The County Historic Environment Record (CHER) is the database of all known archaeological sites and historic landscapes in Cheshire, Warrington and Halton. It includes sites dating from prehistory through to the military remains of the more recent past.

The CHER is continually updated with information provided by professional archaeologists, museums, and local researchers.

New research which has fed into the CHER has revealed the importance of Ness Colliery, near Neston in west Cheshire, in the story of the county’s industrial development.

Coal has been mined at Ness Colliery since 1759, and the works probably employed almost 200 men in their heyday in the 1770s and 1780s. Other activities included making coke, bricks and lime. The colliery was quick to adopt steam engines and was using them by the 1760s. This is the earliest known use of engines in the county outside the eastern coalfield. George Stephenson, the renowned engineer, had connections with the colliery in the 1820s, visiting it at least once.

The coal was shipped to Wales, Ireland and even America, and today the remains of a substantial quay built in 1791 can still be seen in the Dee Estuary, together with other signs of the various colliery businesses which existed on the site until 1927. This site is now tranquil and attractive, but it deserves to be known as a key location for the county’s industrial heritage.

For further information on providing data to the CHER contact
Rob Edwards, Historic Environment Record Officer
phone 01244 603667   email robert.j.edwards@cheshire.gov.uk

For further information on ‘The Neston Collieries and Associated Industrial Workings, 1759-1855’ contact Anthony Annakin-Smith at
anthony@annakin-smith.freeserve.co.uk

The Industrial Revolution in West Cheshire

Oxford Archaeology North completed the excavation of the mill site in 2005 and last year the remains were consolidated and conserved on behalf of Warrington Borough Council.

The original layout of the mill incorporated two water wheels, each about 16 feet in diameter, with the rolling and slitting of the iron taking place in an area between the two wheel pits. The mill was expanded in the late 18th century with an additional metal working area and a new entrance, but in the 19th century it was converted into a textile mill. This probably involved the addition of several storeys to the main mill building, implied by the discovery of load-bearing walls across the original rolling and slitting floor. The textile mill also only seems to have required one water wheel to power its machinery, as one of the wheel pits was abandoned at this time.

The current project has permitted some re-interpretation of previous work on the mill and now the long-term future of this newly consolidated site, complete with interpretation panels, is ensured as a legacy to the area’s industrial heritage.

For further information contact
Mark Leah, Historic Environment Planning Officer (Archaeology)
phone 01244 603289,
email mark.leah@cheshire.gov.uk

Lymm Slitting Mill

An 18th-century iron-slitting mill at Lymm, near Warrington, has also benefited from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Slitting mills were designed to cut iron bars into long square pieces or rods to provide a source material for making nails or wire. Lymm slitting mill was one of a small group of such mills in the region established by the Titely family to serve the local nail-making trade.

Oxford Archaeology North completed the excavation of the mill site in 2005 and last year the remains were consolidated and conserved on behalf of Warrington Borough Council.
In brief

Watching briefs during development have been carried out at: Swanley Hall Farm, Burland; the NWF Site, Wardle; Old Quay, Runcorn; Nantwich Town Football Club, Kingsley Fields, Nantwich; Leighton Hall Farm, Neston; Halton Castle, Halton; Rainow Waste Water Treatment Works to Bollington pipeline; the A556 improvements; Forest Hill Quarry, Sandiway; St. Mary and All Saints Church, Great Budworth; and the Forge Shopping Centre, Warrington.

Archaeological evaluations, in advance of development, have been carried out at: St. Michael’s Church, Marbury; Grinsome Farm on the Ince Marshes; land off Ditton Road, Widnes; land to the west of Norton Priory, Halton; Cranshaw Hall Farm, Widnes; Park Green Mill, Macclesfield; and Cairo Street Unitarian Chapel, Warrington.

The Regional Research Frameworks project has produced the first comprehensive synthesis of the archaeology of the region from prehistory up to the 20th century. The Archaeology of North West England Volume 1 is the first stage in the compilation of an archaeological Research Framework for the North West. It will form the basis for determining new research directions and formulating a Research Strategy for archaeology in the North West. Copies can be obtained from CBA North West, c/o UMAU, Bridgeford Street Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL. Price £15 & £2.50 p&p. Cheques payable to CBA North West.

Cheshire Archaeology Day 2007 will be held on Saturday 21 April at the Northwich Memorial Hall. The guest speaker will be the archaeologist and broadcaster Julian Richards who will speak on his work at Stonehenge.

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They were carried out by: AAA Archaeological Advisors, Anthony Annakin-Smith, Cambrian Archaeological Projects, Crewe and Nantwich Metal Detecting Club, Donald Insall Associates, Earthworks Archaeological Services, Gifford, L-P Archaeology, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, Marches Archaeology, Matrix Archaeology, Norton Priory Museum Trust, Oxford Archaeology North, RSKENS.R, University of Manchester Archaeological Unit.

Mailing list

Cheshire Archaeology News is produced by the Natural and Historic Environment Team, Cheshire County Council. The Team works to protect, conserve and enhance Cheshire’s natural and historic environment resources. For information on the Team’s services, fieldwork and contact details see www.cheshire.gov.uk/archaeology.

Cheshire Archaeology News is sent free of charge to all those on our mailing list. If you would like to add your name to the list, please contact Environmental Planning, Cheshire County Council, Backford Hall, Backford, Chester CH1 6PZ, phone 01244 603656, email annette.swift@cheshire.gov.uk.

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