

# Dai Morgan Evans: A life in archaeology

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## Introduction, by Howard Williams

Born David Morgan Evans on 1 March (St David's Day) 1944 at West Kirby on the Wirral, Dai grew up in Chester, where the history master at the King's School encouraged his interest in local history (Figure 1). Summer holidays at St David's in West Wales, and participation in local digs in Chester, ignited his lifelong passion for archaeology. He studied the subject at Cardiff University (1963–1966) before pursuing postgraduate research on the archaeology of early Welsh poetry (Figure 2a), as well as acting as an assistant director of the South Cadbury excavations led by Professor Leslie Alcock (Figure 2b).

Dai's working life began when he joined the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in Wales in early 1969. During his time there, he conceived and initiated the creation of the four Welsh archaeological trusts, as their 'true begetter.'<sup>1</sup> In 1977, he transferred to the English Inspectorate. Charged, from 1986, with developing countryside policies, he also became the English Heritage (as it now was) specialist in Public Inquiries. From 1992 to his retirement in 2004, Dai was a popular and active General Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He co-devised the APPAG (All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group) from 2001 and for a number of years served as its secretary after his retirement (2004–2008).



Figure 1. Two images of Dai aged 4 participating in excavations in Chester.

<sup>1</sup> Anon. 2016, 5.



Figure 2. (a) Top-left, Dai at graduation, 1966; (b) Top-right, at South Cadbury; (c) Bottom-left, Dai with Richard Avent in 1980 (Photographs: shared by Sheena Evans).

From 2003, Dai was Honorary Lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology at UCL. Having opened University College Chester's new offices and teaching spaces in the Blue Coat School in 2003 to accommodate the Department of History and Archaeology, Dai served first as an honorary lecturer and then from 2006 as Visiting Professor of Archaeology, teaching and inspiring students and sustaining his research interests.

His active retirement also included a host of other activities including television appearances, serving on the National Trust Archaeology Panel, participating in the historic-period dimension of the SPACES project with Geoff Wainwright and Timothy Darvill, and initiating the first modern study of the unique early medieval Welsh monument, the Pillar of Eliseg, at Llantysilio yn Iâl, Denbighshire. After a lifetime contributing to the archaeology of England and Wales, Dai sadly passed away on his birthday aged 73, 1 March 2017.<sup>2</sup>

Stemming from the memorial event held at the Society of Antiquaries of London, 11 September 2017: 'Memorial for Professor Dai Morgan Evans FSA',<sup>3</sup> this multi-authored introduction

<sup>2</sup> Williams 2017.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqlLEDDu9GU>

charts Dai's life in the service of archaeology. The authors cannot claim to cover all aspects of Dai's archaeological endeavours, and inevitably the discussion affords depth to some aspects while mentioning others more briefly. However, the perspectives sequentially address different phases of his archaeological career and combine to capture a sense of his overall achievements and legacy. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to this collection, which constitutes a celebration and memorial to Dai's archaeological career and research.

#### **Early days in Wales, by Chris Musson<sup>4</sup>**

In the valedictory notes on his own life in public service archaeology, Geoffrey Wainwright, reflecting at the turn of the millennium, described Wales as a 'tidy and well-ordered place'. In the late 1960s, in terms of rescue archaeology and heritage records, the situation could hardly have been described in those terms. The system, such as it was, was creaking painfully under the stress – not just in Wales but throughout Britain – of the increasingly rapid loss of irrecoverable archaeological evidence as a result of town-centre redevelopment, industrial and housing expansion, infrastructure projects and (less well appreciated at that stage) the depredations of increasingly aggressive agricultural practices in the countryside. Rescue archaeology was still some decades away from what we might now call 'pre-development archaeology', or in a broader sense 'conservation archaeology'. There was virtually no link, through readily available maps or records, between archaeologists and the national and local authority planners whose work often initiated and to some extent controlled – or at least moderated – the degree of physical, social and environmental damage caused by a country re-making itself in a rapidly changing world.

In Wales during the late 1960s, there was a small department of archaeology in University College Cardiff (as it was then) and another (even smaller) at Bangor in the far north-west. All four of the academic staff at Cardiff were involved in excavation: Bill Manning undertook large-scale rescue work at the Roman legionary fortress in Usk,<sup>5</sup> while Richard Atkinson, Leslie Alcock and Mike Jarrett also worked on sites, in England rather than Wales, which matched their own academic interests (Atkinson at Silbury Hill, Wiltshire; Alcock at South Cadbury, Somerset; Jarrett at West Whelpington, Northumberland). The National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, and a number of small local and regional museums elsewhere, were focused almost entirely on managing, enriching and displaying their own collections. None of these parties were involvement in preventing or reacting to what was being lost in the processes of development and regeneration. Meanwhile, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, founded in 1908 and steadfast in its self-regard as the 'premier archaeological institution in Wales', was grinding its way at an increasingly glacial pace across the counties of Brecon and Glamorgan. The resulting (admirable) county Inventories drew together a mass of archaeological, historical and architectural information. However, at that time few staff had any conception of making its collected information more readily available through what in time became the National Monuments Record for Wales.

The Ministry of Public Building and Works (part of the Department of the Environment from 1970 onwards) had a brief that covered the whole of the UK. It maintained a small outpost of

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<sup>4</sup> With an additional final paragraph by Sheena Evans.

<sup>5</sup> Manning 1981, 1989.

its Ancient Monuments Branch in Cardiff, with, when Dai joined it, Dr Mike Apted as Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments. Dai became the second archaeologist, working alongside Mike, sharing responsibility for all scheduling and guardianship matters. The Inspectors were assisted by generalist administrators, whose capacity to delay or prevent rapid action was legendary (although one at least became a close ally of Dai in getting things done). At that time, the Ministry's power to mitigate or prevent the destruction of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (the only type of field monuments over which they had any power at all) was limited to arranging exploration within three months of notification of an intended development, after which prospective developers or farmers could do whatever they liked with ancient sites which happened to be in their possession. In Wales, that power had been used occasionally, notably for the near-total excavation in 1967 and 1968 of the interior of an Iron Age and Romano-British embanked settlement at Walesland Rath in west Pembrokeshire.<sup>6</sup> The site was threatened by bulldozing for agricultural development and the excavation was led by Geoffrey Wainwright, then one of three excavation directors employed by the Ministry from 1965 onwards. There were also large-scale rescue excavations across four summer seasons at Usk, directed by Bill Manning with the support of students from University College Cardiff, and a host of volunteer diggers whose enthusiasm was at that time the mainstay of many rescue and research excavations throughout the UK.<sup>7</sup>

A different precedent was set in 1966/67 by even larger-scale excavations at Llandegai, close to the North Wales coast near Bangor. The site was a 15-hectare rectangle of fields purchased by the local authority for development as a light industrial estate. A Neolithic cursus, two henge monuments and other prehistoric and early medieval features had been revealed a few years earlier during aerial survey by Cambridge University. Negotiations between the Ancient Monuments Cardiff office, the Royal Commission and University College Bangor resulted in agreement that rescue excavations and recording would be completed before building work started. The project was overseen by Chris Houlder, on temporary secondment from the Royal Commission. Sadly, the final report on the excavation, despite its very striking results, did not see the light of day until 2004, following Houlder's return to his full-time job.<sup>8</sup> It seems bizarre that at that time the directors of rescue excavations were paid only for the work they did on site, being expected to write up the results in their spare time.

This was the kind of situation that formed the background to Dai Morgan Evans's new responsibilities when, towards the end of 1969, constrained by the need for gainful employment, he suspended his postgraduate research at University College Cardiff and joined the Welsh outpost of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate. He brought with him not just enthusiasm, an innovative spirit and a relatively loud voice, but also practical experience that soon became relevant to his new duties in relation to rescue archaeology. The result of that coming-together can still be seen, forty and more years later, in the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts that have since the mid-1970s provided pre-development and conservation archaeology in Wales.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wainwright 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Manning 1981, 1989

<sup>8</sup> Lynch and Musson 2001; Kenny 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Anon. 2016.



