

CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Warrington

Archaeological Assessment



2003

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Front cover :

John Speed's Map of Lancashire 1610

Lancashire County Council <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/environment/oldmap/index.asp>

WARRINGTON

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Mike Shaw & Jo Clark

1. SUMMARY

Warrington is located at the lowest fordable point of the River Mersey and accordingly it has been of importance since prehistoric times. In the Roman period there was a large industrial settlement to the south of the river at Wilderspool, which had reached its peak in the late 2nd century, while in the medieval period the borough of Warrington was established on the north bank of the Mersey. Industrial growth in the 18th and 19th centuries saw the town extend south across the river to include the area of the former Roman settlement.

1.1 Topography and Geology

The town lies at around 15m AOD on the north bank of the River Mersey. The Roman settlement of Wilderspool to the south of the river lies at around 10m AOD. Warrington is 32 km east of Liverpool and 35km west of Manchester. The surrounding landscape comprises largely low-lying farmland.

The underlying geology comprises Upper Mottled Sandstone. To the north of the Mersey, in the vicinity of the medieval town; the drift geology includes blown sand of the Shirdley Hill Sand Group. To the south, in the area of the Roman settlement, the drift geology comprises fluvio-glacial sand and gravel, as does the area around St Elphin's church, which is perhaps the original area of Saxon settlement, to the north of the river. The course of the Mersey includes alluvial deposits (British Geological Survey, 1977-8).

The soils of the surrounding area are principally sandy gley soils, which are most suited to arable farming and are graded classes 2-3 (Furness 1978).

The town lies at a major road junction where the A49, which runs from Shrewsbury and the south to Wigan and the north, is crossed by the A57, Manchester to Liverpool road. Other major routes lead to Chester and the west (A56) and Newcastle-under-Lyme and the south-east, either via Middlewich (A530) or Knutsford (A50).

1.2 Administrative Unit

Warrington was the head of the hundred of the same name, which included the parishes of Warrington, Prescott and Leigh. It was a seigneurial borough until 1847, when it was incorporated as a Municipal Borough (Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 320). The town lay in Lancashire until 1974, apart from the area to the south of the Mersey, chiefly the townships of Stockton Heath and Latchford, which lay in Cheshire. In the local government reorganisation of 1974 the whole of Warrington

was assigned to Cheshire. In 1998 the town and its surrounding area, including those parts to the south of the Mersey, became a unitary authority.

1.3 Place Name

The place name occurs at Domesday (1086) as *Walintune*, which Ekwall suggests denotes either the settlement of Waer's people or the settlement at a weir (Ekwall 1922). Carter (1971, 9) suggests that the place name means 'ford town' and this is quoted in a number of recent reports on the town.

2 SOURCES

2.1 Historical

Warrington has been well studied over the years but lacks an up to date comprehensive history. Grealey (1976) provides the most recent summary and contains a detailed study of aspects of the town's industrial past. Earlier histories, especially Carter (1947) and Crowe (1947), contain useful material but are now out of date, especially for the earlier periods. Strickland (1995) provides an up-to-date summary of the evidence for the Roman settlement of Wilderspool.

There is a wealth of primary documentary material for Warrington, including surveys of the 15th and 16th centuries. The works of Beaumont (1849, 1872, 1873, 1887) contain transcriptions and analyses of primary documentation, but clearly much remains to be done in the collection and analysis of early records. Unfortunately, this is beyond the remit of the present assessment.

2.2 Cartographic

Warrington is identified on the early maps of Lancashire (Saxton 1577, Lord Burghley 1590, and Speed 1610). The town is fortunate in having a good series of early maps (Wallworth and Donbavand 1772; Hall 1826) and an early detailed Ordnance Survey (1:500 plans of 1850/1). The First Edition 6": 1mile survey for the Lancashire portion of the town is also early, published in 1849, but the Cheshire portion is later, published in 1882. Conversely, the 25": 1mile survey for the Cheshire portion (published 1875) is earlier than the Lancashire portion (published 1893).

2.3 Archaeological

Before the present survey there were around 105 sites recorded in the Warrington area on the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR), which are identified in Figure 1. Throughout this report, where sites and finds have been identified from the CSMR, the relevant reference is provided. The present survey has identified a further 121 sites, all of which are of an industrial nature.

A comprehensive discussion of archaeological discoveries at Warrington is not available. A synthesis of discoveries and works has therefore been attempted, which will provide an overview of the known archaeological finds and excavations. This has drawn upon the discussions in Watkin (1886), Thompson (1965), the

Victoria County History (Harris and Thacker, 1987 194-8), Hinchliffe and Williams (1992) and Strickland (1995).

Roman activity at Wilderspool was first identified in 1770, when finds were recovered during the excavation of the Bridgewater Canal through Stockton Heath (Thompson 1965, 68). However, it was during the cutting of the Old Quay Canal in 1801-3 that the first significant structural remains of Roman Wilderspool were discovered (Watkin 1886, 261).

A series of excavations and observations was carried out by Thomas May in Wilderspool immediately west of Greenall's Brewery (which became known as the main focus of settlement) and to the south in Stockton Heath (May 1897, 1900, 1902, 1904, 1905, 1907) (Thompson, 1965, 67). May's work revealed much of the structural character of Wilderspool, including the identification of a large number of Roman industrial sites, and evidence of smelting and iron working, lead and bronze working, glass and pottery making and enamelling. However, he failed to discover the full plan of a number of buildings excavated at the Brewery site and at Stockton Heath (Thompson 1965, 67-91). Amongst May's discoveries at Wilderspool are what is believed to have been the site of a Roman temple (see 3.2.5 below) and a trapezoidal military fort, but work by Williams has added to the overwhelming evidence that there was no military activity at Wilderspool. It was instead an industrial enclave that provided supplies to the Roman army (see 3.2.2 below).

In 1981 a series of trial excavations was carried out at Stockton Heath by Liverpool University Rescue Archaeology Department. Despite their proximity to sites which had previously yielded archaeologically-rich deposits, only a handful of pottery sherds was recovered.

More recently, work has been carried out by Gifford and Partners at the brewery site (1991-4), and synthesis of this work, including detail of the 1994 evaluation, is still awaited. This work encountered substantial archaeological deposits, although some areas had been truncated by the foundation and service trenches of the brewery.

In 1992 an evaluation also by Giffords to the rear of Wilderspool House revealed a high potential for surviving Roman archaeology c 900mm below the ground surface.

In 1994 an archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction of a supermarket on the site of the Greenalls Brewery. The watching brief revealed just one feature of archaeological interest, a beam slot 600mm wide and 200mm deep.

Another evaluation of part of the Brewery Site, carried out by Giffords in 1994, failed to reveal significant archaeological deposits; and a watching brief carried out during the conversion of existing 19th and 20th century buildings revealed features of 19th or 20th century date (Gifford and Partners, 1995).

Evaluation to the west of the Brewery Site at Millbank, Greenalls Avenue, in 2001, again by Giffords, revealed a deposit of sandstone and cobbles which may represent the continuation of a side road recorded in excavations by Thomas May. A pit with 2nd century Roman pottery and tile and a possible sub-circular oven lined with sandstone and clay were uncovered. The site also produced iron working waste,

locally produced pottery, as well as some samian ware and amphorae (Giffords and Partners 2001a).

An evaluation to the south of the Brewery Site, at Egerton Street, Stockton Heath in 2001 took place to the east of the Roman road line. Work revealed a pit containing Roman pottery, but demonstrated that much of the area had been disturbed by 19th century sand extraction (AAA Archaeological Advisors and Foundations Archaeology 2001).

An evaluation at Victoria Square, Stockton Heath, in 2001, failed to reveal any deposits pre-dating the 19th century. This area may therefore have been outside the area of Roman occupation, or again deposits may have been removed by later activity (National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside 2001).

Attention has also been paid to an area 500m to the east in the vicinity of Loushers Lane, which was probably on the periphery of the Roman settlement. The first excavations in this area were carried out by Colonel Fairclough in 1930-5 and there has been further work by John Hinchliffe in 1974-6 (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992) and by Earthworks Archaeological Services in 1993 (Earthworks Archaeological Services 1993). This work has revealed the remains of a high status building including a hypocaust system and painted wall plaster, as well as industrial hearths and furnaces (see 3.2.3 below).

Within the medieval town far less archaeological work has been carried out, though a few sites have been the subject of archaeological interest. For example Mote Hill, the site of a Norman motte and bailey castle, was excavated by Simpson in 1832, Kendrick in 1841 and Hill in 1971 (see 3.4.1.1 below); the moated site of St Elphin's Rectory was investigated by Leigh in 1971 (see 3.4.4 below); and in particular Warrington Friary, which has been the subject of detailed excavation by a variety of organisations (see 3.4.4 below).

Two pieces of archaeological work have been carried out on Church Street. The first took place at The General Wolf Public House, where trial trenching revealed extensive modern disturbance towards the front of the site and deep landscaping deposits to the rear, beneath which undated ditch features were discovered (Gifford and Partners 1996a). The second was a watching brief carried out by Gifford and Partners at 100 Church Street. This revealed the remains of 19th century buildings and garden soils of 17th –18th century date (1998).

3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

3.1 Prehistory

There is a remarkable concentration of Neolithic and Bronze Age stone and metal axes to the south of the River Mersey (CSMR 480, 482, 486-490, 530), which presumably attests to a trade route along the river. There is a similar concentration north of the river around Winwick (CSMR 491, 569, 577, 579), which perhaps suggests a crossing point in the Warrington area, although there are no finds in the area of the later town.

There are a number of Bronze Age burial sites to the south of the river (CSMR 461, 483, 492-4), and also to the north of the river, east of Winwick (CSMR 571/1/1-3; 588). However, there is very little evidence of prehistoric settlement in the town area. The discovery of timber piles in two locations by the banks of the Mersey (CSMR 477/0/1; 490/1) has led to the suggestion that there were lakeside settlements, perhaps of Iron Age date but this remains to be proven.

Hinchliffe's 1974-6 excavations at Lousher's Lane revealed a small pit, which was apparently of pre-Roman date and contained a sherd of coarse, gritty pottery, which was possibly Iron Age. These excavations also revealed residual flintwork in a number of Romano-British features (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992, 100).

3.2 Roman

Roman settlement was centred in south Warrington, in the suburbs of Wilderspool and Stockton Heath. It is probable, however, that the settlement also extended under the present town centre and excavations on the site of Warrington Friary, on the west side of Bridge Street in 2000, also revealed evidence of Roman settlement (see 3.2.7 below).

Roman activity at Wilderspool was first identified in 1770, when finds were recovered during the excavation of the Bridgewater Canal through Stockton Heath. Beamont (1876, 9) and Watkin (1886, 261) locate this at the point where the canal meets the Lumb Brook, while Thompson (1965, 68) places it further to the west. However, either location places this early discovery at the southern extent of the projected area of Roman settlement.

In 1787 while laying the foundations of Wilderspool House, which adjoins the Greenal Brewery, Mr Edward Greenall found a large number of Roman objects. As for the finds at Lumb Brook, no account has been preserved (Watkin 1886, 261). The construction of the brewery had also revealed Roman finds, and excavations in the field behind this revealed building foundations and Samian and coarse ware pottery (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 195).

However, it was during the cutting of the Old Quay Canal in 1801-3 that the first significant structural discoveries were made, information about which was collected by Beamont, including the statements of eleven men who worked in the construction of the canal (Watkin 1886, 261). Discoveries included the foundations of numerous Roman buildings, and the bases, shafts and capitals of columns. These were apparently located c 2m below the surface of the ground and the ashlar, some of which had lewis holes, measured up to 900mm x 600mm. Large quantities of pottery were also recovered, including Samian ware, and there were numerous coins. A Roman road was encountered running north-south, and more than 1.80m wide. Witnesses stated that, were roads made of the same quality today 'there would be no getting from town to town now...for the labour and expense of making them would be too great' (ibid).

Other discoveries mentioned by Watkin include that of 1823, when a row of cottages was built parallel with the river, which revealed Roman coins and pottery. In 'Big Cress Brook Field' sand was extracted for the purpose of building and the

manufacture of bottle glass. This excavation was later extended to 'Long Bank Field', and during these works a large number of finds was recovered, particularly pottery, but no structural remains were identified. This, Watkin suggested, indicates that settlement was largely situated to the north of the canal (ibid 263). In 1869, in the 'Long Bank Field' (south of the Manchester Ship Canal) the lower courses of a stone lined circular well were found, from which a few fragments of Roman pottery was recovered. This was removed by Dr Kendrick and set up in the Town Hall Gardens in Warrington, where Watkin records it still stood in 1886. Watkin provides a discussion of the range of finds made at Wilderspool, from coins to pottery and ironwork (ibid, 260-273).

