

The first field trip was to Strata Florida due to its position as an important location in Welsh history and culture and the many people buried there as well as the recent archeological dig people studying many different disciplines can take inspiration from the location and also learn about its history and its meaning to the cultural identity of Wales.

Strata Florida is a former cistercian abbey in Ceredigion in Wales. It remained an important religious center for the region and to a different extent the entirety of Wales until it was dissolved by Henry the 8th in 1539 and most of the building was demolished to gather building materials like lead leaving it in ruins ever since.

Recent archeological digs at the site had shown that the abbey site was used as a Christian site before the establishment of the cistercian abbey that is there currently.

During the field trip to Strata Florida the potential meaning of the excavation was discussed the site having had a previous religious site would provide a solid reason for why the cistercian monks chose Strata Florida as the site to build their monastery and could possibly explain why the monastery was able to rise to such prominence if the area was considered to already have some level of importance locally.

Although the monastery was established for a religious purpose it would soon gain political and national importance as the ruler of the Welsh kingdom Deheubarth Rhys ap Gruffydd would help found the abbey and also give it his patronage something which would be continued by his descendants many of whom were buried at the site.

The later use of the site by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth a prince of Wales who dominated most of Wales as the place where he called his supporters to hold a council where he made them acknowledge his son Dafydd as his heir.

Since then the site has had several other uses giving it importance to the rest of Wales the Brut Y tywysogion one of the only primary accounts of the history of Wales in the early middle ages. The famous and influential poet Dafydd ap Gwilym is claimed to be buried there.

The importance of the site has had negative effects upon the ruins of Strata Florida, due to its location more isolated in the Welsh countryside away from the major cities. As such parts of the ruins like the headstones for the burials of the princes of Deheubarth have been removed to be displayed at St Fagans near Cardiff to give more people access to seeing items from Strata Florida but at the same time the replicas that are now at the monastery do reduce the importance of the site even further than it already has been. An argument can also be made for how much of a right there is to remove items and redistribute them to another area and how devalues the rest of the country.



To further the idea of their being a site built at Strata Florida the basin for the water for the baptisms is not in line with the entrance to the abbey which could suggest a possibility that it is part of the site that was there before but when building the abbey they decided to incorporate into the new structure.



Although Strata Florida was mostly demolished during the reign of Henry the 8th even before that Strata Florida had been in a worse state than during its height since the Welsh lord Owain Glyndwr rebelled the monks of the Abbey were considered to be too sympathetic to the rebels and as such during the 15 year long rebellion (1400 to 14015) of Owain Glyndwr the monks were removed from the monastery and all the valuables were taken by the crown.

Even though at this point Wales was under the control of England the monks sympathy to apparently ending English rule in Wales and then the king punishing them for this could show that even then Strata Florida was viewed as a symbol of some kind of Welsh nationalism similar to how some can view it now.

In regards to the field trip itself, seeing what further information excavation of the site could yield is interesting. It was mentioned the building that was being excavated very likely could have gone underneath a couple of buildings that were still standing nearby.

The entrance arch to the abbey that remains in much better condition to the rest of the abbey is decorated with swirls along the ends of the arches that could be a reference to the triskelion symbol that is often associated with the celtic peoples during the iron age. Which could potentially mean that even from the start of the construction of the abbey it was connected to the local celtic culture in Wales. Although by the time the Abbey was built the symbol would be rarely used as a specifically celtic symbol instead being used more generally by all christians as a symbol of the trinity so it could possibly be a coincidence.

The site wasn't just focused on the Abbey but also on the local life of the people who lived in the area, a local house is preserved in the area with several tools that would have been by the family and even some articles of clothing from people who would have lived there were preserved as well, with information explaining what they are and how they were used. And lastly there was a computer that displayed a 3D generated image of how the Abbey would have looked before its dissolution allowing you to get a better idea of the Abbey and how it may have functioned

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The visit to Strata Florida was definitely worth while seeing an archeological dig site for the first time in person that had only recently been worked on and learning about welsh history as well as locations that in welsh history are of great importance but in England are practically not discussed or taught about at all there. So with increasing my knowledge of Wales and its history as well as helping increase my knowledge of how archeology is handled in person.