*Cardiff's University College and South Cadbury*

As an undergraduate, Dai welcomed the insistence of his archaeological tutors that they were not just providing an intellectual education but also a thoroughgoing practical training in excavation and all of its related activities. Somewhat unusually among universities at that time, the Department of Archaeology at Cardiff required its degree students to take part for several weeks each summer and/or Easter in excavations on a variety of sites directed by their academic mentors (Figure 2b). This practical background, and Dai's postgraduate research into aspects of the early medieval period, made him an obvious recruit to the team put together by Leslie Alcock for the investigation of the Iron Age, and putatively early medieval, hillfort that stood above the village of South Cadbury in Somerset. The aim was to explore the whole span of the site's occupation, from suspected Neolithic beginnings, through the Iron Age, Roman and early post-Roman centuries to its final hosting of a temporary Aethelfredan mint during the first decade of the eleventh century.<sup>10</sup>

As one of several reputed sites of King Arthur's Camelot, the project attracted (and judiciously exploited) the curiosity of the general public, aided by weekly in-depth coverage in one of the quality weekend newspapers. The newspaper naturally expected to have interesting ideas or discoveries to report each week, and Leslie Alcock proved himself a past master at this task. The BBC at national and local level benefitted from his ability, given a strict two minutes in front of the camera Alcock could talk coherently and without any kind of condescension for exactly 120 seconds. No doubt this example was not lost on Dai, who in time became a very effective television presenter himself.

Dai's first task at South Cadbury, in the reconnaissance work of summer 1966, was to supervise volunteer diggers on a long trench across what turned out to be the sunken track scoured over time between the southern and northern entrances to the fort. In weather that was less than ideal, his enthusiasm and commitment kept the pace of the work going, even during the unenviable task of backfilling the excavated soil in the final rain-sodden days of that summer. To his initial puzzlement and also embarrassment, in view of the 'Arthurian' publicity, he and the project director had to deal with the discovery in his trench during the first week's work of a gilt-bronze letter 'A', later explained as connected with a former Roman temple on the peak of the hill rather than as part of a name-plate for the fabled, or perhaps factual, King Arthur.

Two years later, Dai had to supervise the very complex exploration of the northern entrance to the fort. Here, the gate and related structures were renewed and modified over up to a thousand years, beginning in the Iron Age, continuing through the by-then verified 5th-/6th-century occupation and culminating in the short refortification of the hilltop to house a West Saxon mint half a century or so before the Norman Conquest.

An important lesson that Dai absorbed at Cadbury was the need to dig on a substantial scale in order to achieve a reasonable degree of certainty in the observations made and conclusions reached on the basis of the structures, layers and objects recovered through what was necessarily a destructive but at the same time enlightening process. This approach has

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<sup>10</sup> Alcock 1972, 1995.

become indispensable both to academic archaeology and public appreciation of the evidence it produces. Its success was amply demonstrated by Barry Cunliffe from 1970 onwards in his large-scale exploration of the defences and occupied interior of the Iron Age hillfort of Danebury in Hampshire.<sup>11</sup>

Dai, like other supervisors at South Cadbury, recognised how difficult it was to achieve a steady pace of work, and security of observation and recording, when the bulk of the workforce were enthusiastic but archaeologically inexperienced volunteers. Without their input, the excavation would not have been possible. Their lack of experience, however, meant that their speed of operation varied, depending on temperament, between the barely perceptible and the frighteningly fast (and therefore potentially destructive of the evidence assailed by their pick and shovel). Moreover, in the height of the summer, when university students were available to act as supervisors, the weather was often less than helpful – either so wet that little or no work could be done for fear of damaging the preserved archaeological deposits; or so dry that the surviving layers and features became colourless and wrist-breakingly hard, slowing the work and risking the loss of important information because the distinguishing characteristics of different parts of the deposits could not be seen. These difficulties prompted a fair degree of late-night discussion during the excavation, in particular between Chris Musson and Graeme Guilbert, both already skilful and rapid excavators who were seeking careers in archaeology precisely because of their love of excavation.

### *The ancient monuments inspectorate in Cardiff*

After the Cadbury excavations of 1968, Dai returned to his postgraduate research before joining the Civil Service in the Cardiff office of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate, taking up the post in 1969. One of the first tasks that he was given by his undemonstrative but deeply committed Principal Inspector, Mike Apted, was to sort out increasing difficulties with the conduct and servicing of rescue excavations in Wales. At that time all rescue work had to be state-funded, with logistical support from the Inspectorate's small Works Department – meaning in this case the provision of planks, barrows, tools and the like, wherever and whenever they were needed. This system was already creaking and Dai quickly saw the possibility of solving the problem by providing funds for the directors of all but very small excavation projects to purchase and then maintain and re-deploy the necessary equipment to the next project which they or others might undertake. This slightly unusual solution, like many other innovations introduced by Dai in the next few years, was steadfastly supported by Dr Apted, whose willingness to stand by his young and (for the Civil Service) unconventional and rule-challenging assistant was a key factor in the inception between 1974 and 1976 of the four regional archaeological Trusts. Four decades later they remain a characteristic feature of the way in which pre-development and conservation archaeology are handled in Wales.<sup>12</sup>

The context for all this was a growing campaign in the 1960s aimed at limiting the archaeological losses incurred in town and countryside by means of rescue excavations, predominantly in urban settings. Meanwhile, County Archaeologists and the Inspectorate were encouraging and part-funding the creation of registers of archaeological sites which could help in reducing

<sup>11</sup> Cunliffe 1984a and b.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. 2016.

avoidable losses. A notable leader in this respect was Oxfordshire County Council, where the newly appointed Archaeological Field Officer, Don Benson, divided his time from 1965 onwards between a series of rescue excavations and the initial stages in the development of what would become the first viable Sites and Monuments Record in the United Kingdom.

Other developments in Wales in the early 1970s influenced Dai's attempts to relieve pressure on resources. A particular challenge was to find and enable supervisory staff to mount rescue excavations all year round, so avoiding the need to rely on times convenient for academics and students. In the far north-west, for instance, Richard White, an energetic archaeology graduate from University College Bangor, had become involved in the excavation of a cist cemetery at Arfryn in Anglesey. The discovery there of an inscribed stone reused as the lid of one of the graves resulted in a rather unseemly squabble between early medieval specialists in Cardiff and Cornwall, both of whom wanted to take over responsibility for the excavation – and the glory that might flow from it.<sup>13</sup> Dr Apted would have none of this and left White effectively in charge, though with a more experienced postgraduate from Cornwall as his 'minder'. As a result, Richard was ideally placed to take responsibility when rescue work became necessary at relatively short notice (and out of university term-time) on a local authority shopping development in the centre of Bangor. This was funded largely by the Inspectorate in Cardiff, on Dai's recommendation.

Meanwhile, in the central borderland, Dai had recruited Chris Musson to lead a small excavation team at the Breiddin hillfort near Welshpool, in response to road-stone quarrying of national importance which could not reasonably be resisted, despite the hillfort's scheduled status. Trial work in October and November 1969 revealed well-preserved archaeological deposits, though some features and stratigraphical layers only became visible and intelligible when rain, at the end of an extremely dry autumn, restored colour to the soil and showed the wall-gullies and individual stake-holes of Iron Age roundhouses. Convinced that this bore out everything that had been agreed in late-night discussions at South Cadbury, Musson returned to Cardiff and in the following months formulated plans with Graeme Guilbert and Bill Britnell to establish a small, highly skilled unit that, by virtue of its accumulated experience and rapid pace of operation, could take on excavation projects of reasonable size with a team of no more than half a dozen participants. It was that team, by then christened the Rescue Archaeology Group (or, in their own preference, RAG) that resumed the excavations at the Breiddin the following autumn, an innovation once again strongly supported by Dai and Mike Apted in Cardiff.