The name of the Roman settlement at Warrington is uncertain. Although attempts have been made to link it to *Veratinum* in the *Ravenna Cosmography*, there is little evidence to substantiate this claim (Strickland 1995, 13; Grealey 1976, 27).

3.2.1 Roads

A network of Roman roads converged upon Wilderspool. Foremost was King Street, the road which connected Wilderspool with Middlewich, but there were also probably roads from Chester to the west and Manchester to the east, as well as a road leading in a north-easterly direction towards Loushers Lane and the ford across the river. It is also likely that the Romans built a new crossing of the river, probably by a bridge directly north of King Street and that they created docks by the River Mersey on the west side of the settlement (Strickland 1995, 29). In 1896 a section of King Street was revealed, which measured c 6.30m wide and 1.20m thick, and in the area of the main settlement at least five tracks were uncovered, which ran at right angles to the main road and were interpreted as service roads to the various industrial structures (Thompson 1886, 70). The route of King Street through Stockton Heath was traced by Kendrick et al during the 1930s (Harris and Thacker (eds) 1987, 219). This work along with that of May, confirms the route of the road north into Wilderspool. However, the routes of the other major roads thought to converge upon Wilderspool remain unknown.

3.2.2 Fort

May concluded that the main settlement at Wilderspool was a trapezoidal area located between the River Mersey and the Ship Canal, defended by a ditch and rampart. He also established the line of the road from Northwich, inside the western rampart, as well as numerous industrial sites - including some beyond his projected western rampart and overlying the fill of the ditch of the other supposed defences. This led Thompson to suggest that there were two main periods of occupation, and that the first may have been of a military nature. However, May's argument is flawed for a number of reasons, not least his own sketchy outline of the defences, and even he appears to have had doubts about the south side of the fort (Thompson 1965 69). Also, no archaeological evidence of military buildings has been discovered and the irregular plan suggested by May would be unusual for a fort of this period (ibid 70). A photograph copied in Thompson (1965, plate 35) supposedly of the western defences, appears to show a stone feature that has been severely overcut and is no doubt the result of an over zealous attempt to reveal what May had assumed to be a defensive ditch. Also the suggestion by May that King Street ran inside the western

rampart seems even more implausible. Without satisfactory archaeological evidence, May's suggestion that there was a fort at Wilderspool remains in doubt. Excavations by Williams failed to find the defences in the area postulated, and instead he suggested that May's defences were in fact alleys set at right angles to the main street (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992, 16). However, the discovery of a number of mid-to-late first century Roman military equipment fittings at Wilderspool and the discovery of a tile stamped with the device of the Twentieth Legion, does suggest the presence of Roman soldiers, who were either stationed at, or passing through the area (Strickland 1995, 32-35). Strickland suggests that an auxiliary fort may have been located on the north bank of the Mersey, overlooking the ford at Latchford, in the late first century (Strickland 1995, 25).

3.2.3 Settlement

The initial Roman settlement at Warrington was probably spread along King Street, and it is in the vicinity of this road that the most substantial buildings have been recovered at Stockton Heath and at the Brewery Site. A primary focus for this settlement may have been a *mansio* or wayside station (Gifford and Partners forthcoming) and there is general agreement that settlement began at the brewery site towards the end of the 1st century AD, although this was previously thought virtually to have ceased soon after AD 160. Occupation in the Loushers Lane area was previously thought to have commenced rather later, in the early 2nd century AD (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992, 170) but flourishing into the 3rd century (ibid 171). However, recent work has produced an improved understanding of stratigraphy, and it is now suggested that settlement at Wilderspool continued throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries and into the 4th century, the final abandonment taking place sometime after AD 318, and that occupation of the Loushers Lane area began in the late 1st century AD or even earlier (Strickland 1995; Gifford and Partners forthcoming) and continued into the 4th century and perhaps later (Earthworks Archaeological Services 1995).

Excavation on the site of an extension to the Brewery was carried out by John Williams in 1966-9 (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992). This revealed that the occupation of the site, which was of an industrial nature, lasted through the 2nd century when activity appears to have fallen dramatically, with only casual occupation in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The earliest structures on the site were large timber buildings, which had an industrial function. Their size might suggest military control but the irregularity of the building plan and the lack of military evidence casts doubt on this theory (ibid 30). With development around the mid-2nd century, the character of the site appears to have changed and the clay floors previously revealed by May seem to represent smaller structures set alongside the road, the development of which appears to reflect organic growth. What this change in plan reflects and whether there had been a change in continuity is unclear (ibid).

In 1930, substantial fragments of masonry were recovered during sewer excavations at Loushers Lane. This proved to be the remains of a hypocaust of a courtyard style building. Painted wall plaster was also recovered along with a quantity of industrial waste, which indicates that the building was used for both domestic and industrial purposes (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 196). Unfortunately, few records survive and this building remains little understood (Gifford and Partners forthcoming). An

assessment of the pottery recovered by this work confirmed a date range from the 2nd to 4th centuries, and several overfired tiles might indicate the location of a kiln nearby (Earthworks 1993, 7). To the east of the area where the hypocaust was located, further excavations were carried out in 1974-6 by Hinchliffe. This work revealed circular buildings, 8.5m and 10.5m in diameter, which presumably indicate the survival of traditional building styles into the Roman period. Also identified were a number of enclosures defined by ditches on either sides of a trackway, the layout of which seems to be similar to the ribbon development of Stockton Heath (Hinchliffe and Williams, 1992, 118). Although industrial remains were recovered from this site, including lead, iron and bronze working the level of activity was not large scale. The buildings excavated were of a domestic and industrial nature and were possibly linked with agriculture (Harris and Thacker 1987, 196). A major road running east from the main settlement has been suggested, approximating to the line of Loushers Lane ((Hinchliffe and Williams, 1992, 118).

3.2.4 Industry

The industrial nature of Wilderspool was not recognised at first, although by the 1870s it was realised that much of the pottery was locally produced (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 195). It was May's work at the turn of the 19th century, which discovered large numbers of clay working floors, hearths, ovens and furnaces, that revealed the industrial character of the settlement (ibid). Industrial activity is thought to have begun as early as AD 85-90 and to have undergone intensive production in the early 2nd century (ibid 196), and may not have declined until the early/mid-4th century (Gifford and Partners forthcoming).

Industrial buildings, including clay floors and hearths have been found 250m south of the brewery site in Stockton Heath (Harris and Thacker, 1987, 195). This site was excavated by May in 1901-4 and, as at the Brewery site, a complex of clay floors, furnaces and pits on either side of the King Street were revealed. From the results of these excavations the outline plan of just one building can be described. This was built from stone and measured 18.3m long and 8.5m wide, had a veranda on one side and contained working hearths (Thompson 1965, 72; Harris and Thacker 1987, 195).

Also discovered by May was a life-size human mask, typical of the Stockton Heath kilns. It is usually described as the 'actor's mask' and contained perforations that would have allowed it to be secured to the wearer's head (Thompson, 1965, 86)

Much of the industrial remains discovered at Wilderspool cannot be directly related to a particular industrial process. However, some industrial processes have been identified from the archaeological record and these include shaft and bowl furnaces for iron smelting and smithing, and two furnaces complete with crucibles for producing bronze (Harris and Thacker (eds) 1987, 195). There is also evidence of copper alloy working, in the form of unfinished copper objects, copper ingots, crucibles, casting moulds and slag (Watkin 1886, 260-73). It is likely that the bronze processed at Wilderspool used copper ore mined on Alderley Edge, which lies c 35 km to the south-east (Strickland 1995, 31). The large numbers of lead pieces that have been found suggest that lead working was carried out, and glass making has been indicated by the discovery of a crucible containing black glass paste and glass

waste and slag (Harris and Thacker 1987, 196). However, this evidence need only represent the melting and reworking of glass (Gifford and Partners forthcoming).

A large numbers of iron objects have been recovered, ranging from nails and bolts, to knives, locks, keys and even a carpenter's plane, and many of these were probably produced onsite.

There is plentiful evidence of pottery production at Wilderspool, principally from May's excavations at Stockton Heath, where kilns with waste fragments of jars, flagons and mortaria were found (May 1905). The pottery produced at Wilderspool supplied the Roman forts in the immediate region. However, mortaria were produced on a much larger scale and a high proportion of Wilderspool mortaria has been discovered at numerous forts along Hadrian's Wall (Harris and Thacker 1987, 196).

There was probably production and manufacture in organic materials such as cloth, wood and leather, but none of the sites so far excavated has had suitable conditions for the survival of such materials.

The primary function of the settlement was to supply the army in the north of Britain. Subsequently it may have widened its market to supply the civilian sector or branched out to supply the civilian sector due to the loss of the military market. The settlement was well placed to export its produce. Not only was it located on a road system but its situation on the River Mersey meant that it could also act as a port – indeed it may have been exporting goods to Ireland (Gifford and Partners forthcoming).

3.2.5 Temple

May also revealed what he thought was a temple to the south of the area he had identified as the fort. The excavation recovered stone walls, a clay floor, a clay platform and drain, and what led him to interpret this building as a temple was the discovery of a bronze head of Minerva, the stone head of another goddess and a pot sherd with the face of an owl (May 1904, 65-66).

3.2.6 Cemetery

A number of burials have been discovered at Wilderspool, including a lead coffin found in 1976 during repairs to the Ship Canal. Its position approximates to another recorded by May, which was found in 1895, c 110m east of the Wilderspool Swing Bridge, and comprised a dug-out oak coffin lined with lead. Two infant cremations are reported in this vicinity (Harris and Thacker 1987, 198) and May records that a cinerary urn in 'Upchurch Ware' was found three feet from the surface in the same area (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992, 116-7). These discoveries suggest that the cemetery was located close to the Roman settlement on its south and east sides (Harris and Thacker 1987, 196).

3.2.7 Activity North of the Mersey

Evidence of Roman occupation to the north of the river Mersey is slight, limited to a few chance finds (CSMR 445, 628-9, 631, 638) and possible Roman roads (CSMR 614/1, 627/1). However, it is considered that there may have been a Roman fort located to the north of the river controlling the river crossing at Latchford (Strickland 1995, 12-13, 25), although this remains to be proven. Work at the Warrington Friary site by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) in 2000, revealed three pits and a possible midden deposit, with 2nd to 3rd century Wilderspool pottery (Heawood 2001). This evidence may support the suggestion that there was also a river crossing at the south end of Bridge Street (Strickland 1995, 11).

3.3 Early Medieval

The Domesday reference to Warrington demonstrates that there was a settlement on the north bank of the river by the time of the Norman conquest. At this time Warrington was the focus of Warrington Hundred, which included the parishes of Warrington, Prescott and Leigh, as well as a number of outlying manors (Grealey 1976, 18). St Elphin's church had also been constructed by the time of the Domesday Survey (CSMR 438/3).

The Domesday Survey recorded that:

In Warrington hundred King Edward held Warrington with 3 outliers. 1 hide. To the manor itself belonged 34 drengs and they had as many manors, in which there were 42 carucates of land and 1½ hides.

St Elfin's held 1 carucate of land exempt from all customary dues except tax. The whole manor with the hundred paid £15 less 2s in revenue to the king. Now 2 ploughs in lordship; 8 men with one plough.

These men hold land there: Roger 1 carucate of land; Theobald 1½ carucates; Warin 1 carucate; Ralph 5 carucates; William 2 hides and 4 carucates of land; Aethelhard 1 hide and ½ carucate; Osmund 1 carucate of land.

Total value £4 10s; value of the lordship £3 10s.

(Morris 1978, R3)

Warrington was evidently the focus of an important estate. However, it is difficult to establish when this was founded, particularly since the dedication of the church to St Elphin is so unusual. If the dedication were to a British saint, for example Alpinus, then this might suggest an early foundation for the church and by implication an early date for the creation of the estate. However, it has also been suggested that 'Elphin' may derive from the Saxon *Aelfwine* and it may therefore be a later foundation (Grealey 1976, 41).

