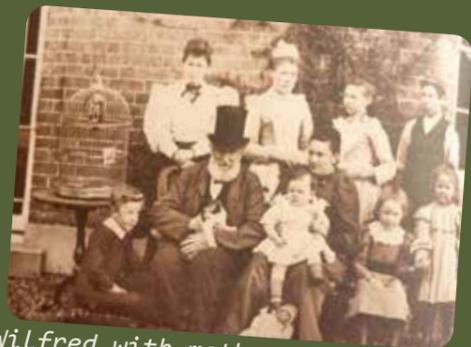




After Wilfred visited Nellie, a former maid at Plas Wilmot in September 1911, he wrote, "Spent the time very pleasantly in recalling our reminiscences of the common fountain-head of our existences, known by all as the 'old Home'"



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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 Shropshire following Tom's promotion.

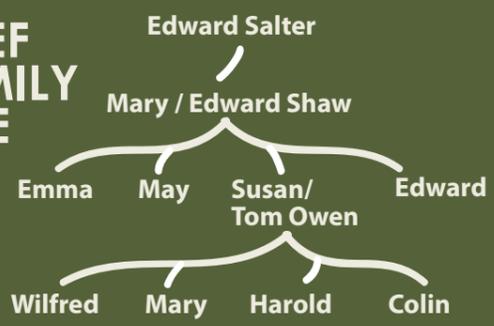
After a time in Dunsden (Sep 1911 - Feb 1913) as a Vicar's lay assistant, Wilfred left to teach English in France, returning in 1915 to enlist with the Artists' Rifles - he was later commissioned to the Manchester Regiment.



Susan, Wilfred and Tom

In 1917, he fought on the front line in France. Sent home suffering shell shock, he was treated at Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, where he met established poet, Siegfried Sassoon. In August, he returned to France and was awarded the Military Cross 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 rang out to mark the end of the war.

**BRIEF FAMILY TREE**



**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

<b>SHORT TRAIL</b>	Around 60-90 mins
<b>LONGER TRAIL</b>	Around 2 hours
<b>TERRAIN</b>	Mostly flat. Gentle inclines. - excepting the Hillfort.
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	Most locations accessible to mobility scooters.

**It is recommended to start the trail at:**  
Oswestry Visitor & Exhibition Centre SY11 2TE - follow the green arrows for the Short Trail and the golden arrows for the Longer Trail.



The Wilfred Owen Town trail was kindly funded by Oswestry Town Council, Oswestry Borderland Tourism Ltd and Lights Out Trefonen.

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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.

## THE SHORT TRAIL - 60/90 MINS

### 1 VISITOR & EXHIBITION CENTRE



**THE ORIGINAL BUILDING** of Oswestry School, founded in 1407 by David Holbache, and one of the country's oldest independent schools, second only to Winchester. Pop upstairs to see the Wilfred Owen display. Oswestry Town TIC, also in the building, has a good selection of books and memorabilia about Wilfred Owen.

**NOTE: wheelchair access to ground floor only**

➔ Leaving the Visitor Centre, go across the churchyard to the entrance of St. Oswald's church.

### 2 ST. OSWALD'S CHURCH

**IN 1891**, Susan Shaw looked to marry the man she loved, Tom Owen. Family finances were ebbing away, her beloved mother Mary has just died, and there was a desperate need for some stability in the family.



And so, on the 8th December, Susan, still in grief, wore black at the wedding and was married at St. Oswald's.

*In the far right-hand corner of the church is St. George's Chapel dedicated to soldiers killed in wartime.*

➔ Leaving the church entrance, go right and follow the road right, through the churchyard, taking the right fork around the side of the Parish Centre and through the entrance gate onto the Broadwalk (90m).

### 3 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 site for local plague victims. It was laid out as an avenue of lime trees in 1710 by the vicar, Thomas Owen.

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

➔ Go left through the gate at the end of the Broadwalk, and continue left along Church Street to the Park Gates of Cae Glas Park (60m).

### 4 WWI/II WAR MEMORIALS

**AN 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 WWI. 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.



➔ Go through the gates into the park. Straight ahead of you are the park gardens leading to the Wilfred Owen sculpture (50m).

### 5 WILFRED OWEN SCULPTURE



**"WILFRED WILL KNOW HE HAS COME HOME"** - words written by Peter Owen, Wilfred's nephew, on the black granite plinth.

The sculpture, by local artist Tim Turner, is the only life-size bronze statue of Wilfred Owen in the world and was cast at Castle Fine Arts Foundry in Llanrhaeadr-Ym-Mochnant commemorating his death on 4th November 1918.

The statue stands in a dynamic pose of Owen on the front line. The book in hand contains words from Owen's poetry and that of local schoolchildren, the words cascading down a gnarled and broken tree onto the mud and sandbags at Owen's feet.

➔ Return back through the park gates, going left along Church Street for 145m to the **second** zebra crossing. Cross over, and continue on past The Cross monument (on your left), towards Llwyd Mansion at the bottom of Bailey Street (45m).