By this time the English Inspectorate was trying to establish regional rescue archaeology bodies financed jointly by the Department of the Environment and relevant local authorities. Rivalries of various kinds, and an injudicious press release before the local authorities were apprised of this plan, meant that the proposal never reached fruition. Attempts continued to promote similar structures in other ways, eventually resulting in a rather patchwork pattern based on counties rather than regions. The initial proposal, however, had resulted in a meeting between John Hurst, who promoted the idea on behalf of the Inspectorate in London, and 'interested parties' from the somewhat ossified structure of archaeological involvement in Wales. In legend at least, and possibly in fact, this resulted in an offer

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<sup>13</sup>Hedges *et al.* 2016.

being made to the Archaeology Department at University College Cardiff to set up a rescue archaeology organisation for the whole of Wales. For whatever reason the offer was apparently turned down, leaving Dai free to devise a scheme that he thought more appropriate to the administrative realities and archaeological character of Wales.

It had long been clear to Dai that no more than one or two of the thirteen county councils then existing in Wales could hope to muster sufficient money and enthusiasm to support a county archaeologist, and perhaps an assistant, at whatever level of seniority. The country was also far larger and more geographically complex than any of the 39 county councils in England, with a large part of the population (but only size-related share of the known archaeology) clustered in and around the large towns and semi-industrial areas along the south-east coast. Different parts of Wales also had, and continue to have, strong individual identities, capable of generating tensions with any organisation based in the capital city 'down there in Cardiff'. Some other kind of structure was needed to recognise these differences in geography, society, administration and (to be fair) archaeology. It would have to take account of the fact that the structure of Welsh local administration was about to be reorganised, in 1974, into the five larger counties of Gwynedd, Clwyd, Powys, Glamorgan and Gwent.

Various possibilities were discussed in the Inspectorate office in Cardiff but it was a conversation in a north-Wales pub, between Dai and Richard White, which prompted an idea that seemed to offer a viable solution. Why not, they contemplated with increasing enthusiasm as the beverages were consumed, set up three, four or perhaps even five independent charitable trusts, non-profit companies limited by guarantee, to receive funds from the Inspectorate and others, to employ staff, to acquire and manage their own equipment and to undertake projects on a 'regional' basis, wherever and whenever they were needed? And of course to foster a public commitment to the archaeology and people of their own region.

Once Dai had won the support of Dr Apted for this idea,<sup>14</sup> he continued to explore it in further discussion in Cardiff and elsewhere in Wales, not least with trusty Assistant Inspector, Richard Avent, who had joined the Ancient Monuments Branch in 1971. The pattern emerged of four regional Trusts, one for Gwynedd in the north-west, another for Dyfed in the south-west, a third covering Glamorgan and Gwent along the South Wales coast (the most populous but smallest area), and a fourth bringing together the thinly populated rural areas of Clwyd and Powys along the central and northern borderland with England. At this point Dai withdrew from day-to-day involvement with the scheme's implementation in order to concentrate on other responsibilities as an Inspector, and Richard Avent took the lead under Dr Apted in the work of enabling the establishment of the Trusts (Figure 2c).

By 1976, the still-operating system of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts was established. For Dai, and for the officers and committees of the individual Trusts, the creation of these independent but (still now, well into the next millennium) partly state-funded organisations, provided a regional commitment and identity in every part of Wales, centred on the charitable objective of the 'education of the public in archaeology', with powers not only to undertake excavations and other field investigations but also to compile records that were relevant to effective development control and conservation functions – and to do all such other things as

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<sup>14</sup> Sheena Evans pers. comm.



might contribute to or flow from these functions. This structure enshrined the potential to counter the oft-perceived dominance of the industrial south-east by affording equal attention to the more rural parts of Wales, and to their own distinctive geographical, social, cultural and archaeological identities. Public funds could be distributed and used with probity but at one remove from the sometimes-stultifying hand of Civil Service administration in Cardiff. A coherent and all-embracing structure of this kind, viewed with envy forty years and more later in England, would allow heritage policy and research objectives to be developed in a kind of ‘creative tension’ between central and regional responsibilities. There was a chance that the Trusts, through cooperation with (but not control by) the six new county councils, could contribute to better development-control and conservation procedures. The pursuit of rescue archaeology, as it was then understood, could give those involved a livelihood and a degree of professional respect granted at first with only grudging acquiescence by the older and more self-absorbed archaeological institutions in Wales.

All of this, of course, was only in its early stages when Dai left for a different variety of green fields in London towards the end of 1977. But, as conversations with him in the final year of his life showed, the achievement of those years brought him enduring satisfaction for a job well done in the early years of a long and distinguished career. Never one to shy away from controversy, he was nevertheless encouraged when the Trusts, under the early guidance of their founding chairmen and directors, vowed always to act together in the corporate interests of Welsh archaeology, even though they might on occasions – and in private – squabble in the pursuit of funding for projects or services within their own individual regions. That degree of public unanimity and common purpose has allowed the Trusts to adapt over the years from basically ‘rescue’ organisations into mature and well-focused regional archaeological services, valued for their field projects, their educational activities and the highly developed SMRs (now Heritage Environment Records) that have done so much to underpin their continuing contribution to conservation of the country’s archaeological and historical heritage. Welsh archaeology today owes a huge debt to Mike Apted, Richard Avent and Dai Morgan Evans, and for creating and supporting the four Welsh Trusts; and particularly to Dai Morgan Evans for his original vision and his persuasiveness in winning Dr Apted’s support for the idea.<sup>15</sup>

Dai’s innovative spirit was not confined to the setting up of the Trusts. His undergraduate dissertation had focused on the mid-Wales lead mines, and he did much to promote the recognition of industrial archaeology in Wales, affording legal protection to a number of former industrial sites and areas, including securing the scheduling as an ancient monument of Telford’s tubular railway bridge at Conwy and the Dyfi Furnace in Ceredigion. He was one of those who tried and failed to prevent the destruction of the Pentrebach Triangle in Merthyr Tydfil. It was mainly because of frustration when his ideas – to get the Dyfi Furnace water wheel turning, for example, or to introduce modern sculptures into castles – were consistently rejected by Mike Apted’s more cautious successor – that he sought transfer to the English Inspectorate. His proposal, however, to turn Big Pit at Pontypool into a museum (now the Big Pit National Coal Museum) and give employment to redundant and retired miners as guides has now triumphantly borne fruit.

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<sup>15</sup> Sheena Evans pers. comm.

### **The ancient monuments inspectorate and English heritage, by Christopher Young**

Dai joined the team at Fortress House in 1977 and stayed until 1992. We shared an office – the famous smoke-filled room – from 1977 until I changed roles at the end of 1979, and I met him at the all-Inspectorate training gatherings. I did, however, regret missing the North Wales session which was organised by Dai and which was fondly remembered by other colleagues, not only for the forward-looking training content including visits and discussions at the Dinorwic slate quarry, but also for a memorable reception at Caernarvon Castle. A famous harpist entertained the group, but later on the police arrived to close the party down because of the noise levels! Dai himself regaled me with the story of their return to the college (Welsh nonconformist) at which everybody was staying, which involved piano playing and raucous singing. Dai had been concerned at the likely reactions of the college authorities and his relief was great when he entered and found the piano was being played by the Principal of the college!

This incident encapsulates many of the qualities of Dai's character that persisted through his career: his love of a good party and his affable nature most assuredly, yet also his forward-thinking professionalism, his training and organisational abilities, and not least his sense of the dramatic. Dai applied these skills as an Area Inspector in the South West, but carved out a role for himself in much wider policy areas.

This was a good time to arrive in London. Apart from 1977 being the year in which Shampers Wine Bar opened, it was also a time of impending change in the Inspectorate. The 1969 Walsh Report was followed by 1972 Field Monuments Act which in turn led to the setting up of Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) at county level. There followed the idea of Field Monument Wardens to provide a presence for the Inspectorate on the ground and a contact with farmers and landowners, the development of rescue archaeology, and increasing recognition of what would now be called the historic environment. Finally, the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act revolutionised our work by introducing Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) analogous to Listed Building Consent. This new system was light years ahead of the old 3-month notice system which gave little real power beyond bluff and negotiation.