It has also been suggested that there was a religious centre located here before the church was constructed, based upon a sacred well. St Elphin's well, is known to have been located close to the church. However, excavations in 1971 by Hill demonstrated that the core of the well was medieval in origin (Grealey 1976, 42). Despite the documentary evidence of early medieval activity, no finds of definite

early medieval date are known in the area of St Elphin's church or the later town. The chief archaeological features of this period are a large number of log boats discovered in the River Mersey. A total of twelve are known along a 5km stretch of the river, which have been radiocarbon dated to the 11th century (CSMR 500-508; McGrail 1978, 287-98).

It has also been suggested that the Saxon *burh* founded at Thelwall in AD 919 may have been located at Latchford. The name Latchford means a ford at a boggy place, which may refer to the ford site in the vicinity of Victoria Park, and Hill has suggested that the *burh* may have been located here (Hill 1976). However, Higham (1988) has suggested that, until the creation of the Manchester Ship Canal, this area was low-lying and boggy and therefore an unsuitable location for the *burh*. However, Old Warps Farm formerly lay in this area and the place name 'warp' indicates an area of land built up by the deposition of silt, which suggests that this area was not so uninhabitable as Higham suggests. Very little detail is known about this potential *burh*, which was no doubt constructed to defend the Mercian boundary from Viking incursion, but its potential location at Latchford is supported by the fact that this area formed a detached part of Thelwall, and Runcorn Parish in the 19th century.

3.4 Medieval

3.4.1 The Manor

After the Norman Conquest, Lancashire was granted to Roger of Poitou, who created the Barony of Warrington, which was held initially by Pagnus de Vilars and subsequently by the de Boteler family who held the Barony until the 16th century (Farrer and Brownbill 1907, 305). Originally the principal residence of the lords of the manor was at Warrington (see below) but from the mid-13th century the de Botelers resided at Bewsey Hall, 2km north-west of the town (Grealey 1976, 43).

3.4.1.1 The Castle

At Mote Hill excavations were carried out by Rev Edmund Simpson in 1832 and Dr James Kendrick in 1841, prior to the site being largely demolished to accommodate an orphanage (Grealey 1976, 39). The hill measured c 50m east-west and 40m north-south; the south and west sides were steep and terminated in a ditch and bank, with gentler slopes to the north and south. Nothing of Mote Hill survives above ground today. The results of the archaeological work carried out in the 19th century suggest that the main feature of the site was a 12th-century motte and bailey castle. However, they also agree that there was a structure that predated the castle, which Grealey suggests may have belonged to a pre-Norman manorial site (ibid 40). Massive timber beams were recovered, which were presumed to have been part of the timber stronghold, along with the remains of an oak lined well. Although the excavators were unable to identify the plan of the castle, they did identify burnt layers, which suggested that it had been destroyed by fire. This coincides with documentary sources, which indicate that the de Boteler castle was destroyed by fire c 1260 (ibid 40). In 1971 further excavations were carried out at Mote Hill by Hill who revealed the inner lip of the main defensive ditch, which was apparently on a very large scale, although no dating evidence was recovered (ibid 40). An evaluation in 2000 to the rear of 21-23 Manchester Road and to the north of the present

cemetery, failed to reveal any evidence of the castle bailey (AAA Archaeological Advisors and Foundations Archaeology 2000).

A survey of 1587 undertaken on behalf of Lord Lilford identifies Mote Hill as the site of a decayed manor or baronage. The site appears to have been left to decay until the 17th century, when local tradition suggests that it was artificially raised in 1643 to accommodate a fighting platform for the Parliamentarians from which they could attack the Royalist garrison at the nearby church. This is apparently supported by the archaeological excavation of 1841, which confirmed that the summit had been adapted (Grealey 1976, 40).

3.4.2 Settlement

Warrington's position at the centre of a major estate, at a fording point of the River Mersey and on a major north-south route, would have made it an attractive trading centre and stopover point. Originally the urban centre was focussed around St Elphin's church and the castle, perhaps along Church Street. By 1285 the fifth Lord of Warrington, William de Boteler, had acquired the rights to hold two weekly markets and two annual fairs; and in 1292 he granted the town Borough status (Carter 1947, 15; Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 35). However, a market and fair had probably been held in the town from a much earlier time, since an inquisition held in 1292 found that markets and fairs had been held in the town 'from beyond the memory of man' (Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 320; Letters 2002). It would appear that by the end of the 13th century the growing independence of the town worried its lords, and in 1300 the burgesses, doubtless under pressure, surrendered the right to hold their own court (Carter 1947, 21-2; Beresford and Finberg 1973, 134).

Initially the Mersey was presumably crossed via the ford at Latchford, but a new bridge was perhaps built in the 13th century when William le Boteler created the Borough. The earliest documented reference to a bridge at Warrington dates to 1305. This bridge soon became the principal means of communication between north and south England, and the street leading from it was called Newgate (now Bridge Street) as late as 1465. Near the bridge on the western side was a house of Austin Friars, and at the point where this new street crossed the old road to Prescott a market was established c 1260. The town gradually grew around this point, and the parish church eventually became isolated, which was no doubt further exacerbated by the removal of the manor to Bewsey Hall (Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 305). The bridge was rebuilt in 1364, and there were repairs carried out in 1420 but by 1453 the bridge had fallen into disrepair and was not rebuilt until 1495, when the Earl of Derby provided a new stone structure (ibid).

The town continued to flourish, and a survey of the property of Sir Peter Legh (who owned around one third of the town) in 1465 shows a large and thriving town (Beamont 1849). The survey recorded that houses extended from the church westwards as far as the market, a little way down Sankey Street and south from the crossing down Newgate to where the bridge formerly stood. On the north side of the market was a row of houses called Pratt Row, whose long back gardens ran to the great heath upon which stood a windmill. The burgages named in the survey were chiefly located in Church Street, Bridge Street and on the east side of town, and one or two also seem to have been located on Sankey Street (Farrer and Brownbill,

1907, 305). Leland visited the town around 1535 and described it as ‘...a paved town; one church (and) a freres Augustine at the bridge end. The town is of a pretty bigness. The parish church is at the tail of all the town. It is a better market than Manchester’ (Toulmin-Smith 1964, 41).

Boteler Grammar School was founded around 1526 by Sir Thomas Boteler (Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 601-3). The foundation charter granted a house in Warrington and an adjoining croft as a schoolhouse. The schoolmasters house was in Bag Lane. The premises were rebuilt in 1688 and again in 1757. A new school was built in 1829 but was demolished, together with the master’s house, in 1862. No earlier remains survive in the present structure.

3.4.3 Economy

Warrington was one of the most important medieval towns in Lancashire. In the lay subsidy of 1334 it was assessed at £3 (Glasscock 1975), a similar amount to the four towns assessed as taxation boroughs (Wigan £4; Lancaster £4; Preston £3 10s; Liverpool £3). Another indication of the town’s importance is its possession of a friary, which is one of only three in the whole of Lancashire (Newman 1996, 129).

Much of Warrington’s wealth was no doubt based on agriculture. The town was surrounded by arable fields, heathland and meadows by the River Mersey. The markets and fairs were another source of income. Fourteenth century charters give an idea of the variety of goods entering the town: customs were imposed on salt, bacon, cheese, butter, fish, pelts, cloth, wool, leather, wine, honey, tin, brass, dyeing agents and pigments, copper, iron, lead, onions, garlic and many other commodities (Beamont 1849, lxxiii-lxiv).

The 1465 Survey records that there were a number of trades and professions in medieval Warrington: chaplain (*capellanus*), priest (*presbyter*), clerk (*aquaebajulus*), lawyer (*juris peritus*), arrowsmith, shoemaker (*sowter*), glover, weaver (*webster*), cook, fuller, nailmaker (*le naylor*), miller, thatcher, fisherman, harper (*citherator*) and piper. There is also reference to a number of shops and the market (*forum*) (Beamont 1949, lxxiv-lxxv).

3.4.4 Religion

The parish church of St Elphin was in existence by the time of the Domesday Survey (1086) and rectors are recorded from around 1180. However, the present church has been rebuilt and restored on a number of occasions so that little remains of the medieval fabric (Pevsner 1969, 411-2; Farrer and Brownbill 1907, 308-314). There are late 12th century architectural fragments in Warrington Museum but the earliest fabric in the present church is 14th century, while the majority of the church dates from the 1859-67 renovations.

St Elphin’s rectory is a moated site which stood around 200m south of the church. The date of its construction is unknown, but a rent roll of 1465 refers to a rectory and barns. In 1701 the site was composed of an eight-bay parsonage and a four-bay barn with a stable, orchard and garden. These were demolished in 1832 when the

moat was in-filled and a new house built. Excavations in 1970-1 revealed parts of the parsonage and associated structures and a bridge across the moat (Leigh 1977).

A house of Augustinian Friars was founded in Warrington at Friar's Gate, close to the bridge across the Mersey, by William Fitzalmeric le Boteler, probably before 1272 (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 240, 244; Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 305) The friary was suppressed in 1539 but the friary church remained in use until c 1650. The arch of a doorway apparently remained standing into the 18th century. Nothing survives of the friary above ground but excavations have partially revealed its plan (Grealey 1976, 19).

Excavation in this area dates back to 1886, when Beamont, Worsley and Owen undertook an excavation during the widening of Bridge Street. This work revealed the corner of a building complete with the foundation of a stone staircase, which the excavators suggested may have been the friary infirmary. They also revealed the foundations of the friary church, including a well preserved choir, a fine tiled floor and an oblong crossing. The less well preserved remains of the nave and large north transept were also recovered, along with the discovery of 'interesting burials'. In 1931, further work was carried out by Owen and Dunlop, who revealed that the nave had been aisled and divided into six bays (Grealey 1976, 43).

In 1978 excavations were carried out by the North Cheshire Archaeological Group, which revealed 28 graves with multiple burials, along with a burial in the wall of the aisle and another beneath an incised grave slab. A second phase of this excavation revealed a further fifteen burials and aspects of the foundations of the transept (OAU 1998, 2). In 1982 Liverpool University investigated an area at Bridge Foot, which also revealed evidence of the Friary including a ditch and mosaic floor tiles (ibid). This was followed by an excavation in 1984 on the site of the former Co-op, which exposed a robber trench of a former friary wall and revealed evidence of various phases of demolition (ibid).

In 1995 an archaeological evaluation was carried out by Gifford and Partners (1995), which revealed substantial remains of the friary (walls, drains, demolition debris etc) c 1m below the modern ground surface. An archaeological watching brief carried out at the site by Gifford and Partners in 1996 exposed further areas of the friary, including a possible walkway connecting the friar's accommodation with the friary church. This work also led to the suggestion that the friary cloister was relatively small at c 20m x 14m (Gifford and Partners 1996).

In 1998 an evaluation was carried out on part of the Friary site by Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU), which concluded that structural remains of the Friary site survived c 1m below ground level and internal features c 600mm. This work was followed by an excavation carried out by the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (LUAU) in 2000, which revealed the north wall of the nave and internal column bases. Later a large north transept was added c 1350. After the friary was dissolved in 1539, the church was still used by the towns people, but the north transept was probably taken down before the end of the century, whilst the nave was demolished by the mid to late 17th century. A number of medieval burials were found within the church. Two of these still retained parts of wooden coffins, which have been dated by dendrochronology to the late 13th or early 14th centuries. What was not expected

however, was the discovery of a large number of burials that post-dated the abandonment of the church c 1650 and it is clear that the site was used for burial until the 18th century. This work revealed the complex history of both the church and the site, including the discovery of a post medieval candle factory and evidence of Romano-British settlement (Heawood 2001). Further work by LUAU in 2001 on the west side of Barbauld Street aimed to examine part of the friary precinct, but no features relating to the monastic use of the site were revealed (LUAU 2001).

In addition to the church and friary, the town also possessed an oratory (chapel) on the bridge (Knowles and Hadcock 1971, 336, 400; (Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 314).

3.4.5 The Surrounding Landscape

There are numerous important medieval sites in the surrounding area, including Barrow Old Hall moated site at Great Sankey (CSMR 568/1; SAM 13434) 4km west of the town centre, Bewsey Old Hall (CSMR 566/1/1 SAM 13488) 2km northwest and Peel Hall Manor House, (CSMR 595), 3km north.

3.5 Post Medieval

3.5.1 The Manor

The manor of Warrington was purchased by Thomas Ireland in 1597 but was sold to William Booth in 1630. It remained in the hands of the Booths of Delamere until 1758 when it was sold to John Blackburne. Thereafter it stayed in the hands of the Ireland family until 1851 when it was purchased by Warrington Corporation (Farrer and Brownbill, 1907, 319).

