

1 * www.cambrianrailways.com
CAMBRIAN RAILWAYS

BORN IN NANTWICH IN 1862, Wilfred's father, Tom Owen found a job with the Great Western Railway as a junior railway clerk, aged 15; he was soon to be posted to the Oswestry branch.



The platform then, would have been buzzing with civilians and soldiers, chatting, looking out across Shelf Bank, before hopping on the train back to Park Hall Camp.

In September 1880, Tom, aged 18, left to seek success in India, setting sail on the SS Benalder from Liverpool. Soon after arriving, he joined the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. He returned in 1891, and re-joined the Oswestry branch of the GWR. **NOTE: In 2014, Cambrian Railways opened a WWI exhibition within the original circular ticket office.**

Visit The Railway Museum next door, for an evocative trip into the railway's rich history.

From the station, go left along Oswald Road for 20 metres to the Railway Museum on the left. From the museum, continue left along Oswald Road before taking a left along Black Gate Street and bear left along Coney Green and across the railway tracks.

2 **WILFRED OWEN GREEN**



THE GREEN was opened and dedicated to the memory of Wilfred Owen on 23rd July 2010 by Peter Owen, his nephew, who spoke of Wilfred's "great love of children and nature".

The site has stunning wildflower meadows, trees, footpaths, a play area and a 40m labyrinth, one of the largest in the world.

Shelf Bank, now a Local Nature Reserve, once housed a Royal Observer Corps World War 2 look-out and Cold War bunker because of its superb views from the summit.

Returning over the railway track, bear left along Black Gate Street, until you come to Salop Road; turn left for 100 metres along to the church on the right.

www.oldsoswestryhillfort.com
OSWESTRY TOWN

OSWESTRY IS ONE of the oldest border settlements in the country. It remains a thriving market town whose ancient and wartime history came together on Old Oswestry Hillfort when a complex of WW1 training trenches were dug.



Thousands of soldiers were drilled in trench protocols prior to being posted to the battlefields.

If time permits, take a walk around one of the country's finest iron age hillforts, with breathtaking views across Shropshire and the Welsh hills. Just 10 minutes from the centre of town.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF WWI, Oswestry quickly became a key strategic military training facility with estimates of around 21,000 soldiers including 4000 officers. In 1917, Wilfred returned to Park Hall Camp in to attend a musketry course: he was a first class shot.

The world-famous Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, renowned for its pioneering treatments for a range of physical disabilities and tuberculosis, started life when Agnes Hunt's Baschurch Convalescent and Surgical Home moved into its current location. During wartime, the hospital's growing knowledge and skill became especially valuable.

Sketches of the dreadful wounds incurred by serving soldiers would sometimes find their way into Wilfred's letters to his mother to illustrate the shocking personal impact of the war.

PARK HALL & THE BIRTH OF ENSA



PARK HALL ARMY CAMP where Wilfred and many Oswestry Pals trained was unique in having the first military 'Garrison' theatre.

The inspired initiative was the idea of theatrical producer, Basil Dean (inset), and soon spread to other military camps. Its success led to Dean being asked to mastermind the setting up of ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association) in WW2, to provide troops with entertainment, home and abroad!

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3 * www.holytrinityoswestry.org
HOLY TRINITY CHURCH



HOLY TRINITY BECAME a central pillar in the life of the Owen family, with grandfather Edward running the Sunday School. Tom got involved too, while Susan was an enthusiastic and strict evangelical. From an early age Wilfred and she would read the bible together.

Wilfred, his sister Mary and mother, Susan, were all christened at Holy Trinity.

In March 2014, the inaugural Wilfred Owen Lecture at Oswestry LitFest given by former BBC Foreign Journalist, Martin Bell OBE was held here.

The font, dated 1894, is likely to have been the font used at Wilfred's christening.

Return back to Salop Road, and turn left, go for 250 metres until you reach the Cross Street junction. Go left along Cross Street to see the mansion to your right.

4 **LLWYD MANSION**

ONE OF OSWESTRY'S MOST impressive buildings, Llwyd Mansion dates to 1604, built by John Lloyd of Llanforda.



Wilfred's relative, Joseph Salter (1726-1800) lived and worked here as a watchmaker and general dealer. He was reputed to have been the town's first printer. His eldest son Robert wrote *The Modern Angler* which was published by his son Jackson. So, it seems Wilfred was not the first writer in the Salter clan!

On the front of the building is a commemorative double-headed eagle. It was awarded to a Lloyd's ancestor who helped to recover an Austrian emperor's standard in 1190 at the siege of Acre.



Wilfred with mother, Susan and Grandfather, Edward Shaw (top hat)

WILFRED EDWARD SALTER OWEN was born on the 18th March 1893 in Oswestry at Plas Wilmot, an idyllic, stylish home, built in 1830 by his great grandfather, Edward Salter, the son of an Oswestry timber merchant.