Beyond his normal casework, Dai focused notably upon two main areas. First, he explored the possibilities of SMC as a management tool and the need for a good information base (hence his interest in SMRs) and good training to operate the SMC system with its inevitable public inquiries. Dai trained the inspectorate to act as witnesses at public hearings – several have vouched for the realism of that training – and acted as advocate in inquiries, a role which played to both his combative and performative skills, and in which he had consistent success. Just one example of his performance relates to a proposal to install a temporary test drilling rig for oil very close to Hadrian's Wall. The Public Enquiry was held in Hexham, with Dai as a superb counsel for the opposition throughout the 3–4 days of the Enquiry. His master stroke came at the end at the obligatory site visit. Dai insisted that the company should mount a tethered balloon reaching up 35m into the air (the planned height of the drilling rig). One look at that was enough to convince the Planning Inspector that the application should be dismissed. His success was based not just on his advocacy but also on his very thorough preparations for each inquiry and his training of the rest of us to prepare and deliver our evidence.

The second major focus for Dai was rural heritage policy. This comprised several strands of work. First, there was liaison with conservation agencies such as the then Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission.<sup>16</sup> Second was the idea of looking beyond the scheduled monuments to the archaeology of the countryside as a whole, where Dai saw the need to manage archaeology as an integral part of the landscape. Third, he worked to engage farmers through publications, through the Field Monument Wardens and through general advocacy. Dai was also brilliant at working with large landowners such as Duchy of Cornwall and Ministry of Defence (MOD). He was for many years on the Duchy Archaeological Advisory Committee, and summed up by HRH Prince of Wales on one occasion as having ‘the gift of the gab’.

Dai’s MOD liaison was a particular success story, especially with regard to the Salisbury Plain Training Area: the largest area of unimproved chalk grassland in Europe and therefore an enormous archaeological resource. Initially he faced suspicion, but Dai’s father had been a TA officer and he himself had enjoyed serving in the Corps at school. He won his Army colleagues’ agreement to setting up the SPTA (Salisbury Plain Training Area) Archaeological Working Party, followed by a consultative committee. More than this, he established relationships of trust and liking. Among various stories he told was one of how, after a new signing system for archaeological sites was instituted, Dai arrived at a round barrow with VIPs to find a squaddy eating his lunch in a newly dug foxhole. Another related to a reception to mark the launch of some initiative in the SPTA at a time when the new Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission had just been given the more ‘accessible’ title English Heritage. When a young lieutenant introduced Dai to the Garrison Commander, the latter responded ‘Very glad to meet you Morgan Evans. Glad you’re not one of those [expletives] from English Heritage!’ Dai himself summarised his work on Salisbury Plain as: ‘a pioneering and experimental approach towards archaeological conservation in any sort of land use and ... the largest scheme of archaeological land management, certainly in the UK, probably in Europe and for the type of archaeological sites involved there are few, if any, comparable schemes in the world’.<sup>17</sup>

Dai was also heavily involved in recruiting and training the Field Monument Wardens, thus giving us an invaluable presence on the ground. All of this work was done by Dai in addition to the normal load of Ancient Monuments casework for his area, and a number of other activities including some international contacts.

Dai was of course a ‘people’ person, who also worked closely with other Inspectors and with English Heritage administrators. He believed in away days and informal networking. He did not believe overmuch in distinctions of status and could and did go directly to the Chief Executive if particularly cross about something. It is noticeable that those who worked with him as their mentor remember him with fondness and admiration, and speak of the care that he took in training them in both the large and the small aspects of working in the Inspectorate. His personality was strong, vivid and outgoing. I remember, when I shared a room with him and three others, that his mood when he arrived on Monday morning could

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<sup>16</sup> His work with the latter two bodies led him to take an Open University unit in ecology and to contribute to legislation to encourage the conservation and planting of hedgerows, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (S. Evans pers. comm.)

<sup>17</sup> Evans 1991.

set the tone for the rest of us. Another colleague used to epitomise the extremes of his moods as Dai Boom and Dai Gloom.

He was convivial and social; lunches in Shampers (a wine bar in Kingly Street) were legendary and lengthy. On occasion on his return, he would sometimes have a brief rest under his desk but still be able to answer the phone cogently and coherently from his position on the floor. Another colleague summed him up for me as ‘a wonderfully stimulating, entertaining, knowledgeable and wildly infuriating colleague and friend.’ The same colleague also said that ‘[Dai] brought fun, challenge, wit, conviviality and scholarly entertainment – you really couldn’t ask for more.’ In fact, the Directorate, and then English Heritage, did get a lot more than that. They got someone who took advantage of the changes in legislation to strengthen greatly the protection of archaeological sites through Scheduled Monument Consent, and who was one of those who transformed the organisation’s approach to rural heritage. In both ways he has helped to shape the approach of what is now Historic England, even though he left it 25 years ago. We miss him and we shall go on missing him.

### **The Society of Antiquaries of London, by Rosemary Cramp**

When I first became a Fellow in 1959, the General Secretary was a forbidding, rather grand person who maintained the ethos of the Society as an exclusive male club, one not much given to welcoming young female members from distant places far away from London. Indeed, not much was conveyed to, or expected of, distant Fellows; they paid their fees and got *The Antiquaries Journal* and *Archaeologia*. If such individuals ever came to London, they crept into the library, or attended the odd lecture. As an earlier president (Cyril Fox) had said, ‘when the time of post-war meetings was fixed in 1946 as 5pm, the present arrangement permits many Fellows in the outer suburbs and the home counties to attend’. No mention of anywhere further! Despite the antiquity of the organisation it was very much the Society of Antiquaries of London.

When Dai took over as General Secretary in 1992, times had changed considerably; Council was more diverse and there had been more welcoming general secretaries than my first. Nevertheless, Barry Cunliffe, as President, knew that there was much in the society which needed modernisation and a new look, and this relatively new antiquary, whose working life had been in government service, had the range of skills and personal vigour to get things done. Dai hit the road running and maintained a breakneck speed until he retired. He had a tremendous capacity to swiftly absorb new knowledge in accurate detail, as the three presidents he served saw. Soon, therefore, he had command of the history and mores of the Society. In 1994, as part of one of the endless reviews the Society has subjected itself to, Barry thought that it needed not a mission statement but aims and objectives. Dai pointed out that this was already provided in the 1751 Royal Charter: ‘the encouragement advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of Antiquities and History of this and other countries.’ This was a far wider remit than serving as a venue for talks for Fellows from London and the home counties!

Dai kept these aims always before Council and the Fellows, and as Barry said in his final address in 1995, new assessments had been made of the Committee structure, Library, lecture programme, external contacts, and the social life of the Society in three years; and it was the





Figure 3. Three images of Dai during his time as General Secretary at the Society of Antiquaries of London from 1992–2004. Left: At Kelmscott House, 2001. Top-right: Dai (centre) with Geoff Wainwright (right) and David Breeze (left) at Geoff Wainwright’s retirement party at the Society of Antiquaries of London, c. 2000. Bottom right: the Society of Antiquaries of London ready to process in the celebrations of the Queen Mother’s 100th Birthday, 19 July 2000: (left to right) Dai Morgan Evans, Jayne Phenton, Adrian James, Niall Finneran, Ann Clark, Susan Youngs, Harry Gordon-Slade (Photographs: shared by Sheena Evans).

first occasion in 288 years that the Society could boast a five-year rolling budget so that an estimate could be made for its forward plan. Barry said, ‘this could not have been achieved without the constant support and creative input of our super-energetic General Secretary’. Later, we completely overhauled our Statutes. For many Fellows, I suppose the benefits, noted and enjoyed, were linked to a new sense of inclusion, through the joyful parties, the December miscellanies with mulled wine, the acquisition of the Internet, and newsletters which culminated in SALON. However, one should not forget that, together with the treasurer,

Dai maintained a prudent grasp on the finances of the Society, and if my tenure in his last three years was typical, we never ceased fund raising.

