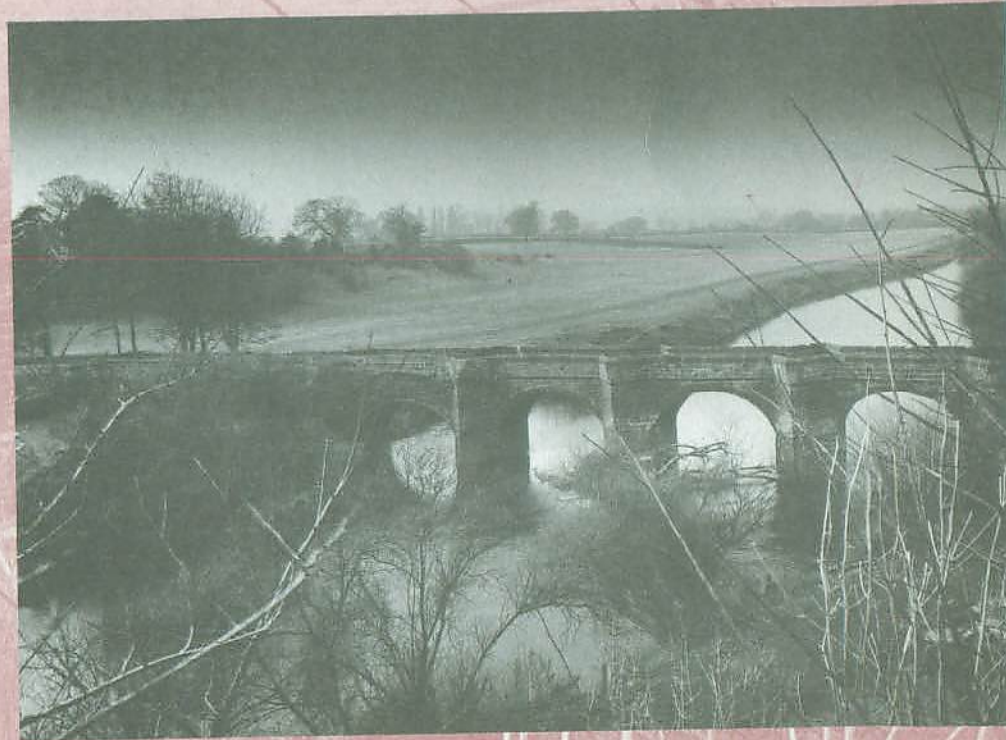


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# CHESHIRE PAST

an annual review of archaeology in Cheshire

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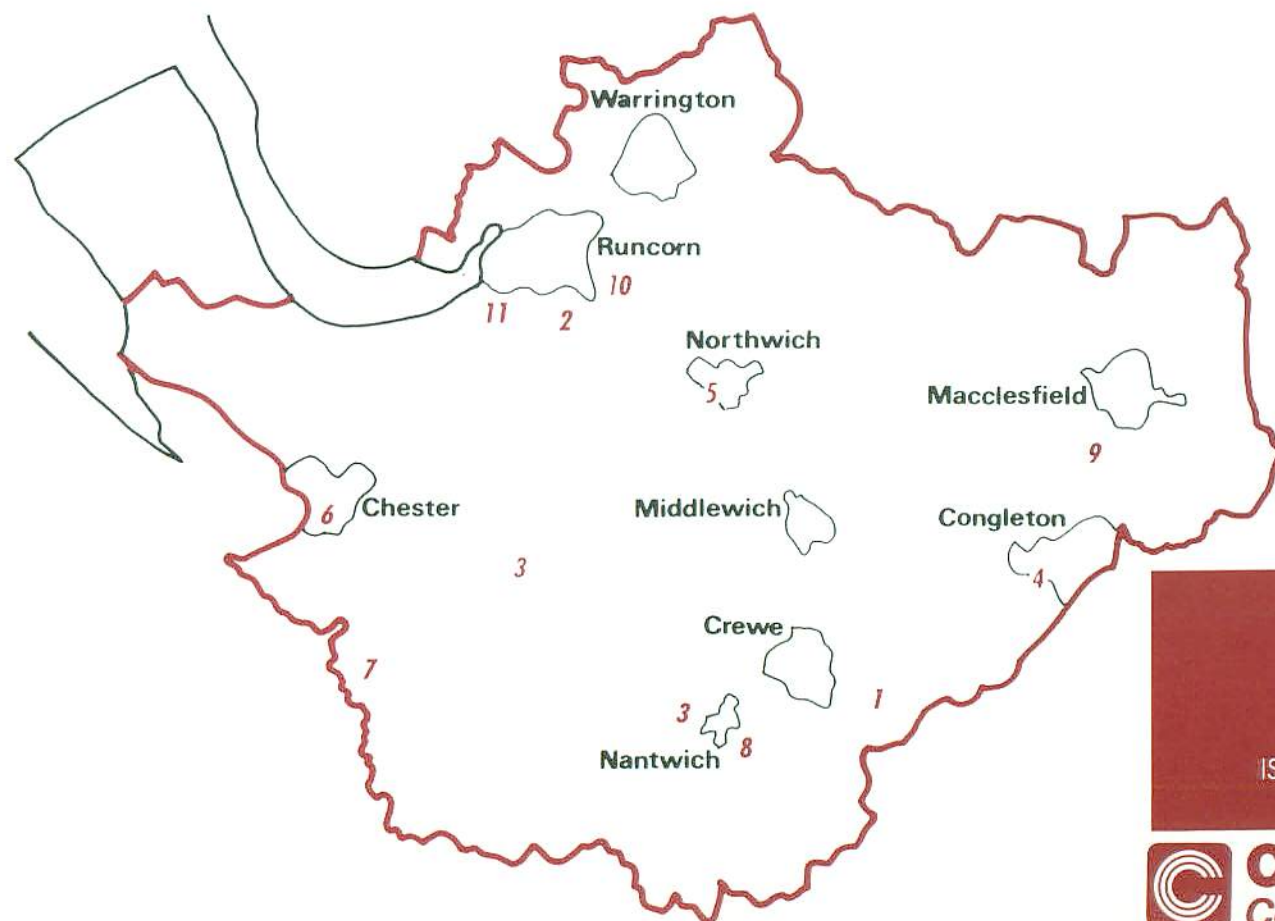


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# CHESHIRE PAST

an annual review of archaeology in Cheshire

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**Cheshire**  
County Council



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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of **CHESHIRE PAST**: an annual review of archaeology in Cheshire. Our aim is to provide an up-to-date summary of all the latest archaeological research in Cheshire, for the archaeologist, the local historian and the general reader.

In September 1991, Cheshire County Council published its Archaeology Strategy for Cheshire, identifying seven objectives for the county's archaeology. One of these was to promote public understanding of Cheshire's archaeological heritage. The publication of **CHESHIRE PAST** marks a first step in this direction, and it will coincide with the first Cheshire Archaeology Day at the Salt Museum, Weaver Hall, Northwich, on Saturday 21 March 1992. This is open to everyone who would like to know more about the archaeology of the county.

There have been momentous changes in British archaeology over the past few years. Increasingly, developers are paying professional archaeological contractors to record the archaeological evidence destroyed by their developments. At the same time, the government has recognised the key role of the planning process in protecting and preserving archaeological remains by publishing Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning in November 1990.