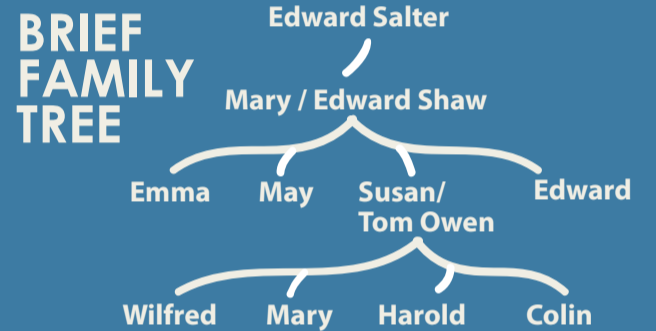
In 1897, following the necessary sale of a much-loved home, the family eventually settled in Birkenhead, with his father Tom being appointed stationmaster. A young Wilfred, aged 7, began attending the local institute. In 1907, the family moved once again to Shrewsbury following Tom's promotion.



Susan, Wilfred and Tom

After a brief time in Dunsden as a Vicar's lay assistant, Wilfred left to teach English in France, returning in 1915 to enlist with the Artists' Rifles; later commissioned to the Manchester Regiment.

In 1917, he fought on the front line in France. Sent home suffering shell shock, he was treated at Craiglockhart War Hospital, Edinburgh where he met established poet, Siegfried Sassoon. In August, he returned to France and was awarded an MC for bravery. Wilfred was killed in battle on 4th November 1918, just days before armistice. His family received the news on the very day the church bells were ringing to mark the end of the war.



THE WILFRED OWEN TOWN TRAIL

Explore aspects of Oswestry's rich history and heritage, through the enthralling family story of Wilfred Owen, the true poet of the Great War.

* check websites for opening times of some locations

DURATION 90-120 mins
TERRAIN Mostly flat. Gentle inclines.
ACCESSIBILITY Most locations accessible to mobility scooters.
START It is recommended to start at point 1 at the Old Railway Station, and follow the sequence, but do feel free to start at any point.



The Wilfred Owen Town Trail was created in conjunction with **The Lads (Llanymynech Amateur Dramatic Society)** and funded by **The Heritage Lottery Fund**.

The grant also funded Neil Rhodes to write a play about Wilfred Owen's last hours at *The Forester's House*. For details of performances of *The Forester's House* visit www.lads-online.co.uk or for more information about Neil, visit neilrhodesbooks.com

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Tel: 01691 662753 Tel: 01691 662488
www.borderland-breaks.co.uk

OSWESTRY, SHROPSHIRE

THE WILFRED OWEN TOWN TRAIL

Poet and Soldier

THE TRUE POET of the Great War, Wilfred Owen was born in Oswestry, Shropshire in 1893.

5 THE IRONMONGERY

No.16 BAILEY STREET was the ironmongery business taken over by Edward Shaw, Wilfred's grandfather. They made nails, tools and tinware - it was a great success.

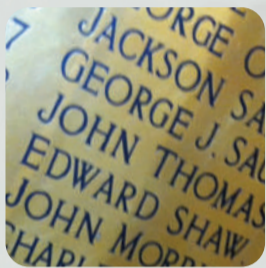


He'd arrived in 1850 from Shobden, near Leominster, and married Mary Salter. He was soon elected to the Town Council, became Mayor in 1869 and Justice of the Peace for the borough. He died in 1897 at Plas Wilmot of a stroke.

Bailey Street would have been the family's main shopping route, with Cross Market and Powis Hall Market having opened on the same day in 1849.

➔ At the top of Bailey Street, look left to see the Guildhall and the main entrance up the steps.

6 GUILDHALL & TOWN MUSEUM



BUILT IN RENAISSANCE STYLE, the new Guildhall of Oswestry Town Council was opened in 1892.

At least three of Wilfred's relatives were Councillors, two of whom were Mayors: Jackson Salter and his grandfather, Edward Shaw.

Pop into the museum (3rd floor/lift is available) to glimpse Oswestry's rich history and heritage from pre-history through wartime to the modern day.

Through the main doors follow the corridor straight ahead and left to see the brass panel of past mayors.

➔ As you leave, take a right and a right again, along the side of the Guildhall. The Library is about 100 metres on the left.

7 OSWESTRY LIBRARY

THE LIBRARY has a good selection of Wilfred Owen related books from biography to literary criticism. There are also some rare letters written by Susan.

In one such letter from 1932, to Mrs Phillips, she writes of spending 30 years of her life at Plas Wilmot, and of Tom, "I miss him terribly. I can believe that in love our God took him - and of Wilfred I feel the same - only he was so young - and our first born."

➔ From the library, take a left along Arthur Street to meet Willow Street, turn left down to The Cross, then right along Church Street.