3.5.2 Civil War

Warrington was strategically placed as a bridging point on the main road from London to Scotland, and hence played an important part in the Civil War. It was adopted in 1642 as the headquarters in the north-west of the Royalist leader, the Earl of Derby, who fortified the town with earthworks. The town was besieged in 1643 and despite resistance surrendered at the end of May 1643. Thereafter the town was garrisoned by the Parliamentarians and Cromwell stayed in the town in 1648 after defeating the Royalist forces at Winwick and accepting their surrender at Warrington bridge (Grealey 1976, 19).

3.5.3 Settlement

The town continued to act as a market centre throughout the post-medieval period. At the end of the 16th century, profits of the two annual fairs were estimated as £24 and the weekly tolls taken on market days as £30, which were considerable sums for the time (Carter 1947, 29).

Despite suffering in the Civil War the town remained prosperous and was described in 1673 as 'a very fine and large town, which hath a considerable market on Wednesdays for linen cloth, corn, cattle, provisions and fish, being much resorted to by the Welshmen, and is of note for its lampreys' (Farrer and Brownbill 1907, 307).

A school for poor children, Warrington Blue Coat School, was founded after 1665 and became an educational charity in 1711. It was first located behind Holy Trinity Church but a new school, the Blue Coat Hospital, was opened in Winwick Street in 1782. The town's first elementary school, the National or Parochial School, was opened in Church Street in 1833. Warrington was for a time in the second half of the 18th century a major cultural centre. This reputation was largely based upon the Warrington Academy, which was founded in 1757 as a college for the sons of Protestant Dissenters who were excluded from the universities. It established a high reputation as a centre of scientific and literary activity. The original academy was at Bridge Foot and the building still survives. The academy moved to premises behind Bow Street in 1762 but was closed in 1786. In addition the existence of an early printing press, Eyres Press, which flourished between 1760 and 1802, and an early lending library, the Warrington Circulating Library, established in 1760, increased the town's reputation and led to its description at this time as 'the Athens of the north' (Carter 1947, 41-4).

In the 18th and 19th centuries the town was important as a coaching stage post, particularly en route to the north. Baines (1825, 590) estimated that around 60-70 coaches passed through the town every day.

3.5.4 Economy

Agriculture was probably the major economic activity in the Warrington area until the 18th century when manufacturing became dominant, and the largest industry in the 18th century, was probably the manufacture of sail cloth. Fourteen sail cloth manufactories in Warrington are listed in Bailey's Northern Directory of 1781 and Aikin, writing in 1791, estimated that 'half of the heavy sail-cloth used in the navy has been computed to be manufactured here'. With the advent of steam power, however, the demand for sail cloth diminished and by 1855 there were no sail cloth manufacturers remaining in the town (Carter 1947, 49).

Another early industry was copper smelting. Thomas Patten had established a copper works at Bank Quay by 1697 and had improved the navigation of the Mersey specifically to enable him to import copper ore for his works. By 1795, however, the works were said to be disused (Carter 1947, 47-8). Warrington was also a major centre for the production of files and hand tools. A noted local industrialist was Peter Stubs who began by 'putting out' work, supplying materials to home workers, but in 1802 set up a major manufactory in Scotland Road (Carter 1947, 48; Ashton 1939).

New industries came to the fore in the 19th century (Carter 1947, 55-6). In 1781 there was a single glass manufacturer in the town, whose manufactory at Bank Quay is shown on a map of 1772. By 1828-9, however, there were five listed in Pigot's National Commercial Directory. A soap works was founded at Bank Quay by Joseph Crosfield in 1814, which prospered and introduced soap powder in 1896. By 1911, however, the company was ailing and was absorbed by Brunner Mond and Co of Northwich, who sold the company in 1919 to its old rivals Lever Brothers of Port Sunlight (ibid).

Wire drawing came to Warrington early in the 19th century and was developed on a large scale by Nathaniel Greening and John Rylands, who began as partners in 1805 but eventually split to head their own companies. Before 1840, iron was obtained from Staffordshire and Shropshire but in 1840 a local forge was opened at Dallam (Holman and Sellers 1972, 38).

Other industries listed by Ashmore (1982, 65) as major activities were cotton manufacture, fustian or velvet cutting, pin-making, engineering, tanning, flour milling and brewing. Musson (1965, 13) also includes canvas, linen, watchmaking, sugar refining and shoe-making.

3.5.5 Religion

St Elphin's church has undergone various episodes of building and refurbishment. The upper part of the tower, which had been damaged in the Civil War, was replaced in 1698, the Patten chapel was built in 1723 (and rebuilt 1773) and a vestry added around 1740. Finally the church was extensively restored and rebuilt by Frederick and Horace Francis between 1859 and 1867 (Pevsner 1969, 411). A need was recognised for a new church in a more central location and Holy Trinity, located at the south-west corner of Market Gate, was founded in 1709. It was rebuilt in 1760 but the church steeple blew down in 1822 and the church was again restored in 1872 (ibid).

Warrington was a major centre of Nonconformity. The Rector of Warrington refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and was ejected from his living. He obtained a licence to hold Presbyterian meetings at the Court House in the market square in 1672. The first nonconformist chapel built in Warrington was the Cairo Street Chapel, opened in 1703. This was followed by a Quaker Chapel in Buttermarket Street opened in 1720 (and rebuilt in 1830) and chapels for the Methodists in Upper Bank Street and for the Congregationalists in King Street (Stepney chapel), both opened in 1779 (Holman and Sellers 1972, 28).

Adherence to the Catholic church remained strong in Warrington. A room in Dallam Lane was used as a chapel from 1771-8 until it was replaced by a chapel in Bewsey Street, and in 1823 St Alban's church was built in Bewsey Street (ibid).

3.5.6 Population

The town's population in the 1600s is estimated as around 1,000 – 1500 (Crosby 1996, 62), in 1772 as around 7,000 (Holman and Sellers 1972, 46) and in 1781 as 8,791 (Aikin 1795). For the period from 1801-1971 figures are available from the census returns and for 1981 and 1991 census data has been reproduced under Class Licence Number C01W0000125 with the permission of the Controller of the HMSO.

1801	10567	1901	64242
1811	11738	1911	72178
1821	13570	1921	78600
1831	18184	1931	79317
1841	18981	1951	76060

1851	23651	1961	80681
1861	24050	1971	79230
1871	26431	1981	56683
1881	41452	1991	54424
1891	52743		

Major expansions of population can be seen between 1841 and 1851, soon after the arrival of the railway, and between 1871 and 1881.

3.5.7 Transport and Communications

The development of communications was vital to Warrington's success as an industrial town. The main road north to Wigan and beyond was turnpiked in 1726, the east-west route to Liverpool and Manchester in 1752, the road to Knutsford and the south in 1753, and the road to Chester in 1786 (Holman and Sellers 1972, 34).

As early as the late 17th century the navigation of the River Mersey as far as Warrington was improved by Thomas Patten, to enable him to transport copper ore direct to his works at Bank Quay, where he had constructed a wharf. In 1720 the Mersey and Irwell Navigation Act allowed the improvement of the river system as far as Manchester (ibid 34).

Warrington was the focus of an early canal system. The Sankey Canal, which was completed in 1759 to bring coal from the St Helen's coalfields to Warrington, was the first true modern canal in England. This successful venture was followed by the Bridgewater Canal, which commenced in 1758-9 and passed through Stockton Heath a few miles to the south of Warrington and cut the cost of transport between Liverpool and Manchester by around 50% (Carter 1947, 48). The Old Quay Canal or Latchford Canal was cut in 1801 and allowed vessels to pass between Runcorn and Warrington without waiting for the tide. Finally the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal, opened in 1894, had a drastic effect on the topography of Warrington to the south of the River Mersey. The initial plans for the Ship Canal included docks at Wilderspool but these were never constructed (ibid).

The railway also came early to Warrington. The Warrington and Newton connection with the Liverpool and Manchester railway was opened in 1831, and a branch line of the Grand Junction railway from Birmingham, which joined the Warrington and Newton line at the north end of Warrington was opened in 1837. The Cheshire Junction opened a line from Chester to Walton Junction, south of the river, in 1850 but shortage of money meant that it was never brought into Warrington itself. In 1853 the St Helens and Runcorn Gap Railway opened an extension to Warrington. Additionally in 1853 further lines, the Warrington & Altrincham Junction and the Warrington & Stockport line were opened. Finally the Cheshire Lines Committee built a fast line between Manchester and Liverpool between 1873 and 1874 and opened the present Central Station in Warrington (ibid).

3.5.8 The Surrounding Landscape

Within the surrounding area there are a number of post medieval sites, including the site of Whittle Hall manor house, Great Sankey (CSMR 564/2), 3.5km west; and

Thelwall Old Hall, a 17th century manor house, listed Grade II and 5km east of Warrington (CSMR 524/1).

4. PLAN COMPONENTS

The town has been divided into 47 components (prefixed by **COM**). These have been tentatively sub-divided by period, although there is a need for a great deal of further work to define the date of these plan components more closely. Many would have spanned more than one period but are discussed under their earliest likely date of occurrence. In some cases tightly defined plan components can be identified, in others only a general area can be delineated and these should be treated as a model against which future evidence should be tested.

The finds evidence would suggest that there was a major trade route along the Mersey valley in Neolithic and Bronze Age times, and the discovery of burial mounds suggests settlement may have been sited on the south bank of the river. The ford at Latchford may already have been in existence as a crossing point and, if so, would greatly have increased the importance of the area. For the Iron Age there is little evidence of activity, although there is a suggestion of a late Iron Age settlement preceding the Roman settlement at Loushers Lane. Given the ephemeral nature of the prehistoric evidence this period has not been mapped, and plan components commence with the Romano-British period.

For the Norman and later medieval periods the town has been divided into small plan components to aid detailed discussion. For the earlier (Roman, early medieval) and later (post-medieval, modern) periods less detailed divisions have been made. For the earlier periods there is insufficient evidence to divide the components, while for the later periods there are too many individual units of settlement for each one to be given a separate component number.

For the post medieval period the extent of the town has been plotted at two dates – 1772 and 1851 – relying on the map evidence of Wallworth and Donbavand and the Ordnance Survey respectively. Further plots could be produced from Hall's map of 1826 and from the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey maps of the late 19th century. However, the differing dates of the Lancashire and Cheshire surveys would have meant producing a composite map showing the extent of the town north and south of the river at different dates

ROMAN WARRINGTON (Figure 2)

COM 1 - Domestic and Industrial Activity

COM 2 - King Street

COM 2a - Possible Roman Roads?

EARLY MEDIEVAL WARRINGTON (Figure 3)

COM 3 - St Elphin's Church

COM 4 - Settlement?

MEDIEVAL WARRINGTON c 1066-1540

Norman Warrington (Figure 3)

- COM 5** - Motte and Bailey Castle
- COM 6** - Tenements, Church Street
- COM 7** - Market Place, Dial Street

Late Medieval Warrington (Figure 3)

- COM 8** - Bridge
- COM 9** - Friary
- COM 10** - Tenements, west of Bridge Street
- COM 11** - Tenements – east of Bridge Street
- COM 12** - Tenements east of Bridge Street
- COM 13** - Tenements east of Bridge Street
- COM 14** - Market Place, west of Horsemarket Street
- COM 15** - Market? – South of Horrocks Lane
- COM 16** - Tenements, south of Sankey Street
- COM 17** - Tenements, north of Sankey Street
- COM 18** - Tenements, north of Sankey Street
- COM 19** - Tenements, west of Horsemarket Street
- COM 20** - Tenements, west of Winwick Street
- COM 21** - Tenements, west of Winwick Street
- COM 22** - Tenements, west of Winwick Street
- COM 23** - Tenements, east of Winwick Street
- COM 24** - Tenements, east of Winwick Street
- COM 25** - Tenements, east of Horsemarket Street
- COM 26** - Tenements, east of Horsemarket Street
- COM 27** - Tenements, east of Scotland Road
- COM 28** - Tenements, north of Buttermarket Street
- COM 29** - Tenements, south of Buttermarket Street
- COM 30** - Tenements, west of Bank Street
- COM 31** - Tenements, north of Church Street
- COM 32** - Tenements, south of Church Street
- COM 33** - Tenements, south of Church Street
- COM 34** - Tenements, east of Napier Street
- COM 35** - Tenements, south of Dial Street
- COM 36** - Rectory
- COM 37** - Boteler Grammar School

POST-MEDIEVAL c 1540 – 1851

Warrington c 1772 (Figure 4)

- COM 38** - Settlement
- COM 39** - Bank Quay
- COM 40** - Sankey Canal

Warrington c 1851 (Figure 5)

COM 41 - Settlement
COM 42 - Bank Quay
COM 43 - Railways

Warrington Industrial Sites c 1772-1851 (Figure 6)

MODERN c 2000 (Figure 7)

COM 44 - Manchester Ship Canal
COM 45 - Settlement

4.1 Roman Warrington (Figure 2)

COM 1 outlines the approximate extent of Roman domestic and industrial activity at Wilderpool. It encompasses the areas of the Greenalls Brewery Site, Stockton Heath and Loushers Lane, where Roman remains have been found. This area will require refinement as new archaeological evidence is revealed.

