeology, he presents the particular changes of visualising linear earthworks for present-day heritage contexts using comics as a medium. As part of his *Oswestry Heritage Comics*, the linear earthworks of Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke have been visualised in different ways as part of a kaleidoscope of localised narratives linking past and present. As Swogger shows, his work provides a model for potential future work in a host of media, and the digital age encourages us to think about site- and landscape-based interpretation, but also online media to engage audiences globally in the comparative and rich stories of frontiers and borderlands.

The future

By setting this up as an annual *Journal* disseminated primarily via digital means, the Collaboratory is making a bold and ambitious statement about creating a cross-

disciplinary research focus for the medium and long term. This does not mean the *Offa's Dyke Journal* will run in perpetuity. Its editorial team and Board, foci, character, venue and title may, and perhaps should, continually shift and evolve. Indeed, we recognise that while our aim will be to create a resource of lasting value to academics and the public, we might not be able to sustain annual publications indefinitely.

Conclusion

...barriers do not necessarily mark, or help to defend, boundaries between powers. Still, we know that some borders might become highly charged with symbolic meanings. Thus the frontier between Franks and (Avar or Magyar) 'Huns' was not only a dividing line between Christians and pagans, but could come to be regarded as a border between good and evil, salvation and apocalypse altogether. (Pohl 2005: 257)

This introduction to the first volume of the *Offa's Dyke* journal has established the multi-disciplinary necessity of this new publication venue, its character and foci. We have also reviewed the content of the first volume and identified the potential for future submissions.

It is our belief that linear monuments and their landscapes offer relatively untapped potential for both fresh research and public engagement in the past and present significance of frontiers and borderlands. Linear earthworks are deceptive. They are seemingly very simple monuments – conservatively described as a bank and ditch earthwork built between two locations – yet they conceal a vast amount of information about the past. Not only can the design of form of dykes be much more nuanced but individualistic differences to each monument can reveal hints to their construction and their purpose. Additionally, by studying their route and placement in the landscape, the agency behind their construction can be discerned. The time and labour invested in creating and maintain such monuments might reveal rich details about the politics, state control and the anxieties of that state – themes revealed in contemporary historical and archaeological evidence of other forms. Further still, these features do not just reveal aspects on the states that constructed them, but the societies and communities that these frontier monuments were built against, and these can often be completely invisible to our surviving historical records.

It is our hope that this journal can be a suitable venue to promote research which has largely struggled to find a place in archaeological narratives of landscape history. These earthworks are some of the largest earthworks in Europe and it is our hope that this journal can help to put them back in the historical landscape and, colloquially, use these boundary features to build research bridges.

We envisaged this journal to be at its core both digital and open source, meaning it has the largest possibility to be as accessible and as available to researchers as possible. This was achieved whilst equally providing unbiased cutting-edge new research and availability of

now difficult to access articles. It should be a venue for a wide range of topics, from a wide range of researchers and it is their hope that this vision continues.

Looking forward to the future; we welcome submissions and notifications of interest for future issues. The deadline for papers to be submitted for volume 2 is currently set at 1 May 2020 and we look forward to a rich and diverse set of contributions in future issues.

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