### 6 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.*

➔ Walk up Bailey Street for 60m, keeping a look out on your right, for this next curious art deco building.

### 7 THE IRONMONGERY

**NO.16 BAILEY STREET** was the ironmongery business taken over by Edward Shaw, Wilfred's grandfather. They made nails, tools and tinware, and 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, becoming Mayor in 1869 and Justice of the Peace for the borough. He died in 1897 at Plas Wilmot.

*Bailey Street would have been the family's main shopping route. 1849 saw the opening of both The Cross Market - the fine building next to The Cross monument - and the original indoor Powis Hall Market on the Bailey Head (replaced by the current market hall in 1963)*

➔ Continue to the top of Bailey Street (75m), then bear left across Bailey Head to the Guildhall steps (25m). Go up the steps or around to the left of the building for wheelchair access.

### 8 GUILDHALL & TOWN MUSEUM

[www.oswestrytownmuseum.co.uk](http://www.oswestrytownmuseum.co.uk)



**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.

**Visit Oswestry 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, bearing left for 3m to see the brass panel of past mayors including Edward Shaw and Jackson Salter.*

## THIS COMPLETES THE SHORT TRAIL

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE, FOLLOW THE GOLD ARROWS.**

➔ From the Guildhall steps, return across Bailey Head to the top of Bailey St, but then bear left down Albion Hill for 40m. At the bottom of Albion Hill, go right along Leg St (65m) to the crossroads junction. Then, go left along Oswald Road for 200m - you will see Cambrian Railways Museum followed by the Old Station Building on your right.

### 9 CAMBRIAN RAILWAYS

[www.cambrianrailways.com](http://www.cambrianrailways.com)

**BORN 1862, IN NANTWICH**, Wilfred's father, Tom, left home at fifteen to find work. According to John Stallworthy, Wilfred's first biographer, he was taken on as a junior clerk by Great Western Railway (GWR) and posted to Oswestry. By 1864/65, an amalgamation of railways in the region had formed Cambrian Railways with Oswestry selected as the headquarters in 1866.



Late in 1880, Tom, aged 18, set sail on the SS Benalder from Liverpool bound for India, whereupon he soon joined the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. However, in 1891, he fell dangerously ill, and after some months recovering, received news from Susan, his fiancée, that her mother was dying. He immediately decided to return home. By the time he arrived, Mrs Shaw had died.

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

➔ From the station, go back along Oswald Road for 110m and take a left along Black Gate Street towards Sainsbury's. After 50m, follow the road left along Coney Green towards and across the railway tracks (140m) to Wilfred Owen Green.

### 10 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 grass labyrinth, one of the largest in the world.

Shelf Bank, now a Local Nature Reserve, once housed a Royal Observer Corps WWII 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 and continue for 140m along to the church, Holy Trinity, on your right.

### 11 HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

[www.holytrinityoswestry.org](http://www.holytrinityoswestry.org)



**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 would sit with his mother to read the bible together.

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

➔ Follow the arrows along Roft St, then right along Lower Brook St, crossing over the traffic lights to Morda Rd. Walk about 420m along Morda Road, till you see the Marches School on your right. Take a left, just after the zebra crossing, along Weston Lane, keeping on this road for 335m till you reach Plas Wilmot on your right.

### 12 PLAS WILMOT - BIRTHPLACE

**NOTE: This is a PRIVATE RESIDENCE with no public access, so please be respectful and do not trespass - thank you.**

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



Wilfred was born here on 18th March, 1893, in the same room as his mother, Susan - born the day before, 17th March in 1867.

Following the death of his maternal grandfather Edward Shaw, the house was auctioned on 16th March 1897, the day before Susan's 30th birthday. Whilst deeply upsetting for the family, they 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 (Wilfred) from the period in which his imagination was being formed."**

➔ Retrace your steps back along Weston Lane, and go right along Morda Road, all the way back to the junction, go across the traffic lights onto Church St and along into the town centre.

## THIS COMPLETES THE LONGER TRAIL

**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 15/20 minutes walk from the centre of town.**

➔ Follow the on the map. From the Old Station Building, go right along Oswald Road to the traffic lights junction (275m). Cross over to Beatrice St, then left onto Llwyn Rd - continue for 1km till you reach the entrance to the hillfort.

**NOTE: wheelchair access only to base of hillfort.**

### 13 OLD OSWESTRY HILLFORT

[www.oldsoswestryhillfort.co.uk](http://www.oldsoswestryhillfort.co.uk)



**OSWESTRY IS ONE** of the oldest border settlements in the country and a thriving market town whose ancient and wartime history came together on Old Oswestry Hillfort.

In the Spring of 1915, following the outbreak of war, Oswestry quickly became a key strategic military training facility with around 21,000 soldiers including 4000 officers stationed there.

Thousands of soldiers were drilled in trench protocols using an extensive circuit of training trenches on top of the hillfort, prior to being posted to the battlefields.

In 1917, Wilfred returned to Park Hall Camp (which was located across the bypass from the hillfort) to attend a musketry course - he was a first class shot.

**More info at VISITOSWESTRY.CO.UK**