There is general agreement that Roman settlement began at Wilderspool on the south bank of the River Mersey towards the end of the 1st century AD. Strickland suggests that Roman interest in the site was originally strategic, since it was the lowest crossing point of the Mersey on the road north. Later, the industrial importance of the area, servicing the needs of the Roman army in north Britain, superseded the military priorities (Strickland pers comm.). The settlement doubtless included a port area on the River Mersey, although no evidence of this has as yet been recovered. It was previously considered that major settlement at Wilderspool ceased around AD 160, but recent work suggests that occupation continued at least into the early to mid-4th centuries AD, while that at Loushers Lane may have continued later still. It may have achieved some success in finding new outlets for its produce after the loss of the military market but it may increasingly have fulfilled a role as a local agricultural centre. Indeed, the area around Loushers Lane at the east end of settlement may have been primarily engaged in agriculture, perhaps evolving into a Romanised farm or villa on the edge of the industrial area.

The location of settlement probably related to the road system, with the main focus being King Street, the Roman road from the south, which is presumed to have continued directly to the north, crossing the River Mersey by a bridge. More minor foci would have been the roads west to Chester, east to Manchester and north-east to cross the River Mersey via the ford at Latchford.

The area around the brewery, fronting onto King Street, was probably within the central area of settlement, while the Loushers Lane site was probably towards the periphery. The area as plotted assumes that settlement was focused on the road system and encompasses known finds of archaeological material. The area also includes a possible cemetery on the east side of the settlement, which would have lain outside the settlement, but there is as yet insufficient evidence to plot it as a separate component.

Although there is some suggestion that settlement continued at Loushers Lane at least into the sub-Roman period, there is no evidence of continuity with the early

medieval settlement which developed on the opposite bank of the river in Warrington. The chief legacy of the Roman period was its road system, much of which continued in use, although the postulated bridge across the Mersey presumably fell into disrepair.

COM 2 defines the route of King Street, which has been established archaeologically. Other roads are known to converge at Wilderspool but the level of information available does not allow their routes to be outlined with any certainty. Suppositions have been made and these routes are therefore depicted as dashed lines (**COM 2a**). This includes the route of King Street north to a bridge crossing of the River Mersey in the vicinity of the present bridge (Strickland, 1995). The roads west to Chester and east to Manchester are assumed to follow a similar route to the 19th century road system, while the road north-east is assumed to follow the line of Loushers Lane, running past the area of Roman remains known from excavation, and to cross the river by a ford at the top of Wash Lane where an 'ancient ford' is marked on the 19th century Ordnance Survey maps. This crossing may be the original route of passage across the Mersey, later being superseded by a slightly lower bridge crossing (Strickland pers comm).

4.2 Early Medieval Warrington (Figure 3)

The presence of an estate centre and church located close to a ford across the River Mersey would have been an attractive location for settlement, and towards the end of the early medieval period a small trading settlement may have grown up in the area.

The Domesday entry for Warrington, indicates that it was a settlement of some importance. The location and extent of early medieval Warrington is uncertain, but the area defined as **COM 4** has the characteristics of a development adjacent to the earlier Roman main road north. The Domesday entry refers to St Elphin's, however the foundation date of the church and settlement is uncertain, and would be clearer if it could be determined whether St Elphin was an Anglo-Saxon or British Saint. Little is known about the early church of St Elphin's, but it was presumably located on the same site as that of the present church (**COM 3**). The early medieval settlement would presumably have included the church, which probably originated as a chapel within the estate centre, unless its original foundation was monastic. The early maps of Warrington (1772, 1826, 1851) show a curving boundary to the west of the church which may be the western arm of an early enclosure (early estate centres are often set within oval enclosures). **COM 4** indicates a conjectural area for such an enclosure, which would have overlooked the ford at Latchford, presumed to be the chief means of crossing the River Mersey at this time. The settlement is unlikely to have had urban functions at the outset, but the presence of an estate centre may have stimulated trade and manufacture.

4.3 Medieval Warrington (Figure 3)

The medieval period has been divided into two sub-sections: Norman and Later Medieval.

4.3.1 Norman Warrington (Figure 3)

The Norman settlement was presumably focussed around the church (**COM 3**) and the castle (**COM 5**). The castle was of a simple motte and bailey type and was probably founded soon after the Norman Conquest. The site of the motte (mound) is depicted on the 1772 map, while the location of the bailey (enclosure) is less certain but is potentially delineated by a curving boundary line.

Settlement is likely to have developed in the vicinity of the church and castle. The regularity of settlement along Church Street (**COM 6**) depicted upon historic maps, suggests that tenements may have been formally laid out, perhaps as a successor to an earlier settlement at the gates of the church and/or the castle.

The area formed by Dial Street at the top of Church Street (**COM 7**) may have originated as a small market; deliberately laid out at the end of Church Street. Alternatively, markets may have been held in closer proximity to the church and castle, from where greater control could be exerted. This may have included markets held in the churchyard, or an area to the north-east known as 'Fairfields'.

4.3.2 Late Medieval Warrington (Figure 3)

At some time early in the 12th century, the Lord of Warrington, William de Boteler, laid out a new town to the west of the earlier settlement.

Indeed the building of a bridge at the bottom of Bridge Street (**COM 8**), the laying out of burgages along the street (**COMs 10 – 12**) and the creation of a market place (**COM 14**) at the junction of Bridge Street with the east-west route between Manchester and Liverpool (Sankey Street/Buttermarket Street) may all have been carried out as a single operation. This would fit with similar initiatives elsewhere in the country at this time.

The lower area of Bridge Street by the bridge, was perhaps settled later, allowing the foundation of a friary on the west side of the road (**COM 9**) and a further settlement area (**COM 13**) to the east.

There would have been a need for markets within the new settlement, and no doubt a variety of specialised markets emerged, as indicated by Horsemarket Street and Buttermarket Street. Amongst these was a specially laid out market area, the Market Place (**COM 14**), a large rectangular area at the junction of the new north-south road and the east-west route along the Mersey valley. A triangular area behind the Bridge Street frontage (**COM 15**) resembles a small, specialist market place.

Medieval Warrington appears to have expanded rapidly, and by the Legh survey of 1485 there was expansion to the west along Sankey Street (**COMs 16-18**), to the north along Horsemarket Street and Winwick Street (**COMs 19-26**), and to the east, principally along Scotland Road/Buttermarket Street (**COMs 27-29**) and behind the Bridge Street frontage (**COM 30**). The curving boundary of **COM 20** perhaps indicates the presence of an earlier feature.

The earlier centre around the church expanded towards the new settlement. The church (**COM 3**) continued in use, but the motte and bailey castle (**COM 5**) was perhaps abandoned after 1260 when it is reported to have burnt down. We can

expect expansion and redevelopment along Church Street (**COMs 31-33**) and also perhaps down Napier Street (**COM 34**). The rectangular area around Dial Street (**COM 35**) may have continued as a market but is perhaps more likely to have been given over to housing, with the market moving to the 'new town' to the west. Additional medieval components include the construction of a moated rectory by the 15th century (**COM 36**), and the Boteler Grammar School in the early 16th century (**COM 37**).

4.4 Post Medieval Warrington (Figures 4-6)

The town continued to prosper in the post-medieval period, as descriptions of the vigour of its market testify. It was also in a position to benefit from industrial expansion from the late 17th century onwards because of its location both on the River Mersey and on a major north-south road. In addition it lay close to the south-west Lancashire coalfield of St Helens.

The growth of industry was helped by improvements in communications. In particular the opening of the Sankey Canal in 1755 (**COM 40**) enabled coal to be brought from the coalfields of St Helens. Similarly the railway came early to Warrington, the first station being opened in 1830, and this enabled cheap transportation of goods to and from Warrington. The road system was also improved with the advent of turnpike roads and the construction of new bridges, particularly the Victoria Bridge of 1835.

Unlike many towns, Warrington's industrial base was diverse and its industrialists were sufficiently attuned to the economics of the age to switch when necessary. Hence sail making was the staple industry of the town in the 18th century but, when it became redundant with the growth of the steamship in the 19th century, it was replaced by a diversity of industries. Figure 8 plots all industrial sites marked on the three large scale maps of the late 18th to mid-19th centuries (Wallworth and Donbavand 1772, Hall 1826 and the Ordnance Survey of c 1851). The most common industrial sites shown between these dates were tanneries (9), cotton mills (8), foundries (7), timber yards (7), wire works (6), rope walks (5), glass works (4), pin manufactories (4) and file works (3, including 1 pin, tool and file manufactory). While these figures do not give us details of the scale or value of the various manufactories they do provide an overview of the range of work undertaken.

4.4.1 Warrington c 1772 (Figure 4)

Figure 6 shows Warrington from Wallworth and Donbavand's map of 1772. At this time the town was only just starting to expand and still lay largely within its medieval boundaries. Domestic housing and factories are mixed throughout the town; and accordingly a single component for the settlement as a whole - domestic and industrial - has been defined (**COM 38**). The one exception is the area of Bank Quay (**COM 39**), where a purely industrial area separate from the main town had grown up around the quay created by Thomas Patten in the late 17th century. Also shown is the course of the Sankey Canal (**COM 40**) which passed to within 500m of Bank Quay.

4.4.2 Warrington c 1851 (Figure 5)

Settlement c1851 has been depicted as **COM 41**. By the mid-19th century, there had been further expansion to the north, west and across the river to the south, as well as an intensification of development within existing boundaries. Bank Quay (**COM 42**) had expanded further, although it was still separate from the town itself. The first railways had arrived in the town, with the opening of the Warrington and Newton Railway in 1831 providing a link to Liverpool and Manchester and the Grand Junction Railway in 1837 providing a link to Birmingham (**COM 43**).

4.5 Modern Warrington c 2000 (Figure 7)

Warrington continued to expand throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Manchester Ship Canal, opened in 1894, ran through south Warrington (**COM 44**). However, a dock was not provided at Warrington, so the Ship Canal had little positive impact upon the town and instead disrupted communication. Further railway lines were added leading west to St Helens, south-west to Chester, and east to Stockport and Altrincham, also providing a quicker service to Liverpool and Manchester.

After the First World War, the town stagnated, and there was a drop in population between 1921 and 1967. This was halted with the designation of Warrington as a new town in 1968, with large-scale expansion occurring with the building of estates at Birchwood and Padgate to the east, Westbrook to the west and Pewterspear to the south, while the central area of the town was extensively re-developed. **COM 45** shows the extent of Warrington c 2000 (OS 1:10000). The new town retained the advantage of being an important communication centre, within close proximity of the M6, M56 and M62 motorways. By 1991 the population had reached over 180,000, making Warrington the fastest growing town in the North West (Hayes undated, 22).

5 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

5.1 Above-Ground Remains

There are four Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Warrington: the Bank Quay transporter bridge (SAM Cheshire 108; CSMR 626/1); the Roman remains at Wilderspool Brewery (SAM Cheshire 110); Bewsey Old Hall moated site (SAM 13483; CSMR 563/1/1); and Barrow Old Hall moated site (SAM 13434; CSMR 568/1).

There are seven Conservation Areas in Warrington: Bewsey Street, Bridge Street, Buttermarket Street, Church Street, Palmyra Square, the Town Hall and Greenalls Brewery, Latchford. These cover much of the historic core of the town.

Warrington has an extensive stock of historic buildings, although only a handful of a total of around 218 date from before the 18th century. These early buildings include the Parish Church of St Elphin; three 17th century buildings on Church Street (Cromwell House, Marquis of Granby, Bull's Head) and a mid-16th century building on the Market Place (Ye Olde Barley Mow).