Dai had a tiny staff, and they all had to play several roles, so he and Bernard Nurse gave lectures and tours, aided from their specialist knowledge the development of catalogues of the collections, and all the time ensured that the Society made a mark and punched above its weight in the outside world (Figure 3). Perhaps, though, the most creative event which exemplified this was our input into the birthday procession for our Royal patron: the Queen Mother (Figure 3c). As the President elect, I watched in awe and delight at the mace bearing turnout Dai had created from our small group led by Simon Jervis and himself.

Dai of course was not a paragon, and he could be irritated by those who did not grasp issues and produce a swift response. Some said his own responses could be too swift. As others have noted, Dai had a short fuse, and could be awakened to rage over a range of issues, but particularly what he considered were slights to the national importance of the Society. For a time, the question of the Royal Academy's development of the courtyard was such an issue. There was first of all the erection of pavilions in the courtyard without planning permission, or consultation with the other occupants. If you want a judicious account of this you should read Simon Jervis's presidential address for 2000.<sup>18</sup> In their new refurbishments, the Academy wanted the courtyard cleared, to be able to put in sculptures and then, at the eleventh hour, a scheme for fountains and water jets and lighting emerged without any reference to the conservation plan which had been proposed after the pavilion debacle. These fountains Dai considered inappropriate for a small domestic courtyard such as ours with individual occupants' rights. Some small adjustments were made to timing, and our landlord, the Government, produced a retrospective conservation plan for the future! All is now forgiven and forgotten, but as Simon said, 'It would be idle to pretend that this episode has not produced some occasional tension round our courtyard and a certain amount of pressure on your general secretary and President'.<sup>19</sup> It did not quite reach open conflict between the societies; but the issue of the integration or diversity of tenure of the learned societies around the courtyard was to be more seriously tested later.

On a lighter note, from the moment of his arrival Dai created an atmosphere of welcome and good Fellowship at the Antiquaries. New Fellows were made to feel that they belonged to a lively as well as an erudite organisation and visiting Societies such as the Royal Archaeological Institute were encouraged to use our rooms. Our premises indeed became a desired meeting place. There were memorable parties not least the celebrations in 2001 of the 250th anniversary of the granting of our Royal Charter. We held a summer celebration at Kelmescott where the bands played and dancers danced (Figure 3a), and a more sober gathering in November in our library with lectures and a really magnificent cake.

But even then we were conscious that the world was changing around us. In the same address in which I mentioned cutting the cake I noted the increased burden on our General Secretary,

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<sup>18</sup>Jervis 2000.

<sup>19</sup>Jervis 2000, 8.

with the governmental demands for papers on health and safety, risk assessment, museum status, reserves status, and most important of all charity status and yes, even in my first year, tenurial status. This never let up in those last three years and we know how it has increased further as time has passed. In 2001–2002, I also noted in relation to the charity commission that their visitation ‘underlined the problem our Society has to recognise in walking the tight rope between serving the interests of the Fellowship and providing evidence of work for the greater good which earns us our charitable status.’

One way in which Dai dealt with this problem was to create significant improvements in our outreach, not only to our members but to the general public and indeed the government. There had been meetings with our American Fellows already and these continued, but in 2002 we held our first Thursday meeting outside London, an event at York which drew in many northern Fellows who had rarely if ever visited Burlington House, and which sparked off the still flourishing York Fellows association. We followed this with a meeting in Dai’s homeland of Chester which drew in Fellows from Lancashire to Wales, and we also held joint meetings with Welsh ‘Cambrians’ and Scottish Antiquaries. We did less to open to the general public than has been done since, but we did engage directly with government on issues such as pressing for the continuation of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and also for the endorsement of the UN charter on cultural heritage; in all of this much aided by the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group which Dai and Rupert Redesdale started in 2001.

Yet in the end the most pressing issue between us and the government was our tenure in Burlington House. This problem had rumbled on since 1995, but in 2002 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister attempted to obtain a ruling on the terms in which the Learned Societies occupied Burlington House (at that time paying no rent). Eventually their case that the Societies were no more than tenants at will (or at best licensees) was presented in the high court of Chancery in January 2004; while the Society of Antiquaries claimed they were moved to Somerset House in 1781 by royal decree of George III and that Burlington House was purpose built for them. After much debate it was agreed that the five societies around the courtyard would present a joint case, with the Antiquaries named as first defendant and Dai as chairman of the Courtyard Secretaries. Dai, Bernard and I sat through the hearing in 2004, and it was clear that the positions of the parties were almost irreconcilably apart, so in the end Judge Smith reserved verdict and ruled compulsory mediation.<sup>20</sup> In December 2004 there was a short-term settlement which is now, in summer 2021, under significant threat.

Dai left before the conclusion of the mediation, and his farewell party was a suitably memorable affair. It was a convivial occasion with music and dancing – some knew what steps they were attempting, some found this more problematic, but everyone enjoyed themselves and I suppose that was what Dai brought to the Antiquaries: not only a new sense of purpose but some laughter and fun.

Dai had never ceased to maintain his academic interests, and in retirement he would have the time to develop them and return to his beloved field work.

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<sup>20</sup> Cramp 2003.

**In memory of David Morgan Evans FSA, by Adrian James**

When I composed these lines, I seemed to hear  
The voice of Dai resounding in my ear.  
It said: *Now, Adrian, you know the drill.*  
*Stand up, and sock it to them.* So I will.

We must be candid, there were not a few  
Panjandrums of the senior Fellows, who,  
After the careful Council had conferred  
And the white smoke arose, were overheard  
To mutter somewhat anxiously, 'Good heavens!  
It seems they've gone for David Morgan Evans!'  
Since no-one knew just quite what to expect  
When Dai was General-Secretary-elect.  
Of one thing we were certain, anyhow;  
The place would see some alterations now,  
Because, at interview, when Dai was asked  
What his priority, if he were tasked  
To manage the Society, would be,  
He answered, with a little glint of glee,  
'I think, the improvement of its social life.'  
To this we'd yield, like butter to the knife.

When first the darkling hall of sal.org  
Dai entered, he pronounced the place a morgue;  
As General Secretary, he moved to act,  
Restoring to these rooms the life they lacked.  
The vinous bottle, and the party round,  
Annulled the torpor with a jocund sound;  
Not for an age, not since Dai's namesake John  
Was President, had we so undergone  
Re-education in the genial ways  
Of social seminars, and sweet soirees.  
Though pastime with good company and drinking  
Were more Dai's line than bumf or blue skies thinking,  
Plans of campaign were eagerly unfurled,  
And windows opened on the wider world.  
The general public, yes, the hoi polloi,  
Approached these portals, to perceive, with joy,  
Prints and engravings, visages of kings,  
And lots of really nice old books, and things.  
As partners in our purpose they were viewed,  
Instead of peasants, ignorant and rude;  
Although, in fairness, I should add that Hugh  
Chapman, Dai's predecessor, saw this too;  
Glasnost and perestroika at that time  
Were bandwagons on which Hugh had us climb.