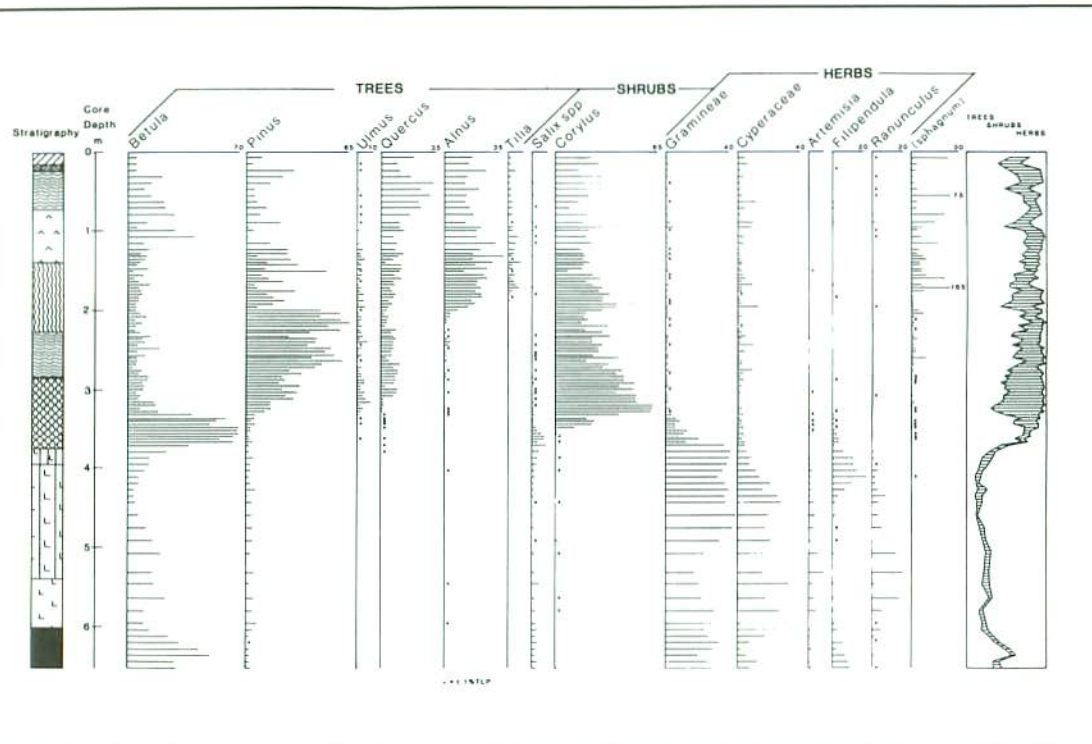
However, this has in no way diminished the role of more traditional archaeological research. In this issue we report on research by the Universities of Keele and Manchester, by Merseyside Museums and by Cheshire County Council into various aspects of the archaeology of Cheshire. We have reports on two newly-discovered Bronze Age axes, a medieval timber bridge near Nantwich, and excavations at the birthplace of Lewis Carroll. There is news of recent archaeological work in Chester, a survey of Holt-Farndon medieval bridge, and conservation work on the famous Congleton hoard. And we also report on excavations at Frodsham saltworks by the Frodsham Local History Group, showing that **CHESHIRE PAST** is not just for the professionals. Indeed, we would be pleased to hear from any voluntary groups or individuals carrying out archaeological research in Cheshire.

If you would like to contribute an article to **CHESHIRE PAST**, please contact the Editor, Cheshire Past, Commerce House, Hunter Street, Chester CH1 2QP, Tel Chester (0244) 603160.



# 1 POLLEN AND TREE-RING STUDIES AT WHITE MOSS, ALSAGER

Dr Frank M Chambers, Jonathan Lageard and Dr Peter A Thomas,  
Environmental Research Unit, Keele University



Summary diagram from Core T3.75 at White Moss, showing pollen taxa changing with depth. The taxa are (left to right): birch, pine, elm, oak, alder, lime, willow, hazel, grasses, sedges, and other herbs

Peat cutting at White Moss, Alsager (SJ 775 550) has revealed the remains of an extensive prehistoric forest preserved within the peat. In 1988, a three-year study began, designed to reconstruct the environmental history of this part of South Cheshire through survey and fieldwork at White Moss.

Until recently, the moss was an extensive peat bog, overlying glacial sands and a former late-glacial lake in South Cheshire. It has been hand-cut for peat, probably for generations, and has recently been cut at a much faster rate mechanically, so that underlying sand can be reached and quarried. The bog was not dissimilar to nearby Lindow Moss, where the remains of the 'Lindow Man' bog body were recently found.

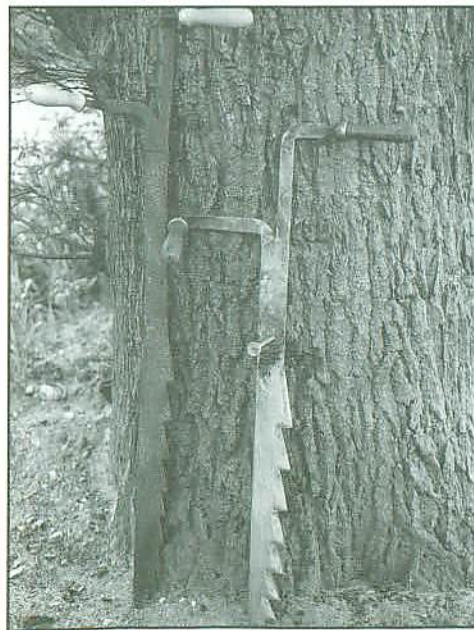
The composition and layering of the peat suggest that White Moss has been a rather drier mire than Lindow Moss; indeed, at various periods in prehistoric times, pine trees grew on the surface of the bog. The present study aims to reconstruct the environmental history of the site, and to establish the periods and duration of tree growth on the bog. The study may also provide evidence for climatic change in South Cheshire over the past few thousand years. Three principal techniques are being used: pollen analysis, radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology.

Pollen found in the peat and former lake sediments is being analysed to reconstruct the vegetational history of the site. Analysis suggests that the landscape of this part of South Cheshire was dominated by pine (*Pinus*) in the early post-glacial period. There was once a lake in the southern area of White Moss. This infilled, and became a bog. In the surrounding landscape, other trees arrived - deciduous hardwoods like oak, elm and possibly lime - but pine seems to have persisted on the fringes of the mire, perhaps because it had a competitive advantage on the acid peat (as pine does at Wybunbury Moss, today). At various periods, pine seems to have colonised the surface of the mire. Radiocarbon dating of peat and excavated pine stumps will provide a timescale for these vegetational changes. The results of radiocarbon dating are awaited, but pollen analysis through the peat suggests that tree stumps excavated from the mire are several thousand years old.

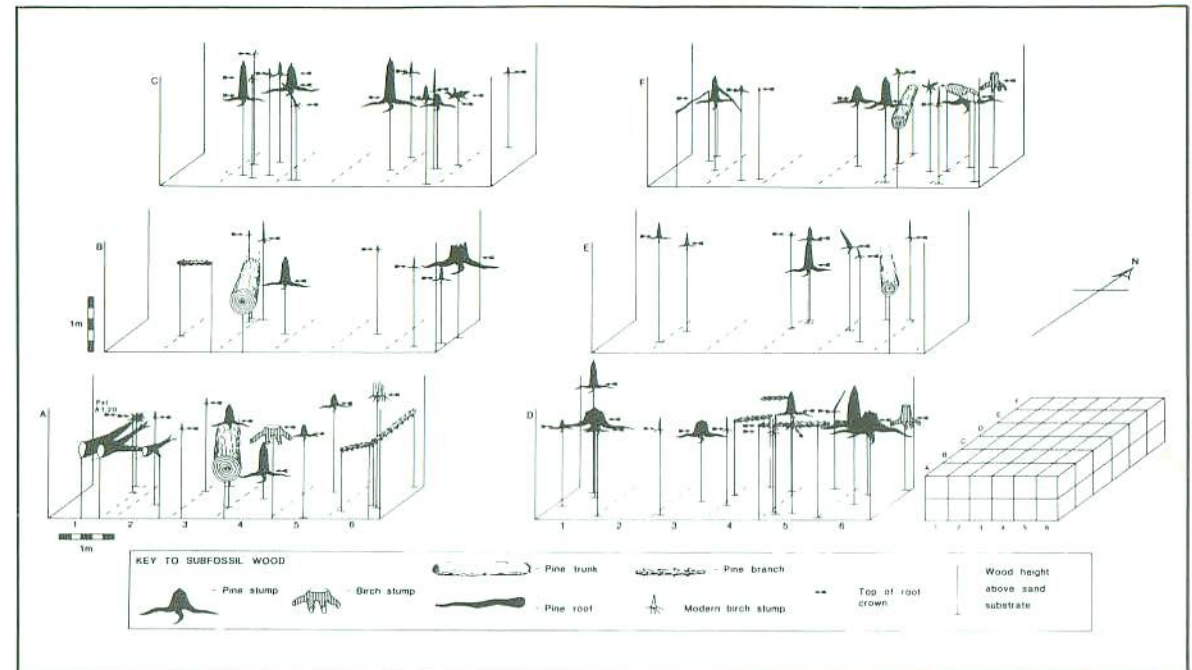


Detailed records of the position of the tree stumps have been made in three exhumation areas. Each area was 6m x 6m in plan, and was excavated by careful hand cutting of the peat to a depth of over a metre. To assist in the peat excavations, a stainless steel peat cutter was made in the University workshop, based on a hand-operated cutter used at Lindow Moss.