Of the Listed buildings just one is Grade I (the Town Hall, formerly Bank Hall); nine are Grade II* (St Elphin's Church, Church Street; St Ann's Church, Winwick Road; Church of the Holy Trinity, Sankey Street; Church of St James, Wilderspool Causeway; Bank Quay transporter bridge; Ye Olde Barley Mow; Cromwell House; St Lukes Church, Liverpool Road; and 3-5 Winwick Street. The remainder are Grade II.

It is a sign of the town's vigour that most of its earlier buildings and structures have been removed by later redevelopment, so that few buildings earlier than the 18th century survive. Similarly, most of the important early industrial sites have seen continuous redevelopment. Details of surviving early industrial sites are given in Ashmore (1982) and Grealey (1976).

5.2 Below-Ground Remains

Redevelopment has doubtless destroyed much of the early medieval and medieval archaeology, and an opportunity was lost in the 1970s when the area around St Elphin's Church was redeveloped with only minor archaeological investigation. Equally, much of the Roman town has been destroyed by 19th and early 20th century development. Nevertheless, there are areas where archaeological deposits do survive. For example, recent excavations have demonstrated the survival of Roman remains on the Greenalls Brewery site and part of this area has been Scheduled to ensure its survival for future generations. There is also potential for the survival of early medieval and medieval deposits in the vicinity of St Elphin's Church and of remains of the castle in the park area to the north east, where the in-filled bailey ditch may survive.

Within the medieval town, survival of archaeological levels can at present only be predicted on a case by case basis, but it is encouraging that remains of the friary survive despite extensive re-development. It should be noted that Bridge Street in particular was substantially widened at the end of the 19th century and hence the earlier property frontages on the western side potentially survive below the present road and pavement. This also applies to much of the historic core, where road widening schemes have shifted modern frontages some distance back from the original street frontage.

6 PRIORITIES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

6.1 General

The study of Warrington forms part of a national research priority to examine the origins and development of medieval small towns and rural markets (Priority H5; English Heritage 1997, 49). Study of the Roman town would also relate to the study of military and civilian interaction (Priority H1 – English Heritage 1997); and study of the remains of the industrial period relates to English Heritage research priority (Priority T6 – English Heritage 1997). Work at Warrington would fit into a number of national priorities, particularly:

- PC4 Briton into Roman
- PC5 Empire to Kingdom
- PC6 Late Saxon to medieval

- PC7 Transition from medieval to post medieval traditions (c1300-1700AD)

6.2 Roman

- Establish the nature and extent of domestic and industrial activity at Wilderspool; can discrete areas of activity be defined?
- Establish the occupation dates for the various areas of Wilderspool.
- Establish the routes of the Roman roads that converge at Wilderspool.
- Establish the nature and extent of settlement in Stockton Heath and Loushers Lane.
- Locate the Roman crossing of the Mersey River.
- Establish the location and extent of the cemeteries.
- Establish the location of the presumed auxiliary fort.

6.2 Early Medieval

- Establish the nature and extent of settlement during the early medieval period.
- Establish the foundation date, nature and extent of the early medieval church and examine its relationship to contemporary settlement.

6.3 Medieval

- Establish the precise location of settlement areas and date phases of expansion and contraction.
- Establish the nature and extent of buildings on settlement plots. Examine the evidence for planned settlement.
- Establish the foundation date of the medieval castle and establish the extent of the bailey.
- Examine evidence for medieval trade and industry.
- Establish the foundation of the various market places.
- Establish the foundation and the plan of the Augustinian Friary.

6.4 Post Medieval

- Establish precise location of settlement areas and date the phases of expansion.
- Examine evidence for post medieval trade and industry.
- Establish to what extent trade and industry encouraged the growth of the town and identify what form this expansion took.
- Examine the impact of the canal and railway communication networks upon the development of industry.
- Identify the range and diversity of industrial processes and manufactories in Warrington.
- Assess the extent and survival of industrial archaeological remains through a programme of systematic recording.

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7.2 Maps

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8. ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Warrington and the Surrounding Area

Figure 2: Roman Warrington

Figure 3: The Development of Medieval Warrington

Figure 4: Warrington c 1772

Figure 5: Warrington c 1851

Figure 6: Warrington Industrial Sites c 1772-1851

Figure 7: Warrington c 2000



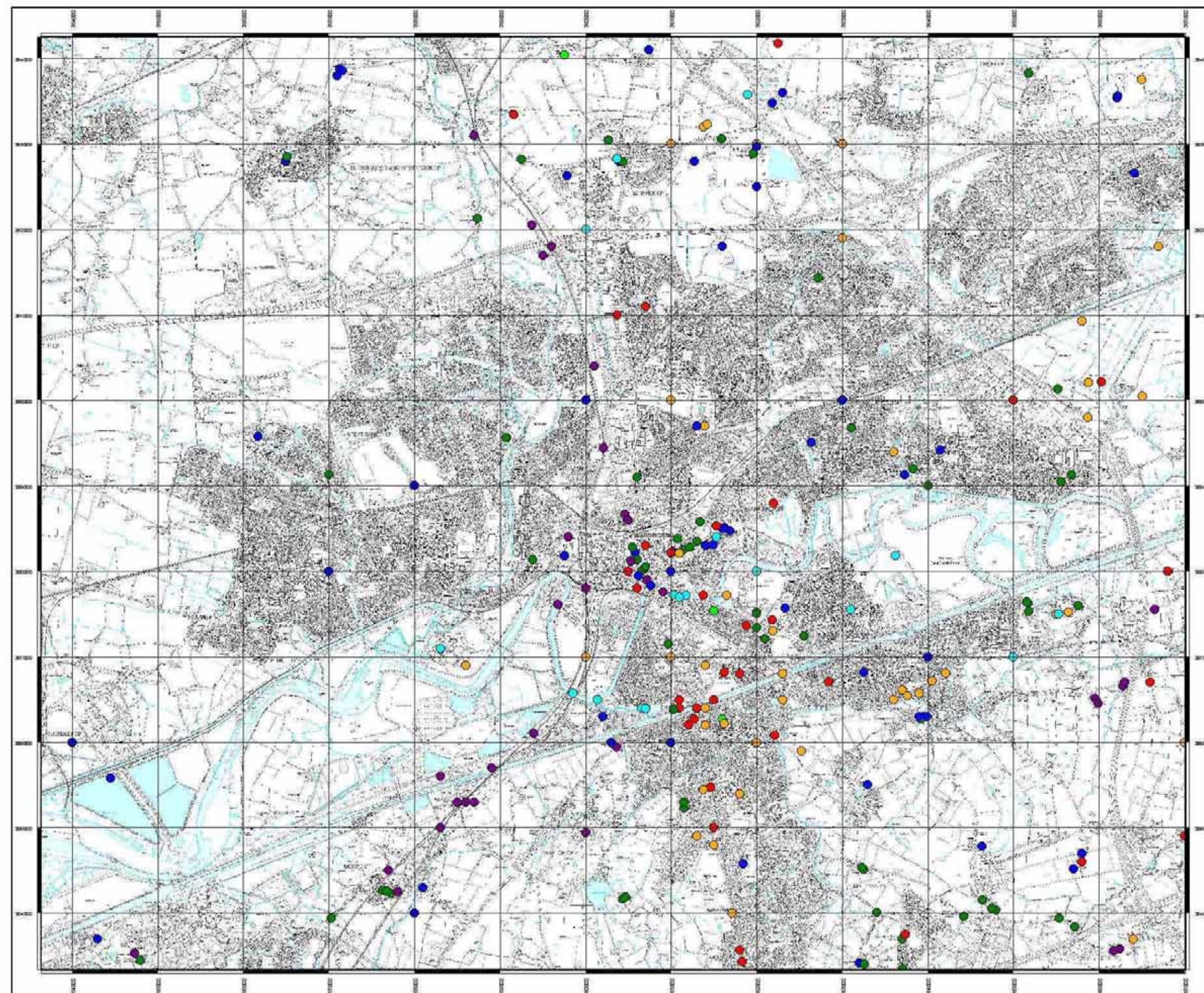
Figure 1
Warrington and the
Surrounding Area

Sites and Monuments

-  Prehistoric
-  Romano-British
-  Early Medieval
-  Medieval
-  Post Medieval
-  Modern

1:43000

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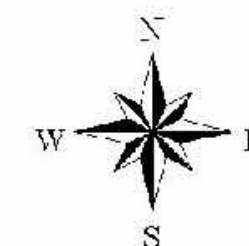
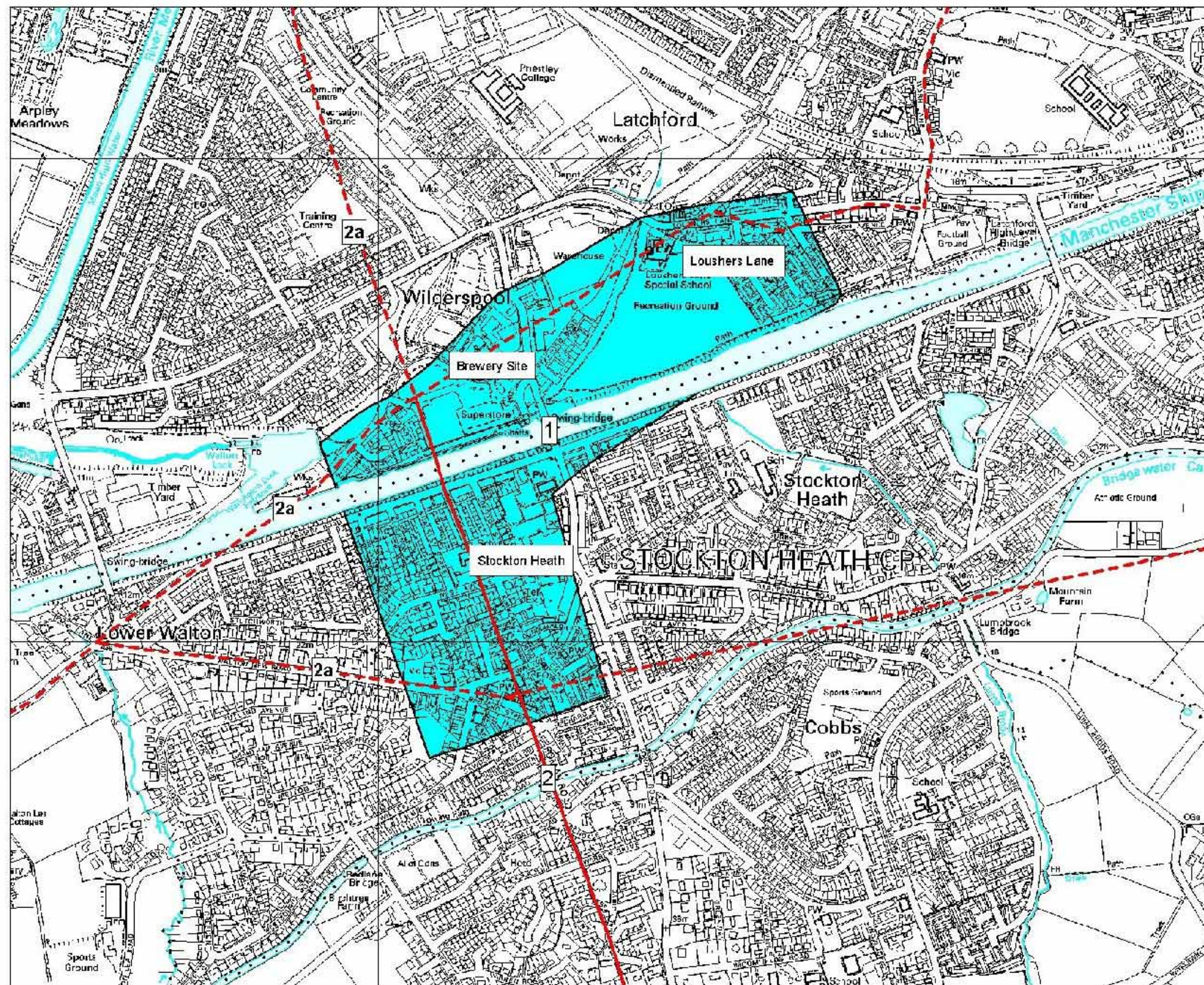