Dai's earlier career was partly spent  
 In monsterring a prim Establishment,  
 And there were those who thought his Celtic fringe  
 Affinities betrayed a loosened hinge.  
 But people pompous, proud and self-important,  
 Dai strongly felt, were being what they oughtn't;  
 He craved the clangour of wit's fiery forge,  
 And wasn't solemn like our young Prince George.  
 Then latterly, and somewhat unexpectedly  
 For one who loved the eighteenth century,  
 Dai did diversity, and dared derision  
 By being visible on television,  
 Replete with Roman villa, where his friends  
 Attired themselves in togas at weekends.  
 As a presenter, who was Dai most like?  
 Not barking mad, *comme* Dr Magnus Pyke  
 (My TV references, are, to a man,  
 Historical – nay, antiquarian);  
 Neither seigneurially suave, as Wheeler,  
 Nor yet the donnish and discerning dealer  
 In ancient cultures, studiously aloof  
 Like Kenneth Clark. Rather, Dai was proof  
 That scientific thought could be embraced  
 With human feeling, by a man of taste;  
 That progress in a science comes by arts;  
 We welcome knowledge foremost in our hearts.  
 Impassioned, generous, humorous on the whole,  
 A life-affirming, large and liberal soul,  
 Readily touched, and quickly moved to tears,  
 A watchful ward of burgeoning careers,  
 Dai's range of human sympathies was wide,  
 And paid no heed to any class divide.  
 But certainly the ill-bred Philistine  
 Incurred his wrath. In 1999,  
 There opened at the Royal Academy  
 Its *Monet in the 20th Century*,  
 And Dai, for one, the RA failed to please  
 By throwing up some PVC marquees  
 Without planning permission. Jocelyn  
 Stevens, who happened to be looking in  
 Just as these edifices rose, walked out,  
 Fuming at such 'white monsters' all about.  
 Dai had a Celtic temper. When his ire  
 Was roused, it burned, a fast and kindling fire,  
 And institutional arrogance he hated;  
 Accordingly, the RA was berated.  
 Westminster Council's planners that same day

Received a note exhorting them to stay  
 The Royal Academy's too-hasty hand,  
 By issuing an instant countermand.  
 Though the marquees were ready for the town,  
 The planners met, and turned the whole scheme down.  
 Dai's triumph made the evening press take note,  
 To whom he cackled, 'I don't like to gloat,  
 But I'm gloating. The Philistines are smitten.'

We gratefully remember Dai for wit; an  
 Ability to tell hilarious stories  
 Turned routine tea-breaks into social glories.  
 He'd met, in his professional capacity,  
 Odd types, whom he'd recall with fine loquacity.  
 Some Army personnel he'd known seemed one  
 With Dr Strangelove's General Turgidson  
 In almost superhuman doltishness.  
 Dai used to tell us about one fine mess,  
 His horrifying near-catastrophe  
 When, in an Army truck on Salisbury  
 Plain, unexpectedly huge guns began  
 To pound the track down which the vehicle ran.  
 The Army major he was driven by  
 Declared, 'A soldier's not afraid to die,'  
 To which our Dai, who plainly gave a damn,  
 Squeaked, 'Well, I'm not a soldier and I am!'  
 Of all Dai's many kindnesses to staff,  
 The greatest was, he often made us laugh.

Some of us here are veterans, I believe,  
 Of Dai's extraordinary millennium eve.  
 For several months, a wild *Grande Peur* had spread  
 Throughout the land, an atavistic dread  
 That all computers on millennium morn  
 Would cease to work, and what rough beast be born.  
 Dai placed a banquet in the Council Room,  
 And in we came, to face the hour of doom.  
 Of meat there was no want, of wine no drouth;  
 One reveller stuffed a trout's head in his mouth.  
 Then, after dinner, Dai released our crowd  
 Onto the roof (when such things were allowed):  
 Splitting fireworks burst upon the night;  
 Above roared Concorde, at no great a height;  
 Computers glowed; yes, they were doing fine.  
 The world was saved. We went and drank more wine.

Just once was such a social night embattled.  
Just once was Dai a little more than rattled.  
The summer wine cup, which we staff had fixed  
Down in the kitchen, boasted Cointreau mixed  
With kumquats, plus substantial quantities  
Of soda, but for which the potion is  
Intoxicating to a high degree.  
Preparing this was in the agency  
Of a staff member ungainsayable  
In vintner's lore, and on her shoulders fell  
The due concocting of our special brew.  
That something was amiss, we shortly knew.  
Proceedings started promptly, with the normal  
Miscellany of papers, and, the formal  
Transactions being closed with thanks returned,  
In favour of their wine cups guests adjourned.  
These genteel fixtures in the month of June  
Are placid as a rule; but very soon,  
Fellows with signs of tiredness or emotion,  
Or curious defects in locomotion,  
Began to be in startling evidence;  
And some there were who seemed deprived of sense,  
Assuming a position, when alone,  
Which properly may be described as prone.  
While this was happening in the entrance hall,  
A visit to the kitchen revealed all;  
Our barmaid for the night, whose tastes were formed  
In Soho in the Fifties, had not warmed  
To adding soda, deeming such dilution  
Fitter for liquids destined for ablution.  
Dai remonstrated, but the brusque response,  
'Fellows can't hold their drink, Dai,' came at once.  
The Cointreau proved a too, too heady mix;  
Now Pimms removes the office politics.

Undoubtedly, it would be very wrong  
To leave a false impression. Wine and song,  
And what goes with them, played the smallest part  
In ways in which Dai took this place to heart.  
Work was, as it remains, laborious;  
As staff, we felt more was required of us.  
With issues of our tenancy here looming,  
And soon becoming ever more consuming,  
Troubles popped up, too numerous to control;  
Life seemed a gruesome game of Whack-a-Mole.  
When Dai was under some undue duress,  
Physical symptoms flashed of mounting stress;

The premonitory signs to recognise  
 Were sudden facial tics, fast-blinking eyes,  
 The index finger that so often poked  
 Dai's spectacles whenever something stoked  
 A smouldering indignation. But these niggles  
 Could soon subside in mockery and giggles.  
 No man was less disposed to bear a grudge;  
 No-one should judge him, as he would not judge.  
 He might bstride the pulpit, but the pew  
 Was where he sat, with people whom he knew.  
 Supportive of the staff, and always just,  
 Dai offered loyalty. He had our trust.  
 God said (and rightly), *Blessed are the pure*  
*In heart*, amongst whom Dai's place is secure.

Ours is no time, and Dai was not the man,  
 To be a septuagenarian  
 Assistant Secretary, although Carlisle  
 And Philip Corder by a country mile  
 Retained the post long past retirement age.  
 But Dai, a youthful 60, quit the stage.  
 To publish an appropriate ovation,  
 We held a party on this great occasion.  
 Even the library was cleared, and for  
 One single night became a disco floor  
 Which gallantly, if groaningly, confessed  
 The terpsichorean prowess of each guest.  
 The vast and hallowed carpet offered traction  
 To steps for *I can't get no satisfaction*;  
 Nor was this all of which these vaults could brag;  
 Whenever that grim lyric, *What a drag*  
*It is, getting old* was hollered out, or bruted,  
 The sentiment could not but be confuted.  
 With Dai, the dance-floor dervish, wild with wit,  
 Leading our feet, we made a night of it.  
 With Dai in charge, we staff had, to the end,  
 A gracious colleague, and a loyal friend;  
 This institution, by his wise election,  
 Gained optimistic, outward-bound direction.  
 We all miss Dai. I miss his sense of fun.  
 He's missed in many ways, but everyone  
 Whose life he took absorbing notice of,  
 Remembers him with laughter, and with love.

### **An active retirement, by Howard Williams and Sheena Evans<sup>21</sup>**

Despite continuing ill health from 2004, in retirement, Dai remained very active as an archaeologist and a force for good in support of the subject.<sup>22</sup> Not only did he apply his expertise to the service of the discipline through political and media spheres, he also developed his contribution to academic teaching. Most significantly, Dai pursued original research, returning to and exploring his interests in the late Roman and early medieval archaeology of western Britain, the history of antiquarianism, the management and conservation of ancient and historic monuments, and the study of Llangar church: all dimensions reflected in this collected works. Indeed, Dai was presenting about ‘early medieval burial mounds in eastern Wales – Eliseg and Garmon’ when I (Howard Williams) first met him in February 2007 during the Early Medieval Wales Archaeological Research Group (EMWARG) workshop held at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff. At that point, I did not realise I was soon to become far better acquainted with Dai following my move the following February to Chester, where Dai was already an active supporter, teacher and researcher.