The depths of stumps are being recorded to see whether there was more than one invasion of pine but, because stumps may have moved vertically within the peat, a more exact picture of tree invasion is being obtained from a study of the tree rings (dendrochronology) in the preserved stumps. These stumps have come not only from the excavated areas but also from wood piles at the site - the result of excavations by bulldozer. Patterns of wide and narrow tree rings are being compared (rather like comparing bar-codes at a supermarket check-out) to provide overlapping sequences of tree rings. This has resulted in several cross-matched sequences ranging from around 100 to 338 years in length, but these are presently of unknown age. These 'floating' sequences will be fixed in time by radiocarbon dating. Samples of wood, weighing 20-60g, have been taken from either end of the chronologies and sent to the Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory at East Kilbride.



*A stainless steel peat cutter and an original peat cutter design (left)*



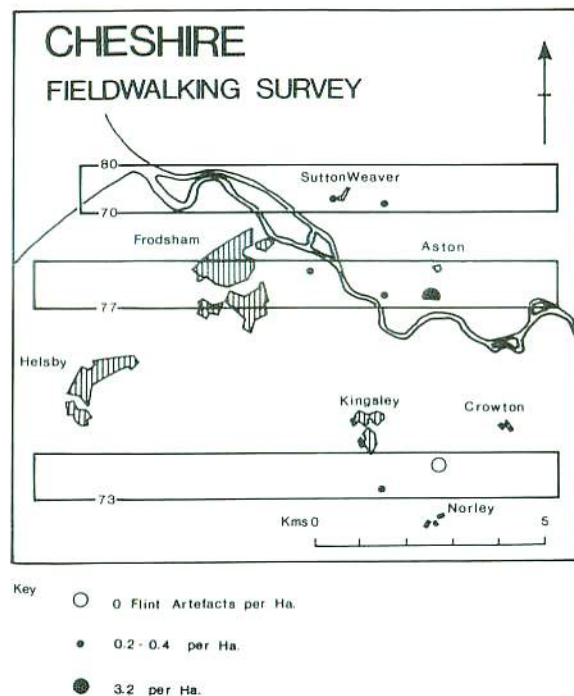
*An example of records of sub-fossil wood from a 6 x 6m exhumation area*

Study of the relative width of the tree rings, plus study of pollen, spores and other remains in the peat, may also allow a reconstruction of the changing surface wetness of the mire through time.

The project is funded by Cheshire County Council and the Natural Environment Research Council. Access to the site was provided by Mr D Beecroft and Hepworth Minerals and Chemicals, who also provided site maps. The project archive is held at the Department of Geography, Keele University. The work is continuing and will be written up in 1991 as a PhD thesis by research student Jonathan Lageard. For further information, see J G A Lageard, F M Chambers and P A Thomas: 'Palaeoforest reconstruction from peat exhumations at White Moss, South Cheshire, UK' in *TREE RINGS AND ENVIRONMENT*, Lund Report, Lund University Press, 1991 (in press).



## 2 PREHISTORIC SURVEY IN NORTH CHESHIRE *R W Cowell, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside*



*The density of flint finds from each field. The figure is arrived at by dividing the number of hectares walked (up to a maximum 20 ha) in each 100 ha block by the number of finds from that block of fields*

For some years a systematic survey has been underway to identify evidence of prehistoric settlement in Merseyside. It is mainly undertaken by walking ploughed fields during the winter months, looking for concentrations of worked flint or pottery that might indicate prehistoric sites, now being ploughed out. The fieldwalking is organised on a pre-set grid system, so as to limit personal choice in where to walk. The aim is to produce a pattern of sites and 'empty' areas, that will bear more relation to the prehistoric distribution than to the walker's subjective judgement of where he or she might find sites.

During 1990, the survey was extended into Cheshire. The initial stage is concentrating on North Cheshire, where the most suitable landuse for fieldwalking occurs. The approximate boundaries stretch from Warrington to east of Chester, and as far south as a line drawn through Delamere. The results from this area can then be compared with those from north of the Mersey.

Only two weeks were available to undertake the work this year, which allowed 120 hectares (c50 acres) to be walked. This was in the areas of Sutton Weaver, Aston, Bradley and Norley, mainly concentrating on either side of the River Weaver. Any pattern to emerge from this year's work ought therefore to be treated with caution. It cannot be used as an indicator of what is likely to be found across the whole area, as the settlement distribution is likely to change in relation to differing soils, geology, relief, etc. It is hoped that fieldwalking over a period of c20 weeks will cover the initial area (which totals c1,200 hectares), after which the importance and nature of prehistoric settlement in the area will be more apparent.

The main evidence found during the survey was struck flint, although one piece of probable prehistoric pottery was found near Aston Heath. The general density of flint was extremely light across the walked areas. This implies that settlement was sparse, although these areas could still have been used for other activities, such as grazing or hunting, which will leave less archaeological debris.

There were, however, two exceptions to this pattern. The main area was next to the Weaver, south-east of Aston, where occupation was concentrated at different times over several thousand years. The earliest is represented by flintwork belonging to hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic period, dating from c 7,500-3,500BC. It is characterised by long thin pieces, known as blades (see illustration, nos 1-4). Most of these blades have been slightly modified along one edge by very fine chipping to produce tools - particularly 1, which is probably part of an arrowhead.

The Aston site probably contains at least four different occupations, which may represent repeated visits by groups to the area over several years or perhaps generations. The small amount of material suggests that such visits were



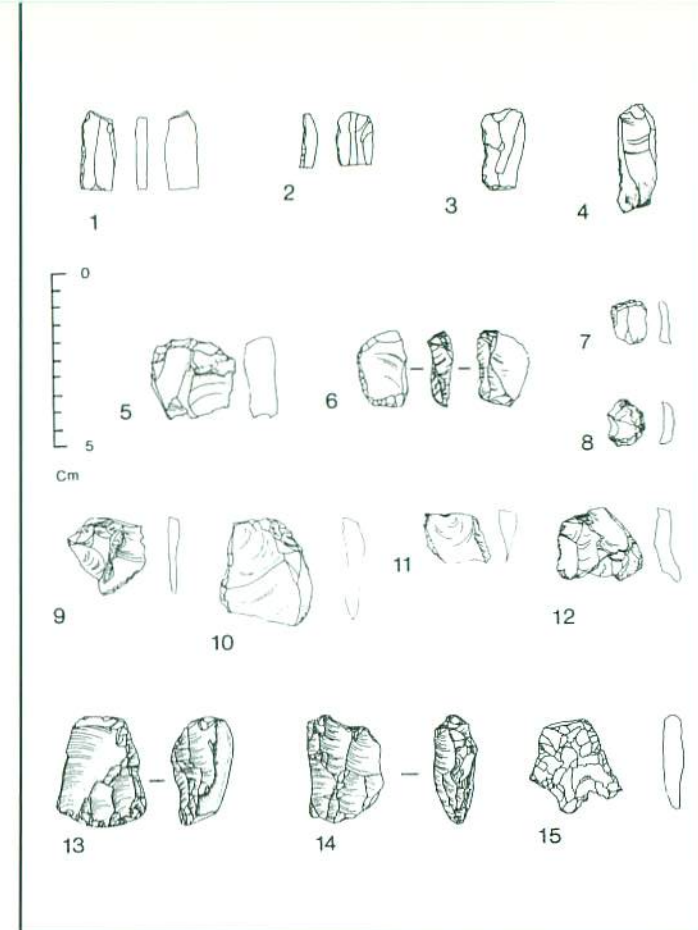
brief, and the shape of the arrowhead that they probably took place after c6,000BC. There are only four other known sites of this period in lowland Cheshire, although work in Merseyside (where about 40 such sites have been found) shows that this part of the North West was extremely attractive to hunting communities.