Figure 2
Roman Warrington

Key

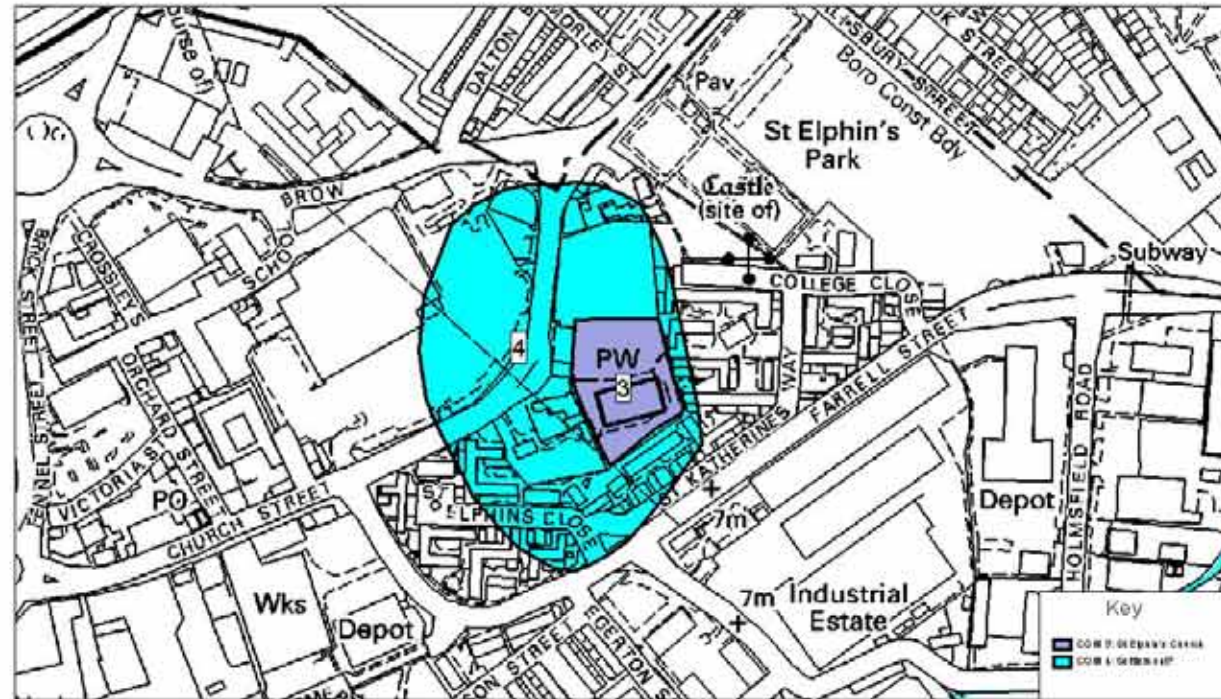
- COM 1: Domestic and Industrial Activity
- COM 2: King Street
- COM 2a: Possible Roman Road

1:8000

0 250 500 Metres

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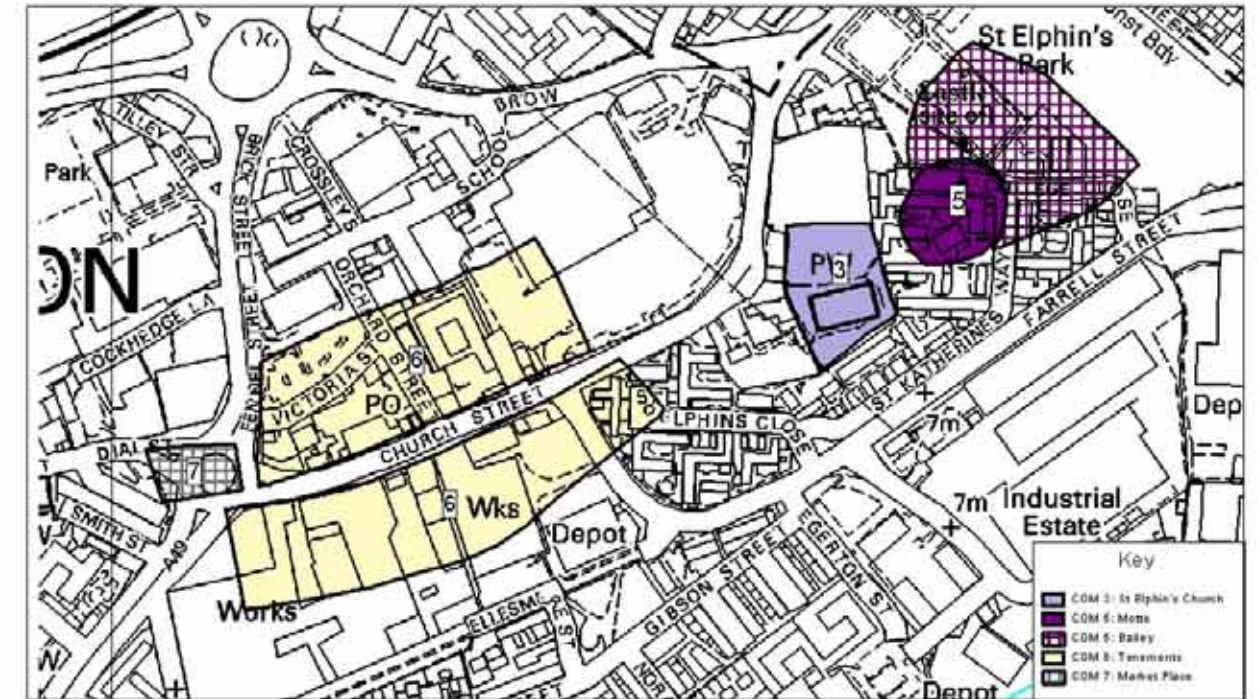
Figure 3: The Medieval Development of Warrington



Early Medieval

0 100 200 Metres

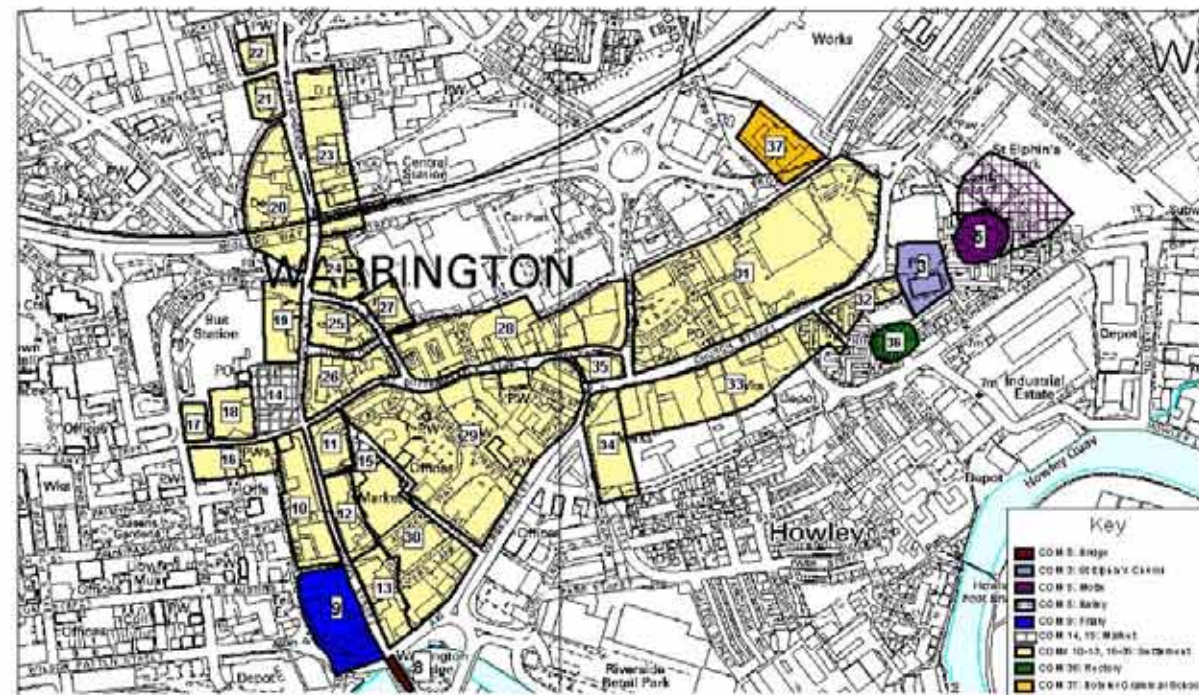
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Norman

0 100 200 Metres

1:5000



Late Medieval

0 200 400 Metres




1:10000

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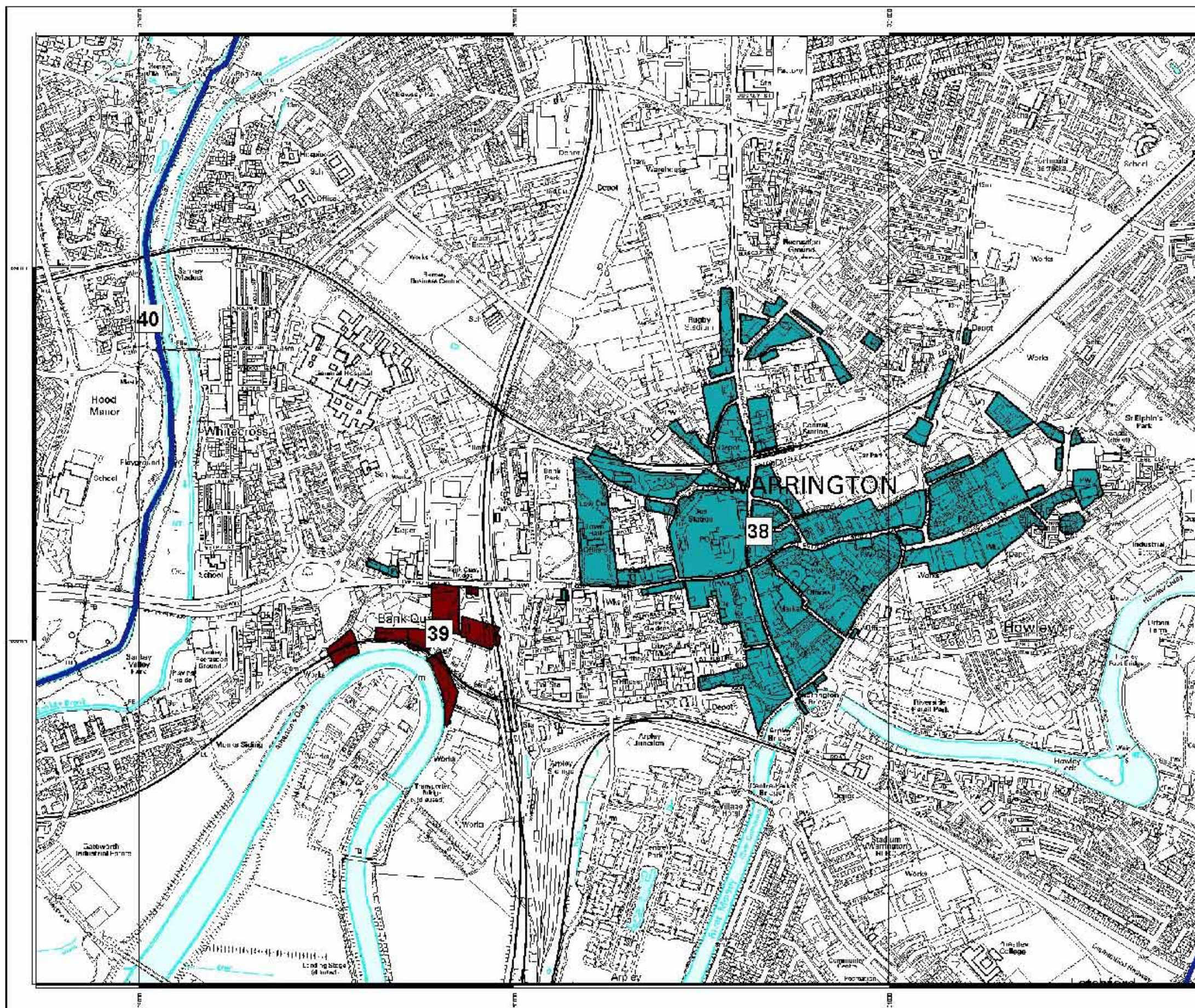