#### ***Teaching***

As noted above, Dai was an Honorary Lecturer at UCL from 2003 (as well as lecturing for some years at Birkbeck College and at the Extra-Mural Department of the University of Oxford), but also most actively involved in teaching students in his home city of Chester at the Department of History and Archaeology in what was to become in 2005 the University of Chester (formerly University College Chester). Dai’s affinities with Chester go back to his childhood, from as early as aged 4, when the Chester Archaeological Society of which his father was a member and later secretary was overseeing multiple digs in the city. Returning to be affiliated with the archaeologists at Chester, Dai first held a position as a visiting lecturer before being appointed with a professorial title in 2006 as Visiting Professor of Archaeology.

Honorary affiliates rarely make active contributions to university life, but Dai was an exception. Not only did he contribute substantively to the quality, depth and breadth of student learning, supporting a very small archaeology unit of two archaeologists and one heritage specialist, but during a hiatus in teaching staff in 2007 he stepped into the breach, delivering contributions to a raft of modules. In subsequent years, he taught a range of subjects on the final-year module ‘Archaeology and Contemporary Society’, straight from his own experience, regarding media and archaeology, politics and archaeology, and the future of archaeology, as well as key issues relating to heritage management and conservation. Moreover, through his own high-profile activities including public talks and media work (see below), he enhanced the reputation of Chester’s archaeologists and fought our corner within the University, the city and on a national and international stage.

#### ***Research***

I was already acquainted with Dai’s work on early medieval burial mounds from his EMWARG talk, and his visits to teach regularly coincided with post-lecture visits to Hatties Tea Shop,

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<sup>21</sup> This section authored by Howard Williams with a final section by Sheena Evans.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Dai served for many years as an active member of the Advisory Committee for Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.





Figure 4. Dai during the 2008 survey at the Pillar of Eliseg with Professor Nancy Edwards (top-right) and during the 2010 field season of Project Eliseg (Photographs: Howard Williams)

then by Chester’s Northgate and a short walk from the Bluecoat building which housed the Department of History and Archaeology. We soon began scheming about potential plans for new research. This is because, while also working on the articles which form components of this book, Dai was eager to get back into the field.

Via his collaboration with Geoff Wainwright and Tim Darvill, Dai was already a long-term contributor to the SPACES (Strumble-Preseili Ancient Communities and Environment Study) exploring Neolithic landscapes in north Pembrokeshire. But Dai had further plans and had already mobilised a range of specialists including Dr Susan Youngs (British Museum), Alex Turner (Durham University), Dr David Petts (Durham University), and Professor Nancy Edwards (Bangor University) to support his endeavours to explore the ninth-century fragmented cross-shaft upon its original base, set on an undated round mound, known as the Pillar of Eliseg (or Eliseg’s Pillar), Llantysilio, Denbighshire. This enigmatic and unique monument was already the focus of ongoing research by Edwards and in 2008 Dai facilitated Nancy’s measurement of the stone for her then-forthcoming North Wales volume 3 of the *Early Medieval Inscribed*

*Stones and Stone Sculpture*.<sup>23</sup> The 2008 field season also involved a topographical survey of the mound, and Semple and Turner conducting a geophysical survey of the field to the north of the scheduled ancient monument.

These were but preliminary investigations. Subsequently, Dai played a significant role in fostering our collaborate fieldwork project with late prehistorian Dr Gary Robinson and Professor Nancy Edwards of Bangor University: Project Eliseg. Returning to the field in 2010 with consent, permissions, funding and students from both Bangor and Chester, we conducted the first of three seasons of excavations into the monument (Figure 4). Dai was therefore not only instrumental in the project getting off the ground, he was fully participatory in the first field season: digging, sieving and even adorning the railings around the Pillar with Y Ddraig Goch! He visited again briefly in 2011, although ill-health prevented his participation in the third and final season in 2012.

Our excavations revealed that the mound beneath the Pillar was indeed an Early Bronze Age kerbed cairn with multiple secondary cist burials.<sup>24</sup> Dai was keen to support my preliminary interpretation of these findings regarding the role of the monument as constitutive of claims to past, present and future in early 9th-century Powys.<sup>25</sup> Dai's insights subsequently inspired my collaborative investigations of the landscape context of the monument.<sup>26</sup>

Linked closely to Dai's interest in the 'afterlife' of the Pillar and thus to its antiquarian reimagining in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we found evidence of the consolidation and enhancement of the monument and its re-erection in the late eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup> This was a time when the shaft was re-dedicated to commemorate its restoration by Trevor Lloyd of Trevor Hall and placed so as to be intervisible with his summer house in the grounds of Valle Crucis Abbey down the valley to the south.

Dai was also inspirational regarding the public and community engagement aspects of the project. Both before and during fieldwork, we aspired not only to publish summaries of our work, but also to present public talks and include local people in the project from start to finish; and Dai explicitly encouraged me to write for popular magazines.<sup>28</sup> We were also keen to create as prominent a media presence as possible as well as a digital footprint for the project through a website, social media and also (in the second and third seasons) a regular vlog on YouTube. While experimental and only successful in part, these initiatives were reasonably innovative and certainly pushed us far outside my usual comfort zone.<sup>29</sup>

Project Eliseg's fieldwork also informed Cadw's ongoing management and conservation of the monument. Moreover, while our final monograph remains forthcoming, the fieldwork has already produced an unexpected legacy. The artist's reconstruction of the Pillar of Eliseg commissioned from Dr Aaron Watson and informed by insights and guidance by Edwards,

<sup>23</sup> Edwards 2013: 322–336.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards et al. 2010; Edwards et al. 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Williams 2011a.

<sup>26</sup> Murrieta-Flores and Williams 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards et al. 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Williams 2010; Williams 2011b, 2011c.

<sup>29</sup> Tong et al. 2015; Evans and Williams 2019; Williams and Evans 2020.

has taken on a new life in the Eagle Tower at Caernarfon Castle as part of the ‘Bloodline of the Princes’, underpinning the central importance of the site and its story for national origin stories for Wales.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, informed by our excavation results, Cadw commissioned and set up two heritage interpretation panels, one at the monument itself and one by Valle Crucis Abbey.<sup>31</sup>

In short, Dai’s inspiration and direction not only led to startling new archaeological results about the early medieval monument, its afterlife and landscape context, but also to new initiatives in public archaeology, a new Cadw regime of heritage management and conservation for the Pillar of Eliseg and, further, to heritage interpretation distributed across North Wales.

### **Public engagement**

Dai attributed his presentational skills to his experience while a postgraduate of lecturing to any and every audience in the cause of adult education, once adapting his delivery to the needs of a single caretaker as they sat by the community hall boiler on a stormy winter’s night somewhere in the Welsh Valleys.<sup>32</sup> In retirement, Dai delivered a range of public talks and public engagements as well as inspiring the public engagement dimensions of Project Eliseg. Yet I want to focus on his contributions nearing and during retirement to two experimental archaeology projects in Roman building. It is necessary, therefore, to return to a time when Dai was still General Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries. Dai already had some experience of radio and TV appearances, but there was a step-shift when he found himself co-opted into a distinctive six-part television programme to build a Roman villa at the Butser Ancient Farm, Hampshire, inspired by Roman villa architecture in broad terms but specifically by the excavations at Sparsholt.<sup>33</sup> As Chairman of the Butser Trust, Dai stepped into the breach after the lead presenter resigned (having decided the project was not feasible). Dai salvaged the project in episode 4 of *Rebuilding the Past* by establishing a new programme of works leading to the completion of a Roman villa using traditional methods: the first of its kind in England since the Roman period.

Mixing together reality television and experimental archaeology, the programme and its associated book were a lasting contribution to public archaeology and Roman studies (Figure 5).<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the villa has been subject to ongoing repairs, refurbishments and revisions. Aspects of construction which were temporary compromises required to meet the tight television deadlines have been succeeded by more satisfactory and academically informed long-term solutions including new windows and stairs to allow access to the mezzanine floor. Mobility access has also been improved. Outside, the Roman-style lavatories have proven a popular feature for visitors. The long-term presence of the villa has also provided additional opportunities for experimental archaeology, including research on the hypocaust system.<sup>35</sup> As many as 30,000 school children in any given year have explored this villa since its 2003 construction; and the villa has been used by specialist groups and re-enactors and as a venue

<sup>30</sup> Evans and Williams 2019; Williams and Evans 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Williams and Evans 2020.