The other location found during the survey, overlooking the confluence of the Mersey and Weaver near Sutton Weaver, is less certainly of Mesolithic date, as it does not contain any of the distinctive arrowheads or blades. It may be of this period, however, as the nature of the flintwork suggests that blades were being produced on the site.

The evidence for this is in the form of the pebble cores from which blades have been struck (13-14). On these it is possible to see the scars left where the blades have been struck off, leaving a negative blade impression. The presence of these cores suggests not only a date for the site but also a function, since it was probably associated with the production of flintwork. This type of evidence was not present on the Aston sites, suggesting not only that different activities were carried out there but that they were possibly occupied by a differently-structured group. Very often, where cores are found, a whole range of other flintwork is also found, suggesting a range of activities such as the preparation of food, clothing, shelter, etc. This has not yet been found at the Sutton Weaver site, but over two-thirds of the field was under pasture, and therefore unavailable for fieldwalking.

At the Aston site, in the same field as the Mesolithic flint, there was flintwork of a different type (5-12). This probably dates to the Neolithic or Early Bronze Age, sometime after c3,500 BC. It includes a number of scrapers (5-8) which might have been used for some of the domestic tasks mentioned above, but in this case associated with a settled farming community. The rest of the flintwork consists of waste flakes (9-12), and the contrast in shape can clearly be seen. One of them (9) may have been chipped along one edge to produce a type of cutting flake. The shape of the scrapers suggests a date between c2,800-1,700BC. The finding of the broken arrowhead (15), about 200m to the west of the main site, shows that hunting was still important even amongst farming communities. This piece dates to c1,800-1,400BC, or the Early Bronze Age.

These results represent only a beginning, and the very lack of site evidence which the survey intends to rectify makes it difficult at this stage to understand the nature and date of much that has been found so far. The initial results of the survey confirm that, as in Merseyside, prehistoric settlement and population in the North West was not as intensive as in regions to the south and east, but in their regional context they are very encouraging for the future understanding of the prehistory of Cheshire.

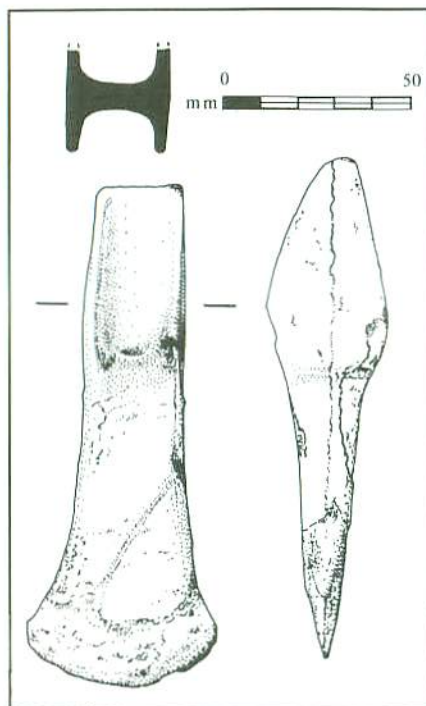


*A selection of the flint finds from the survey (numbers refer to text)*

*The project was jointly funded by Cheshire County Council and National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. Thanks go to Gary Ashby for help with the fieldwork and to Jeff Speakman for the post-survey processing work. Mark Lloyd undertook the artwork. Special thanks go to all the farmers who allowed access to their land and particularly Mr H Talbot. Copies of the archive are held by Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record and by Merseyside Sites and Monuments Record. The finds are held by National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside until completion of the survey.*



### 3 TWO MIDDLE BRONZE AGE AXES FROM CHESHIRE *Adrian Tindall, Cheshire County Council*



*The Iddinshall palstave (drawn by P Alebon)*

*The author is grateful to Colin Burgess for his comments on the two finds. The palstaves are in the possession of the finders. Further information on each is held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record Nos CSMR 2258 and CSMR 2293.*

Two Bronze Age axeheads were found in Cheshire during 1990. Both were discovered by metal-detector and reported by the finders to the County Sites and Monuments Record.

Both are Middle Bronze Age 'palstaves' - a transitional type between the simple Early Bronze Age flat axe and the more advanced socketed axe of the Late Bronze Age. They would originally have been mounted on a split wooden haft, tightly bound with a thong or cord. Palstaves are characterised by stop-ridges across the neck, to prevent the axehead splitting its wooden haft during use, and by raised flanges along each side to keep the axehead straight. More sophisticated examples were decorated with raised ribs or a shield pattern in front of the stop-ridge, and later palstaves had a loop added to one side to tie them more securely to the haft. Palstaves were in use from c1,500BC until the development of the socketed axe, around 1,200BC, gradually made them obsolete.

The first of the two palstaves was found in September 1990 by Brian Kingsnorth, of the Historical Search Society of Mold. It was found at a depth of c75mm in a freshly-ploughed field at Iddinshall, near Tarporley. It is 132mm long and 50mm wide across its edge, which is badly corroded. It is simple and undecorated. In form it resembles the North British 'wing-flanged' axes, though the stop-ridge may have stronger parallels in Wales or the Marches.

The second axe was found in December 1990 by Ross Anderson, of the Rolls-Royce Historical Artefacts Association. It was found at a depth of c180mm on ploughland at Reaseheath, near Nantwich. It is 161mm long and 65mm wide across its splayed blade. It is in excellent condition, apart from some damage to its haft end. It is a Group I shield pattern palstave, with closest parallels in Shropshire and the Marches. It belongs to the later Acton Park phase of Bronze Age metalworking (named after Acton Park, Clwyd), and dates to perhaps 1,400BC.



*The Reaseheath palstave (photo: Cheshire Museums)*

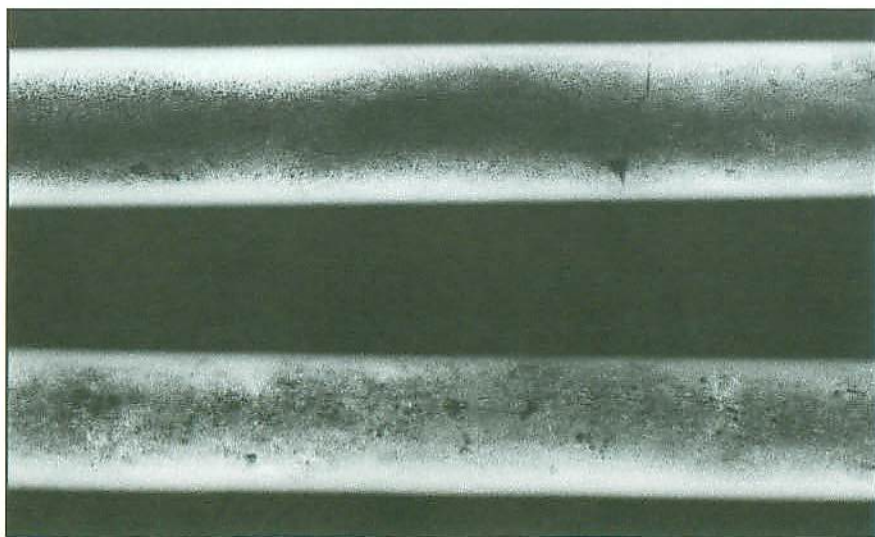


#### 4 THE CONGLETON LATE BRONZE AGE HOARD *Julie Vint, Cheshire Museums Services Unit*

A new display of the Congleton Bronze Age Hoard can now be seen at Congleton Library. This important hoard of Late Bronze Age metalwork was found in New Street, Congleton (SJ 864 626) in 1925 during the digging of foundations for a new school.

It consists of an exceptionally well-preserved leaf-shaped socketed spearhead, with two crescent-shaped or lunate openings flanking the socket, a fine example of a socketed barbed spearhead, a small socketed axehead decorated with three ribs, and a bronze tube (possibly a spear-shaft ferrule) in two sections. There was originally part of a second tube with an expanded end section, but this was stolen from the library in 1942 and never recovered. The hoard appears to date from the Ewart Park phase of the Late Bronze Age, c900-800BC. Such hoards were quite common at this period and may represent either bronzesmiths' stocks of scrap metal or a hoard of personal wealth.

The hoard is displayed with a Middle Bronze Age palstave, which still bears traces of a finely-engraved pattern on its surface. This was found by Mr T H Hulme near Congleton in 1937.