Figure 4
Warrington c 1772

Key

-  COM 38: Settlement
-  COM 59: Bank Quay
-  COM 40: Sankey Canal

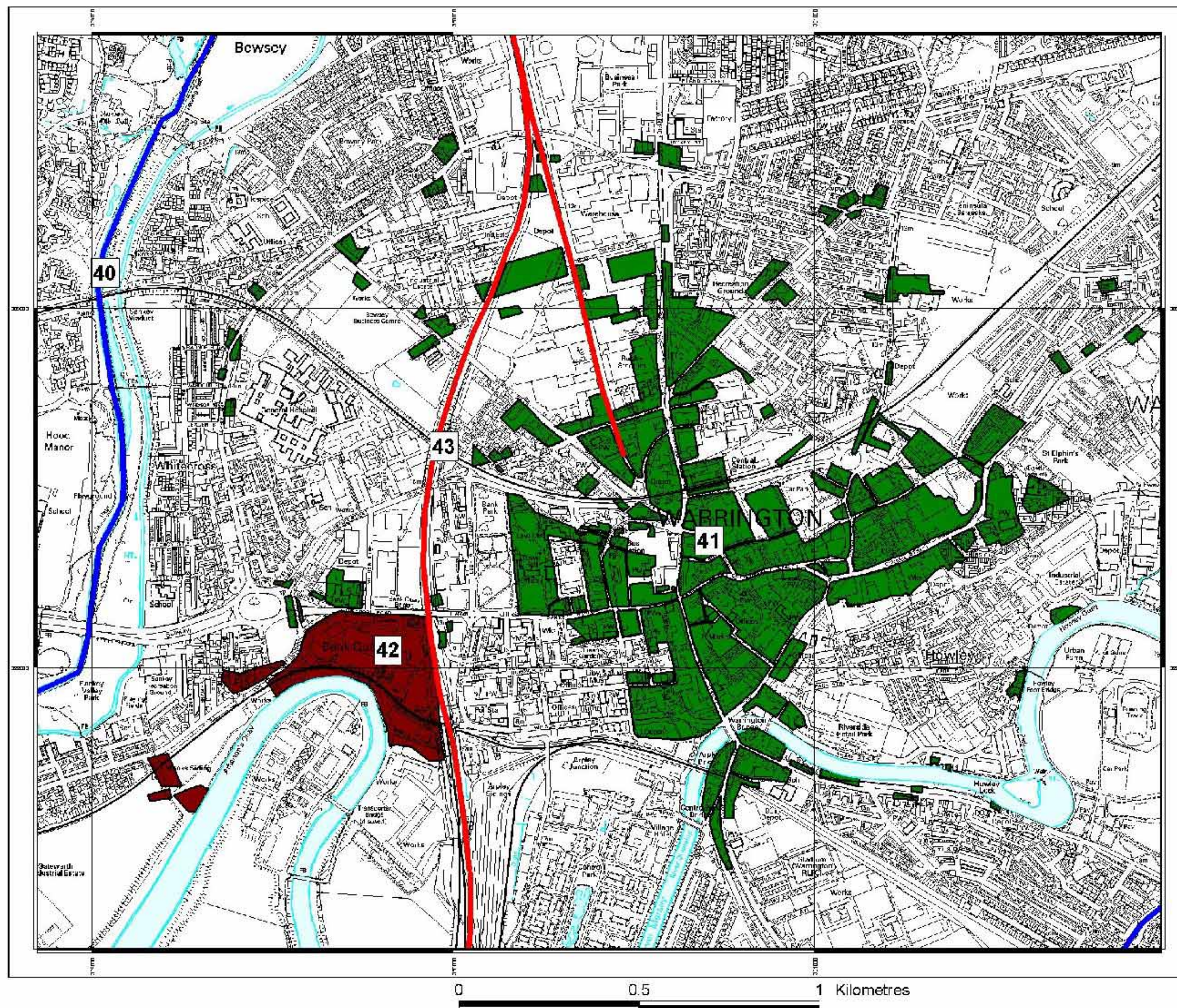
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Figure 5
Warrington c 1851



Key

- COM 40: Sankey Canal
- COM 41: Settlement
- COM 42: Bank Quay
- COM 43: Railways

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ENGLISH HERITAGE



Key

Industrial sites

- ▲ Brewery
- Brick field
- Brick kiln
- ▲ Canvas manufactory
- Cloth hall
- Coach works
- Coal yard
- Copper works
- ★ Cotton mill
- Distillery
- Dye House
- Factory
- File Works
- Flour mill
- Foundry
- Gas works
- ▲ Glass works
- Lime kiln
- Malt kiln
- Marble and Stone works
- Mill
- Pin manufactory
- Pin, tool and file works
- Pottery
- Quay
- Railway works
- Rope walk
- Rosin works
- ▲ Saw mills
- Saw pit
- Soap works
- Station
- Sugar house
- Tannery
- ▲ Timber yard
- Warehouse
- ▲ Wire works
- ~ Canals
- ~ Railways

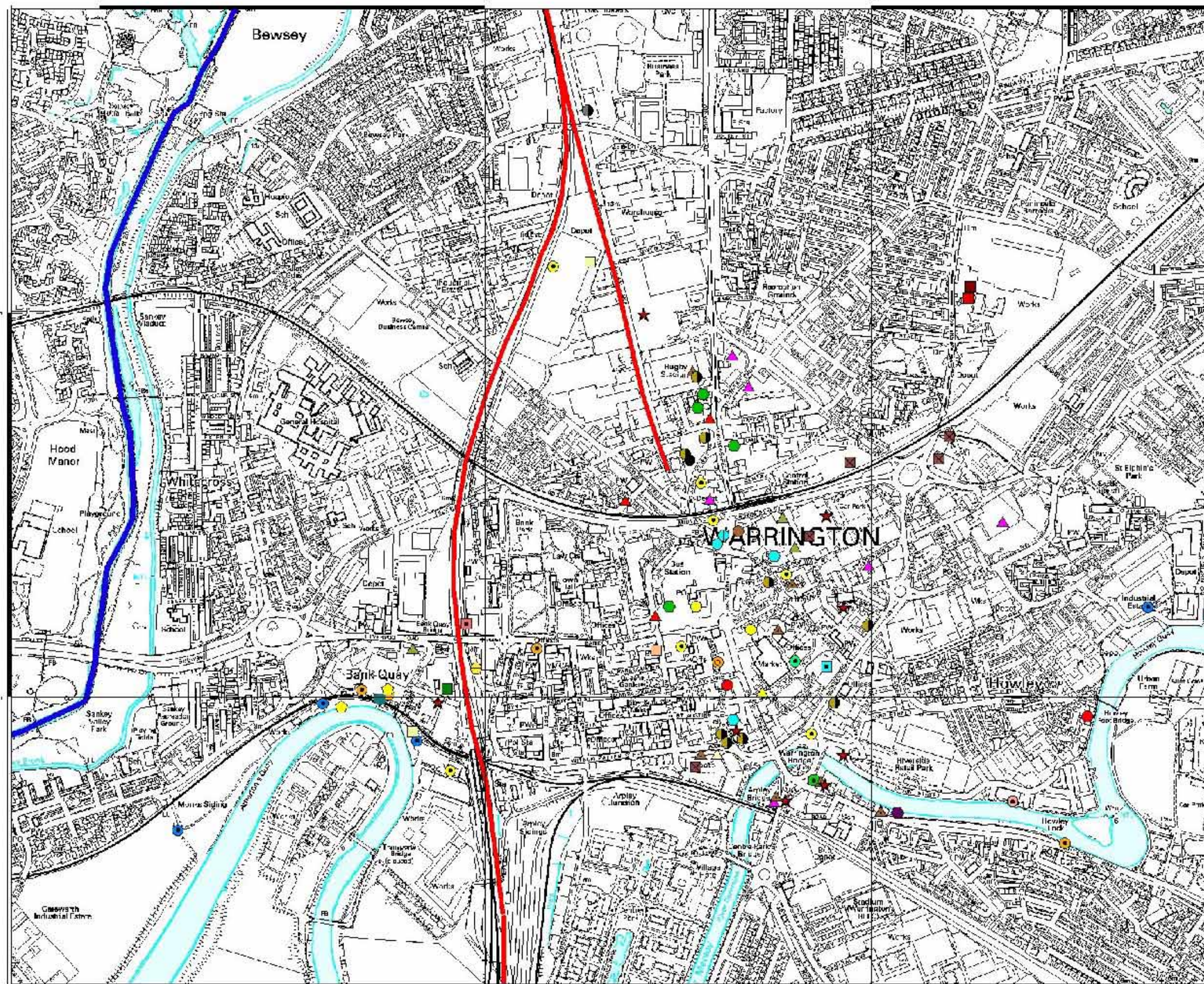
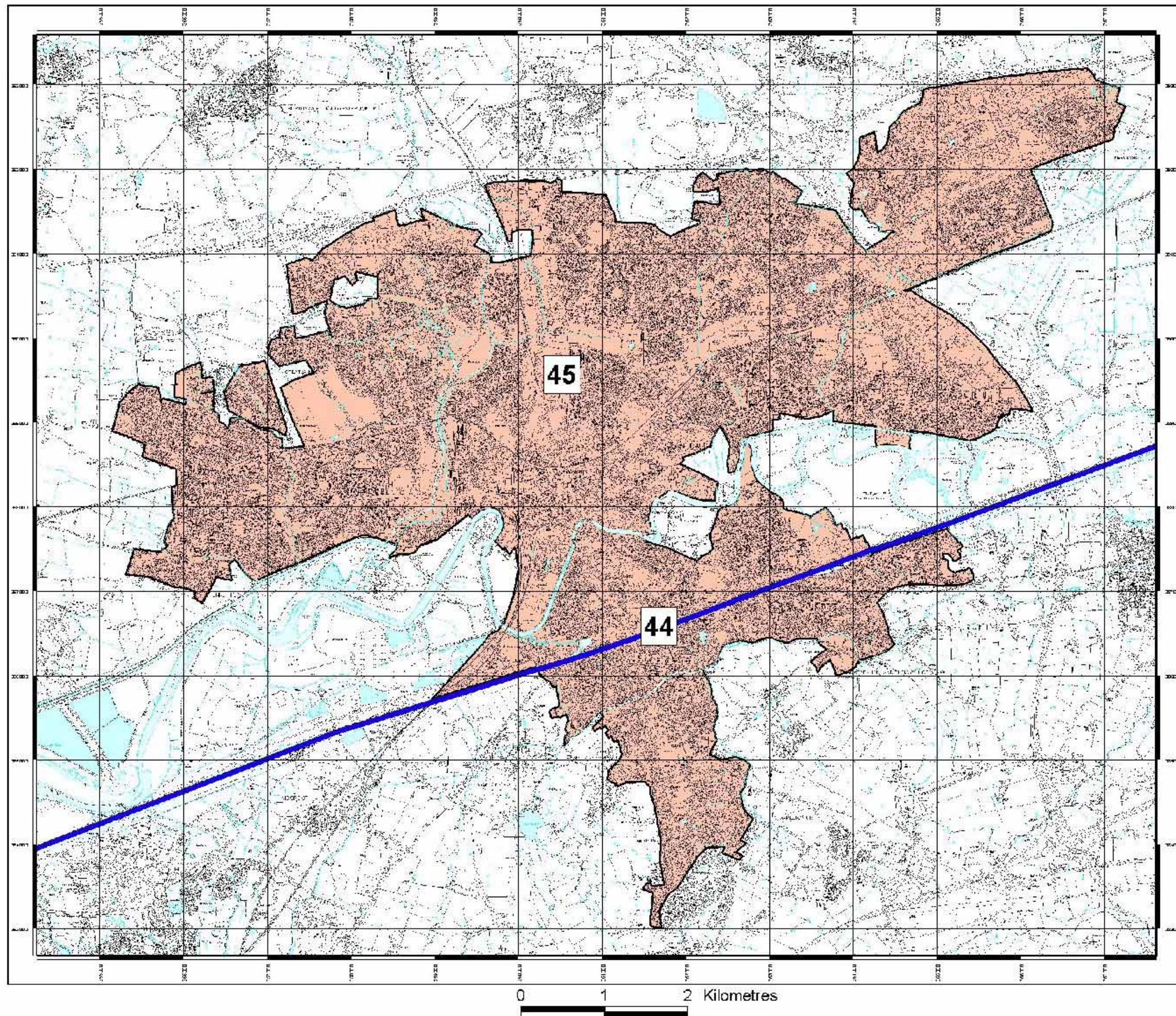


Figure 6: Warrington - Industrial sites 1772-1851

1:10000

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UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION



Figure 7
Warrington c 2000

Key

-  COM 44: Manchester Ship Canal
-  COM 5: Settlement

1:43000

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