<sup>32</sup> S. Evans pers. comm.

<sup>33</sup> Johnston and Dicks 2014.

<sup>34</sup> Evans 2003.

<sup>35</sup> Claire Walton pers. comm. 8 December 2017.





Figure 5. Photographs of the Butser Farm Roman villa (Reproduced with permission of Butser Farm)

and locus for talks, research and filming. In summary, stemming from the television show and Dai's book, the villa has served as an enduring public education and research resource.

Building directly on the Butser experience, in 2010 Dai agreed to participate in a Channel 4 programme entitled *Rome Wasn't Built in a Day*, and for a second time he brought his broad knowledge of archaeology, his ability to adapt and acquire new skills very fast and his taste for controversy and combative engagement to the public eye. Drawing on the Roman writer Vitruvius and exhaustive research of existing archaeological evidence as well as his own experience at Butser, he rapidly designed – then modified for cost reasons – a Roman town house which modern British workmen were to build using Roman methods. Overseeing and interacting with a band of workmen with distinctive personalities and varying competence, Dai both suffered and adapted to the unhistorical scenario of the programme with good humour; as with the Buster project, he acted on his belief in the value of experimental archaeology and in the potential education value for television audiences.<sup>36</sup> He also helped secure the agreement of English Heritage not only to the location at a premier heritage site but its long-term retention and conservation there. The villa has become an attraction of lasting value to visitors and local people alike. Therefore, while the television programme was perhaps short-lived, it had an incomparably wide audience for show-casing Roman building techniques and the challenges and choices involved in an informed reconstruction. Indeed, there was a dramatic spike to over 57,000 visitors to Wroxeter during 2011 in the immediate aftermath of the airing of the television show.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, the Roman house has remained a valuable teaching tool and major attraction at Wroxeter Roman City in Shropshire, receiving over 22,000 visitors each year including parties of local schoolchildren (Figure 6).<sup>38</sup>

Dai brought to these projects his humour, his passionate public engagement, and his expertise and vision. While academics and heritage professionals might debate details of their construction and the quality of the television shows themselves is outside the parameters of this discussion, it is undoubtedly clear that these projects had credibility and legacies for public archaeological engagement and education.

Among the other commitments Dai undertook after retirement was his membership of the Council of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, and it was perhaps fitting that his last public lecture was delivered to them at the Royal Society of Medicine in London on 13 November 2013. The subject was 'How Welsh was Mrs Thrale?', and despite his now advanced illness he was able to share his enthusiasm for that redoubtable friend of Samuel Johnson, and his research into her Welsh origins and ongoing connection with the Principality. His final peroration was a passionate plea for Welsh scholars and antiquaries to give more public recognition to prominent Welsh men and women, such as her, who were better known outside than within Wales.

The most outstanding example he gave was that of the eighteenth-century oriental scholar, linguist, lawyer and archaeologist Sir William Jones, who is universally honoured as the linguist who first brought to public notice, in the Kolkata of 1786, the idea that Greek, Latin

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/interview-professor-dai-morgan-evans-planner-archaeologist>

<sup>37</sup> White *et al.* 2013, 207. For visitor figures, see: <https://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=597>

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Roberts (Properties Historian, English Heritage) pers. comm. 06/10/2021.



DAI MORGAN EVANS: A LIFE IN ARCHAEOLOGY



Figure 6. Photographs of Dai during the 'Rome Wasn't Built in a Day' television programme (top left, lower left and right: Photographs by Howard Williams. Remainders by permission of Dai Morgan Evans' estate)





Figure 7. Dai at the tomb of Sir William Jones, Kolkata (Photograph by Sheena Evans)

and Sanskrit must, given their resemblances, share a common ancestry; thus providing the impetus for the development of comparative linguistics in the early nineteenth century and the use of the term ‘Indo European’.<sup>39</sup> Jones is honoured with a monument in the South Park Cemetery, Kolkata (Figure 7) and the ongoing presence in the same city of the oldest institution of oriental studies in the world (now the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal), founded by him in 1784. Despite his Welsh roots, there is no corresponding memorial in Wales, nor is it widely known that the inspiration for much of what he did, in the legal as well as literary

<sup>39</sup> Garland 1990.

and cultural fields, was his lifelong passion for social justice, courageously expressed in both Britain and India.

Dai was hugely proud of his own Welsh roots. He spent happy hours searching (usually in the rain) for ancestors buried in Welsh graveyards, and only ever relaxed in the family cottage in mid-Wales. He enjoyed relating that a relative of his wrote the libretto for the first opera in Welsh (though it is not clear that he ever succeeded in listening to this all through – he did have a recording), and had a copy of another ancestor’s collected sermons in Welsh. This pride in Wales is the guiding thread in his love for the historic environment, for medieval British and by extension all archaeology, for antiquarianism and for learning and culture in all their forms.

### **About this collection, by Howard Williams**

This book aims to collate and promote the academic work of Dai, whose career spanned the civil service, learned societies, charitable organisations and the academy (see the Appendix for a comprehensive list of his publications). While many of his publications appeared later in his life, they clearly built upon his lifelong interests and expertise developed since his student days at Cardiff where he studied early medieval archaeology. Subsequently, his interests incorporated the prehistoric and historical archaeologies of England and Wales, exploring in particular both the early medieval origins of Wales and its eighteenth-century antiquarians. Dai Morgan Evans’ lifelong ties to Chester and Wales and his passion for both teaching and research, prompting his appointment as Visiting Professor in the Department of History and Archaeology, provide a basis for our delivery of this project. Rather than a posthumous *Festschrift*, this book celebrates Dai’s work and its legacy by assembling and contextualising many of his own key works.

Part one addresses the archaeology and history of early medieval western Britain via four articles, two originally appearing in edited collections, two in journal articles in the *Montgomeryshire Collections* and *The Antiquaries Journal*. Exploring the origins of Powys, Irish influence on mid-Wales, the report on the Llanwyddelan stone, and a reflection on the likely (dis)continuity of Roman traditions in Wales, these chapters bring together Dai’s key contributions and critical reflections on early medieval Wales and the west, gathered here together re-edited, re-formatted, and with significantly enhanced visual support.

Part two includes three studies by Dai on antiquarianism and the history of investigations and conservation of ancient monuments, originally appearing in *The Antiquaries Journal*. His reflections on Cadbury Castle stand the test of time as a critical reflection on the reliability of the antiquarian sources and their reliance on each other. Meanwhile, given the recent dating of the Cerne Abbas Giant to the early medieval period, Dai’s reflections on the earliest written sources are timely and pertinent. Finally, Dai’s exploration of the history of conserving historic buildings reflects on key lessons pertinent far beyond Wales and England. Once again re-edited, re-formatted and enriched by additional images, this part of the book connects the study of the human past through ancient monuments with their conservation and care in today’s world.

Part three of the book draws together three studies on eighteenth and early nineteenth-century antiquarianism originally published in the pages of *The Antiquaries Journal* and *Archaeologia Cambrensis*.

Part four constitutes the re-edited and re-formatted publication of the four articles in the *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society* XVI, parts 1-4, 2010-13, between 2010 and 2013. The opportunity has been taken to significantly enhance the images supporting the publication in order to visualise the relationship between the churchyard, church architecture, fixtures and fittings with the surviving and restored site under Cadw guardianship.

Comparing the contents of this book with Dai's full publication list (below), there are inevitable gaps, principally Dai's sundry works on heritage conservation, the National Trust, and the 2003 Methuen book on the Butser Roman villa project. Still, brought together for the first time, with modest but salient updates to identify more recent pertinent literature as well as with new visual accompaniment, this book stands as both a recognition and a celebration of the many strands of Dai's lifetime contribution to the archaeology of England and Wales.

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