*X-ray of the tube/ferrule, showing stress-cracking of the metal*



*CMSU staff completing the new display at Congleton Library*

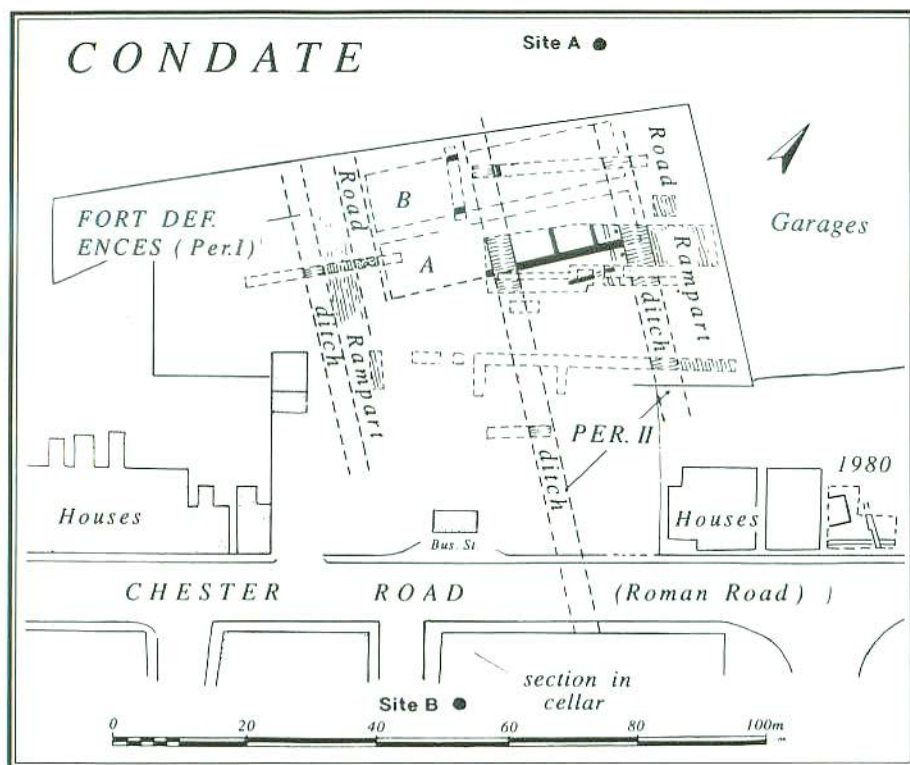
The opportunity was taken to clean and investigate the items prior to their re-display. X-radiology carried out by the CMSU Conservation Officer revealed previously unsuspected casting flaws in the barbed spearhead and has illustrated the full extent of the stress cracks, only just visible to the naked eye, in the metal of both the lunate spearhead and the ferrule/tube.

Faults such as these might suggest that these otherwise beautiful items were part of a travelling bronzesmith's hoard, concealed to await his return for remelting to make into new tools or weapons.

*The project was carried out by Cheshire Museums Services Unit - part of Cheshire County Council's Heritage and Recreation Service. The new display can be seen in Congleton Library during normal opening hours (closed all day Sunday, Wednesday and after 1pm Saturday). For further information on the hoard see D M T Longley: 'Prehistory' in A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY OF CHESTER (THE VICTORIA HISTORY OF THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND), VOL I, 98-101, 1987.*



**5 ROMAN NORTHWICH (CONDATE): EXCAVATIONS IN 1990** *G D B Jones, University of Manchester*



*A plan of part of Fort 2, showing the reduction in size in Period II and the location of Sites A and B*

buildings. Archaeologically, however, the evidence was rich. The site produced evidence of multiple timber buildings, forming part of the row of barracks flanking the western defences of the fort. The defences can now be shown, both on the evidence derived from excavations in 1983 and the recent construction of a garage, to lie on the west side of Pleasant Street.

The Castle area of Northwich, which occupies a hillcrest overlooking the confluence of the Rivers Dane and Weaver, has for many years produced large quantities of Roman material. A series of excavations since 1970 have established the existence of a two-phase Roman auxiliary fort, originating in the last quarter of the 1st century AD and, like Manchester, forming a link in the strategic route between the legionary fortresses of Chester and York.

During 1990, a final programme of rescue excavation was undertaken in advance of redevelopment of the area behind the bakery in Pleasant Street. The opportunity was also taken to examine adequately an allotment adjacent to Ryders Street, north of the main road, prior to redevelopment. Both investigations were designed to make it possible to produce a final report on the Roman fort at Northwich.

This objective was achieved by the location of the northern defences of the fort in two sections (**Site A**): one in the allotments and then subsequently in an area of garage space on the north-eastern side of Ryders Street (SJ 652 735). Both sections revealed the same inner ditch line, predictable from subsidence in houses in Queensgate nearby. Environmental samples were taken from the waterlogged sump of the 2.5m-wide ditch, which appears to have been reinforced by a small primary external ditch some 25m further north. The sampling trench across the allotment failed to produce evidence of buildings associated with the *vicus*, or civilian settlement, to the north.

**Site B** in Pleasant Street (SJ 652 734) was altogether more complicated

because of the presence of hardcore above the remains of 19th century buildings. Archaeologically, however, the evidence was rich. The site produced evidence of multiple timber buildings, forming part of the row of barracks flanking the western defences of the fort. The defences can now be shown, both on the evidence derived from excavations in 1983 and the recent construction of a garage, to lie on the west side of Pleasant Street.

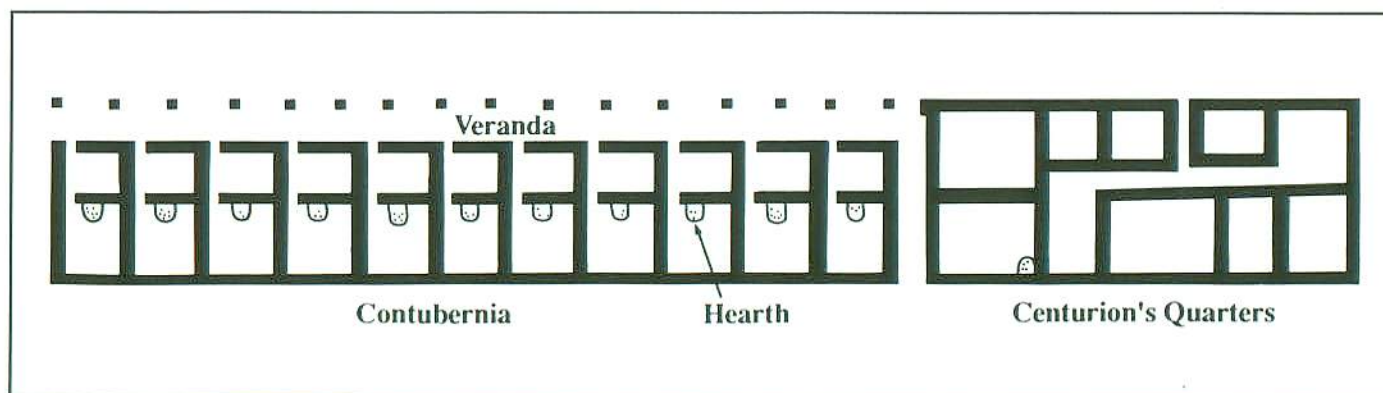


Accordingly, the site offered the chance to examine a fresh area of the interior of the fort, partly in the hope of linking the plan with the (as then unexplained) structures located in rescue excavations near Zion Chapel in 1974. This was done by locating the main alignment of the buildings, provisionally termed barracks, running along an east-west axis across the limited area available for excavation. The width of the primary structures located was approximately 6.5m, with a second phase seeing expansion caused by the larger scale of the construction trenches. The primary structure appears to be interpretable as the junction between the centurion's block and the start of the verandah and *contubernia* (barrack-rooms) of the barrack, whereas in the second phase the verandah seems to have been eliminated.



