

The Industrial Revolution in West Cheshire

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.

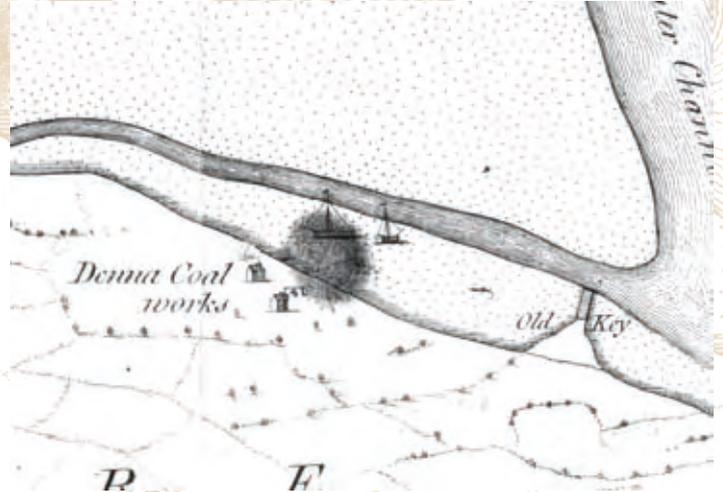
New research which has fed into the CHER has revealed the importance of Ness Colliery, near Neston in west Cheshire, in the story of the county's industrial development.

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.freemove.co.uk



Ness Colliery (Denna Coalworks) shown on a map by Thomas Boydell, 1770-1 (Cheshire Record Office)

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 Titley family to serve the local nail-making trade.



Reconstruction drawing of Lymm slitting mill (Oxford Archaeology North)

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

Portable Antiquities Scheme

During 2006, 100 archaeological objects discovered in Cheshire, mostly by metal detecting enthusiasts, were added to the Portable Antiquities database. Of these, 43 were Roman, (including 33 coins), 28 medieval, while the rest were mostly post-medieval. Generally, an object has to be at least 300 years old to qualify for recording.

Bronze Age metal finds are relatively uncommon, but this year three notable discoveries were made. Sword fragments were found in Over Alderley (PAS Find No. 8844B2) and Weaverham (25C375), the latter being an almost complete blade that had been deliberately bent in antiquity (*bottom centre*). A fine example of an early Bronze Age axehead dating to around 1900-1700 BC was found at Rainow (OD11D2) (*centre*).

A noteworthy medieval find was a bronze seal matrix in excellent condition (*right*), dating from the 13th century (9E9384). The oval-shaped matrix, found at Marbury, would have been used to make an impression in a wax seal on documents and letters. It bears the legend 'S'.ROB.FIL'.AL'.PILAT, which transcribes as 'Robert son of Al(ain?) Pilat'.

A very fine 15th-century gold brooch found in north Cheshire (9E1D13) (*bottom left*) was reported under the terms of the Treasure Act. Beautifully crafted, the brooch comprises a pair of clasped hands, a sign of friendship commonly used during this period. A legend on the brooch in difficult to read Gothic script is currently waiting to be transcribed.



Nick Herepath who has served as Finds Liaison Officer for Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside for nine years has now left the scheme to take up the post of Community Heritage Officer, Chester City Council.

For further information check out the Portable Antiquities Scheme website at www.finds.org.uk

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.

Tickets are £11 each (£9 concessions) from Environmental Planning, Cheshire County Council, Backford Hall, Backford, Chester CH1 6PZ, phone 01244 603656, email annette.swift@cheshire.gov.uk.

Archaeological excavations have been carried out at: St. Anne's Lane, Nantwich (see detailed article).

Conservation work has been carried out at the sandstone wall on Manley Common and at the air-raid shelters at Woodcock's Well Primary School, Mow Cop.

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



Photos: Liverpool Museum

Thanks to...

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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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