Willow Street was popular with Welsh poets in the 15th Century. Guto'r Glyn, was one, who wrote the poem, "In Praise of Oswestry"



8 WAR MEMORIALS

THE EXTENSIVE RESTORATION of Oswestry's fine War Memorial was unveiled in August 2014. The front of the pillars commemorate those Oswestry men who died in WWI, with WWII commemorated on the reverse, just inside the gates.



Also inside, to the left, is a memorial to those men who worked for the Cambrian Railways killed in WW1. It's a most graceful work by sculptor Allen G Wyon.



The piece, originally sited at the Railway Station, was moved to the park and re-dedicated in 1975.

You will notice a William Salter in the list of names. Can you find it? A Salter relative of Wilfred's perhaps?

➔ As you walk along Church Street you'll reach the Broadwalk Gates, just before St. Oswald's Church. Walk through the side gate. The plaque & bench are on the right.

9 PLAQUE & STONE BENCH



COMMISSIONED BY the Wilfred Owen Association in 1993 to mark the centenary of his birth, this beautiful steel plaque includes the Artists' Rifles insignia and is engraved with two of Wilfred's most famous poems: *Anthem for Doomed Youth* and *Futility*. The striking stone bench was designed and made by local stonemason, Mark Evans.

At the commemoration of the plaque, poet Ted Hughes - a great admirer of Wilfred Owen - read from *Futility*.

The Broadwalk itself dates back to 1200 and is said to have been the grave for local plague victims. It was laid out as an avenue of lime trees by the vicar, Thomas Owen, around 1710.

The insignia at the centre of the plaque was Wilfred's monogrammed design for his cigarette case.

➔ Go back to the gates, and continue right along Church Street for about 40 metres, to an entrance into the Churchyard on the right.

10 ST. OSWALD'S CHURCH

IMAGINE. You're about to get married to Tom Owen, the man you love; family finances are ebbing away and your beloved mother Mary has just died.



Susan, still in grief, wore black at the wedding. It was on the 8th December, 1891, and the church has barely changed since those days.

Take a look inside this beautiful church. In the far right-hand corner is St. George's Chapel dedicated to soldiers killed in wartime.

➔ From the church entrance, look right, across to the Visitor & Exhibition Centre.

11 VISITOR & EXHIBITION CENTRE

ACROSS THE CHURCHYARD is the original building of Oswestry School, founded in 1407 by David Holbache. It is one of the country's oldest independent schools, second only to Winchester. Pop upstairs to see a Wilfred Owen display

NOTE: wheelchair access to ground-floor only.

➔ Leaving the Visitor Centre, go right and under the lych gate to Upper Brook Street. Then, turn left along to the junction. Cross (right) at the traffic lights over to Morda Road. Walk about 250 metres along Morda Road to the Cricket Club on the left.

12 OSWESTRY CRICKET CLUB



THE STORY GOES that Tom Owen was introduced to Susan by her brother, Edward, a keen sportsman, with whom he played cricket at Oswestry. The club, once at Victoria Road, is now located on Morda Road, once part of the Plas Wilmot orchard.

This photo (on display inside the club) shows the cricket team in 1892. In another family twist, Edward - seemingly due to drinking and gambling difficulties - suddenly left the country and it is thought ended up in Denver. Still another family issue for Susan to deal with.

➔ From the club entrance on Morda Road, go back towards town for around 40 metres, taking a right along Wilmot Place. Walk 200 metres to Plas Wilmot. **PLEASE NOTE**, this is a private residence without public access.

13 PLAS WILMOT

BUILT IN 1830, this Grade II listed, classical villa was the dream of Edward Salter, Wilfred's great grandfather who sadly died before it was completed.



Extensions including the stable, coach house, kitchen, scullery and wash house were constructed by Wilfred's family.

Wilfred's mother, Susan was also born here on 17 March 1867, in the same room as Wilfred.

When his maternal grandfather Edward Shaw died, the house had to be auctioned on 16th March 1897, the day before Susan's 30th birthday. Biographer, Dominic Hibberd called this a, "bitter and very public humiliation". Still, the family retained strong emotional ties to Plas Wilmot naming their house in Shrewsbury, Wilmot House.

English Heritage wrote of Plas Wilmot that, "it is clearly the place which meant most to him from the period in which his imagination was being formed."

If time permits, take a short walk along Weston Lane where a young Wilfred would have often walked with his mother, Susan. A peaceful place.

➔ Go back along Wilmot Place, and take a right along Morda Road to walk back into town.

We hope you enjoyed the trail!

After Wilfred visited Nellie, a former maid at Plas Wilmot in September 1911, he wrote, "Spent the time very pleasantly in recalling our reminiscences of the common fountain-head of our existences, known by all as the 'old Home'"

THE **wilfred OWEN** TOWN trail