*The possible barrack-block at Pleasant Street, during excavation*

This interpretation, like that of the possible third phase, remains tentative because of the depth of early modern disturbance which removed much of the evidence for the latest phase on the site. Features from the latter appear to be unrelated to the two-phase plan already discussed. A particular point of difficulty in interpretation was caused by the presence of a series of stove-lined wells, apparently of fairly modern date, running through the northern edge of the Roman buildings. Nonetheless, because of the previous work in Zion Street and the general evidence of layout from 1983, and despite the stratigraphic uncertainties that remained, the excavation provided useful information about the layout of the south-eastern corner of the fort. It is now possible, with the evidence from Sites A and B, to proceed to a full-scale report in monograph form on the fort at Northwich.

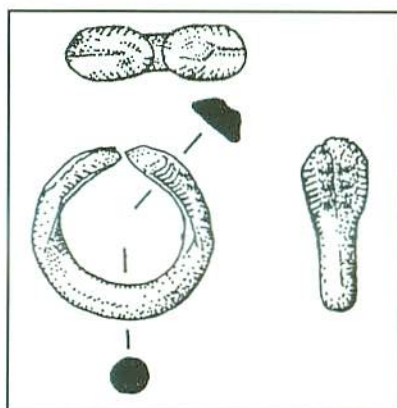


*Typical plan of a Roman barrack-block*

*The project was grant-aided by Cheshire County Council and Vale Royal Borough Council. The work was carried out by Paul Reynolds, Peter Lawson, John and Sonia Allen, Pat Faulkner, Keith Maude, Geoff Davies, Jenny Moore, Derek Pierce and Clare Stephens. Access to the Ryders Street site was provided by courtesy of the developer, Mr Blackhurst. The site archive is held by the Department of Archaeology, University of Manchester. A full report will appear in a planned volume on Roman Northwich in the University of Manchester's Brigantia Series.*



## 6 CHESTER: RECENT WORK OF THE CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE *M N Morris, Chester Archaeological Service*



*Roman copper alloy penannular ring with ?snake-head terminals, from the Lower Bridge Street excavation*

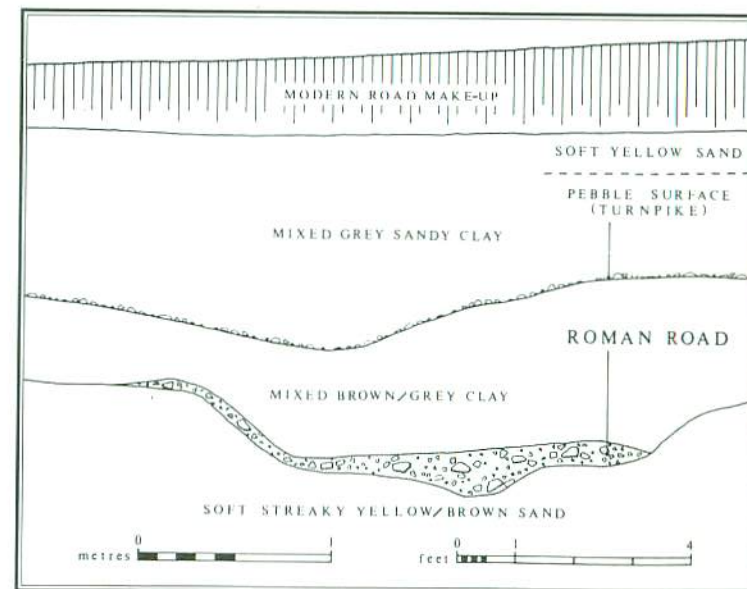
Various small-scale excavations and evaluations were carried out by the Archaeological Service within the historic centre of Chester. Two sections of the **City Walls** (SJ 403 666 and SJ 406 665) were dismantled and recorded to examine the causes of their present structural instability. The Roman fortress wall and rampart, a section of medieval wall rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries, and more recent repairs, were all discovered and recorded.

At **Marks and Spencer, Foregate Street** (SJ 408 668), traces of scattered hearths and surfaces in the Roman civil settlement were discovered. These were followed by a build-up of soil and the digging of several medieval pits. The latter included two clay-lined pits which may have been used for soaking cattle horn prior to working them.

**The Bars** site (SJ 412 664) lies on the periphery of the medieval and Roman suburbs. Only scattered Roman surfaces and medieval soil deposits were located. The main post-medieval feature was a fine sandstone masonry cellar.

In **Crook Street** (SJ 404 663), a small area of one of the centurion's quarters belonging to the First Cohort was excavated. Well-preserved remains survived, and indicated at least two buildings phases in stone preceded by one in timber. Painted wall plaster *in situ* and a latrine drain were among the features discovered. In the medieval period, parts of a timber-framed building of two phases were located. It was probably an outbuilding associated with an important stone-built hall on Watergate Street to the south.

In **Abbey Square** (SJ 405 665), a small 'T'-junction section of Roman walling with associated surfaces was located. It formed part of a legionary building of unknown function. No later features survived. The modern ground surface clearly equates with the medieval one in the Abbey Cloister, which the site adjoins.



*Section through the two road surfaces beneath the A51 at Littleton*

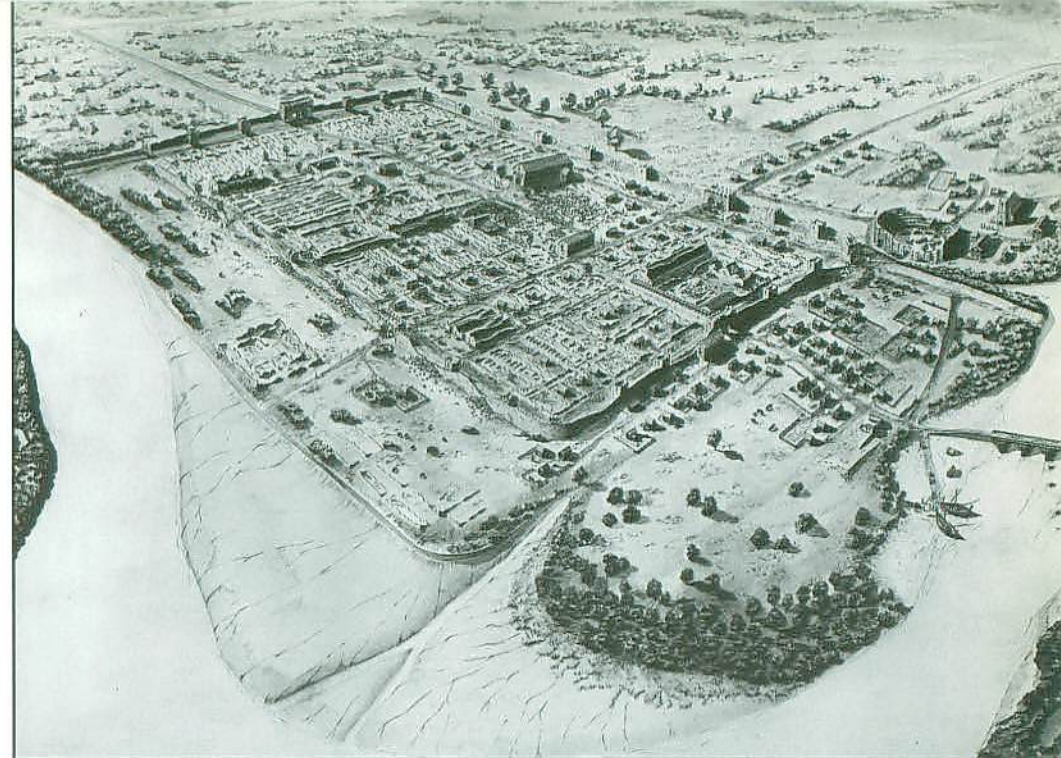


In **Lower Bridge Street** (SJ 406 659), traces of Roman extramural occupation and medieval soil deposits were located during an evaluation. On **Eastgate Row** (SJ 405 663), excavations in the Dark Row located a medieval cellar which had been backfilled in the 16th century. In **Commonhall Street** (SJ 404 662), parts of a well-preserved and fine Roman building were located. On top of its demolition rubble lay Saxon occupation, including a hearth. Medieval occupation included pits and possibly part of a building. During the post-medieval period, pit digging continued, a cellar was dug and the area became increasingly built up.

