

Wilfred Owen Green - Oswestry

This area of public open space was formerly known as 'Oswestry Town Green', 'The 5 Acre Site' and even 'the Railway Land' and was landscaped for the first time in 2010, over 40 years after the railway left. Over that time the site had been neglected and used for quiet informal recreation by local people.

Since the official opening, on the day the schools broke up for the summer holidays in July 2010, the site is proving to be extremely popular for visitors of all ages, as a pleasant walk from eastern Oswestry to the town centre and as a place for picnics and play.

There have been some teething troubles with litter, wear and tear and some boisterous high spirits amongst some visitors, but this is always to be expected on popular public open space.

Shropshire Council inherited this area of neglected land in April 2009 and quickly sought to bring in external funding to redesign the site to give Oswestry a Green it could be proud of. After extensive consultation with local residents a design was drawn up that offered a well managed Green that had both formal elements of short mown grass and seating, to wilder areas of wildflower meadows, an orchard, woodland edge and scrub offering the visitor a taste of the wilder countryside in the centre of a large market town.

Play provision has featured strongly in the design; several items of play equipment together with features of mounds, boulders and even a 40metre raised turf labyrinth encourage natural imaginative play.

The social and economic benefits Wilfred Owen Green will bring to Oswestry will be significant and long lasting. There is already a very positive and relaxed atmosphere on the Green with many local residents delighted that the area is receiving the care it has long needed. The catalytic effects of the Green are already being felt on the neighbouring Cambrian Heritage Railway project which is now striving forward to produce an excellent visitor attraction with steam engines, a visitor centre and café.

To honour the memory of Oswestry born war poet, Wilfred Owen, the site was recently renamed Wilfred Owen Green. An official naming ceremony is to take place later this autumn and it is hoped members of the Wilfred Owen Association, together with Peter Owen, the great nephew of Wilfred, will be able to attend.

This is only the beginning for the site; now that we have a distinguished title for the area we can build upon this success and allow the area to be enhanced as a hub of remembrance and somewhere to celebrate the heritage of Oswestry. The ecology of the site will be carefully monitored in the years to come to maximise the biodiversity and to allow the area to become even wilder in a carefully managed way that blends into the neighbouring 2.5ha site of Shelf Bank which will be designated a Local Nature Reserve in the near future.

Throughout the autumn of 2010 we will be establishing a 'Friends of the Green' group to enable local people to have a direct influence on the management, use and future of the site, please contact Shaun Burkey if you are interested, contact details below.

Wilfred Owen Green can be accessed from Ambleside Road and Brookhouse Road or from Sainsbury's car park and is near the Railway Museum. See the attached map.

Funding for the Green came from several organisations:-

£80,000 - Natural England's Natural Asset Fund

£50,000 - Department for children Families and Schools Playbuilder programme

£30,000 - Advantage West Midlands

£10,000 - Shropshire Council

Total project cost £170,000

Shaun Burkey

Conservation & Community officer