At **Littleton** (SJ 436 668) the A51 Tarvin Road, which lies on the line of the Roman road from Chester to York, was crossed by the new M53/A55 Link Road. A section was cut through the old road to see if the Roman road could be located. Two successive surfaces were found. The lower consisted of a substantial layer of river cobbles, about 100mm thick and 3m wide, set in a hollow in the soft sand subsoil. This was sealed by a clay dump, about 500mm thick, on which lay a much more scattered and sporadic surface of cobbles. This in turn was sealed by the substantial make-up of the modern road. No direct dating evidence for the two roads was forthcoming from the site. However, the lower surface is thought to be the Roman road and the upper one, the 18th century turnpike which succeeded it.

The bulk of the route of the new road was walked after the soil had been stripped, in case any spreads of finds or building debris might be revealed which would indicate ancient settlement sites. However, only finds from the last two centuries (pottery and clay pipe fragments) were picked up. These are the result of manuring and kitchen midden spreading on the fields from the time they were enclosed early in the 18th century.

A new report, **Excavations at Chester: Saxon Occupation within the Roman Fortress** (S W Ward with J A Rutter and others), is currently in preparation. It describes the Saxon structures and associated objects found on seven sites within the former Roman fortress - Hamilton Place 1971, Northgate Brewery 1972/3, Goss Street 1973, 1-11 Crook Street 1973/4, 1 Abbey Green 1975/8, Hunters Walk 1979/80, Hunter Street School 1979 & 1981 - together with contemporary finds from other sites in the city. Discussions cover the survival of Roman structures, especially the Bridge Street bath house, the nature of Saxon occupation, and the development of the topography of the city and the trading links of the port. It is to be published in the Chester Archaeological Service Excavation and Survey Reports Series.



*Tenth century Chester from the south-west. Reconstruction painting by students of Blackpool and Fylde College*

*Small-scale excavations were largely funded by contributions from the various developers: Marks and Spencer plc, Greenall Whitley Ltd, Lyn Town Ltd, the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral, Refuge Assurance plc, D Palumbo Esq, and Pacecolt Ltd. Other work was supported by Chester City Council, English Heritage and Cheshire County Council. Projects were directed by B Flynn, K J Matthews, C Quinn, T J Strickland, W Walker and S W Ward. Access to the M53/A55 Link Road was arranged by Cheshire Highways Service and the main contractor, Fairclough Civil Engineering Ltd. The excavation archives are held by the Chester Archaeological Service at the Grosvenor Museum.*



## **7 A SURVEY OF HOLT-FARNDON MEDIEVAL BRIDGE** *S W Ward, Chester Archaeological Service*



*Holt-Farndon Bridge from the north-west (photo: Cheshire Museums)*

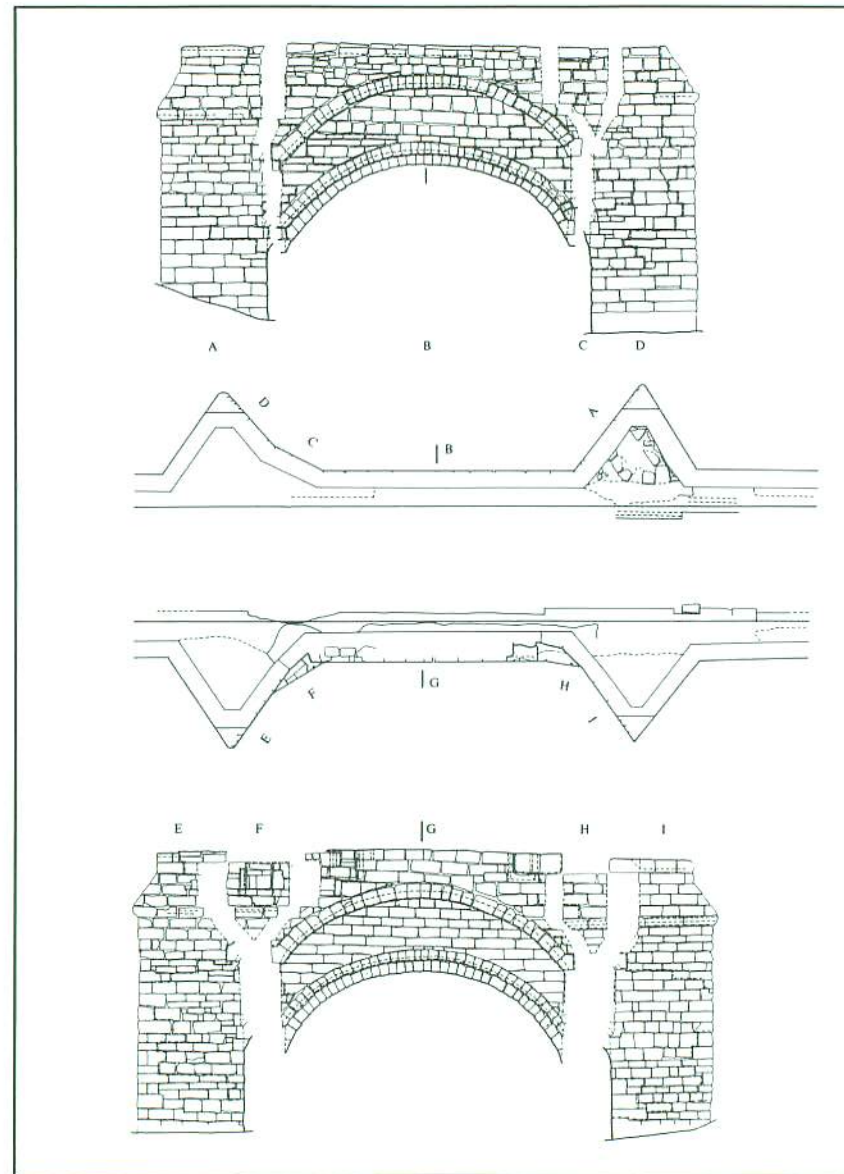
Holt-Farndon Bridge (SJ 411 544) is the middle one of three medieval bridges which still span the River Dee - the others being at Chester and Bangor. It lies at the first feasible bridging point above Chester on the ancient salt way from Nantwich to Wrexham and North Wales.

Documentary evidence indicates that it was built in 1339. Originally it had ten arches, on the fifth of which stood a large gate tower. This tower was demolished down to carriageway level in the late 18th century. Two arches have also been lost on the Welsh side.

As it now survives, therefore, the bridge consists of a narrow sandstone structure of eight arches which has suffered much from the heavy traffic which formerly used it. The construction of a new bridge and by-pass to the south of Holt and Farndon gave the opportunity to close the bridge and undertake a thorough programme of restoration. This programme consisted of two aspects: the relaying of the carriageway in setts at its original lower level, and the repairing and repointing of all the external masonry.

The Archaeological Service was commissioned to undertake a watching brief and survey of the ancient structure to record any features revealed. The erection of scaffolding afforded an opportunity to draw a complete stone-by-stone survey of the external faces.

The removal of the carriageway revealed parts of the footings of the gate tower, including the polygonal corner turrets and what were probably gutter stones. The survey of the elevations enabled various periods and styles of earlier repairs to be identified. It also demonstrated that considerable quantities of the original structure survive, and that the bridge's present appearance is very similar to its medieval one, apart of course from the loss of two arches and the gate tower.

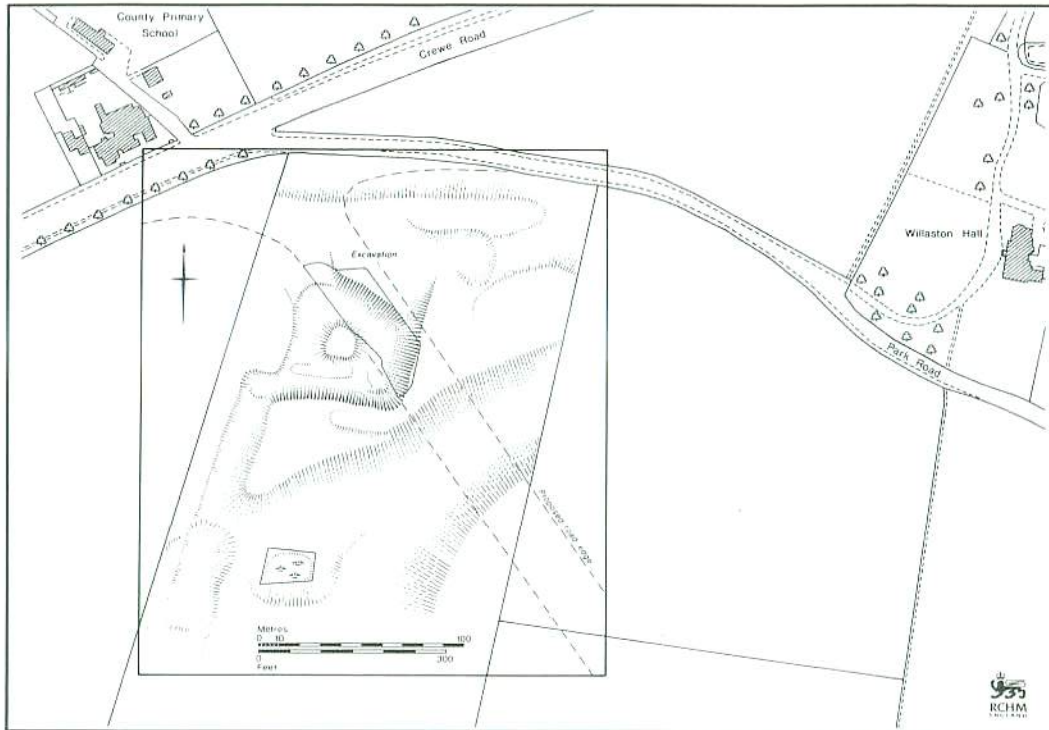


*Elevations of Arch 3, with strainer arch for carrying the gate tower (drawn by C Quinn)*

The project was jointly funded by English Heritage, CADW and Cheshire County Council. Access was arranged by Mr M P Hutchinson of Cheshire Highways Service and Mr R Hodges of Veryard and Partners. The archive is held by the Chester Archaeological Service at the Grosvenor Museum. A full report will be published in the Chester Archaeological Service Excavation and Survey Reports series.



## 8 EXCAVATIONS AT WILLASTON OLD HALL MOATED SITE, NEAR NANTWICH *Susan Reynolds, Cheshire County Council*

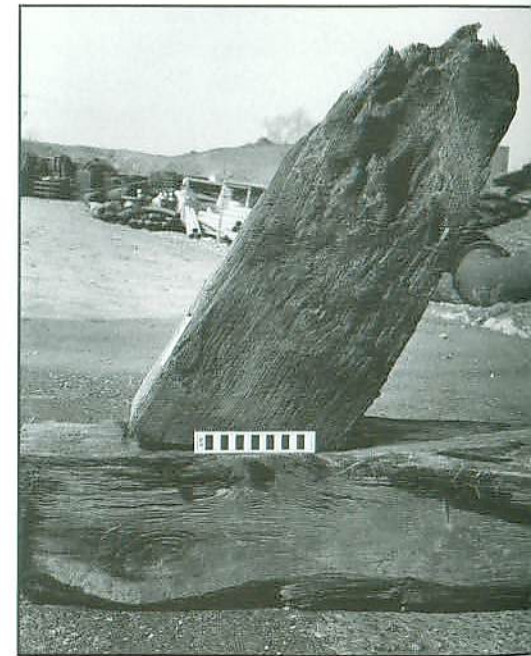


*The medieval moated site of Willaston Old Hall. Redrawn for publication by P M Sinton from a 1:1000 original survey (Crown Copyright: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England)*

Willaston Old Hall, or Chaneux Hall, is a small medieval moated site some two miles east of Nantwich (SJ 6705 5248). It was the home of the Chanu or Cheyney family from at least 1316, when a document refers to a 'vivary' (possibly a fishpond) belonging to William Chany at 'Wictruston'. The manor was purchased by the Sneyd family in the early 16th century and subsequently by John Bayley, who in 1731 built the present Willaston Hall. The Old Hall was then abandoned and the site reverted to agriculture - the only clue to its former existence being the name 'Moat Field' on the Tithe Award Map of 1845.

In 1989-90, part of the site was threatened by construction of the new A500 Nantwich by-pass, and a rescue excavation was undertaken. Before excavation began, an earthwork survey was carried out by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. This clarified the plan of the moat, and identified a drainage channel leading from its south-west corner to a possible fishpond some 65m to the south. Geophysical survey by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory of English Heritage also showed up the infilled arms of the moat.

A machine was used to strip the site of topsoil, and machine-trenching then revealed the north and east arms of the moat. This proved to be steep-sided with a flat base, and was 14-16m wide and 2.5-3m deep. Wooden hurdles may have been used to retain the unstable sides of the moat ditch. Traces of ponds and drainage channels were found to the north and south of the ditch. Hand-dug trenches on the moat platform revealed a perimeter fence along the southern edge, 6m long, and three post-holes to the north. It appeared that some spoil from the moat ditch had been dumped in the centre to raise the level of the platform.



*One of the oak bridge timbers (photo : Cheshire Museums)*



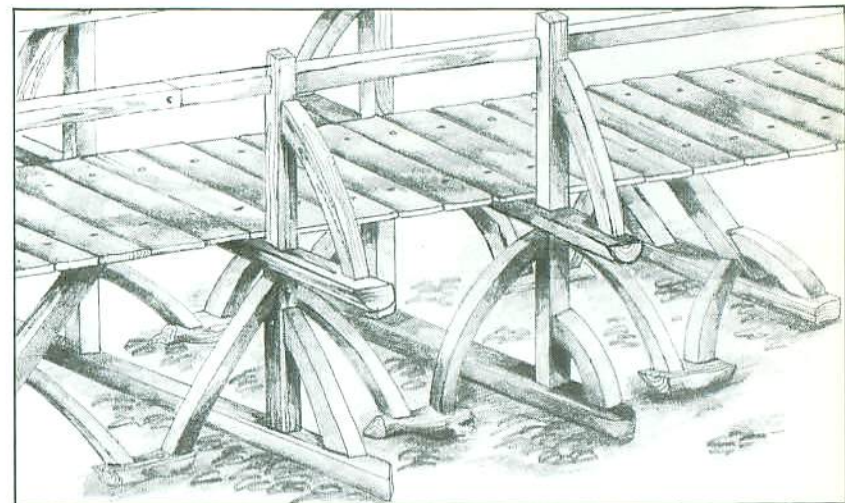
Most of the finds came from the topsoil and were of 17th century date. They included pottery, clay pipe, tile, bottle and window glass. Only six sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. From the ditch deposits came a leather shoe sole, a wooden handle (probably from a spade) and further 17th century pottery.

During March 1990, a watching brief was maintained as construction of the road began. During the removal by machine of the ditch deposits in the north arm of the moat, the remains of a medieval timber bridge were revealed. Sixty-four oak timbers were recovered, the largest measuring nearly 4m long and 360mm thick. They formed the foundations of a massive timber drawbridge, of 'self stable' type, that once spanned the moat. A variety of carpentry techniques had been used, including mortice and tenon joints (some with their wooden pegs still in place) and more unusual joints of scribed and jowled form. Several of the larger timbers bore carpenters' marks, and many had been skilfully bevelled, or chamfered - perhaps suggesting they had originally been used for a more decorative purpose. The whole structure was strengthened by vertical posts and curved braces.

Samples of the timbers were sent for tree-ring dating at Sheffield University Dendrochronology Laboratory. They showed that the bridge timbers had been felled sometime after 1215, and probably before the end of the 14th century. This agrees well with the known date-range of moated sites in Cheshire, and with the dating of similar timber bridges elsewhere in the country.

Moated sites such as Willaston became popular among the country's small landowners and lesser gentry during the 13th and 14th centuries. The moat served a variety of purposes - providing prestige, security, sanitation and stocks of fish. By the end of the 15th century, however, they had largely gone out of fashion, and many sites were abandoned in favour of a new and more luxurious residence nearby. Moated sites are among the most common medieval field monuments in the country, and there are around 170 examples in Cheshire. Relatively few have been archaeologically investigated, and the Willaston bridge is only the second medieval timber bridge found in Cheshire - the other being from a moated site at Twiss Green, Culcheth, near Warrington.

There is a particular concentration of moated sites in the Nantwich area, perhaps reflecting the wealth generated by the local salt industry. We know, for example, that both Thomas Chanu and his son John had interests in salt pits in Nantwich during the 15th century.

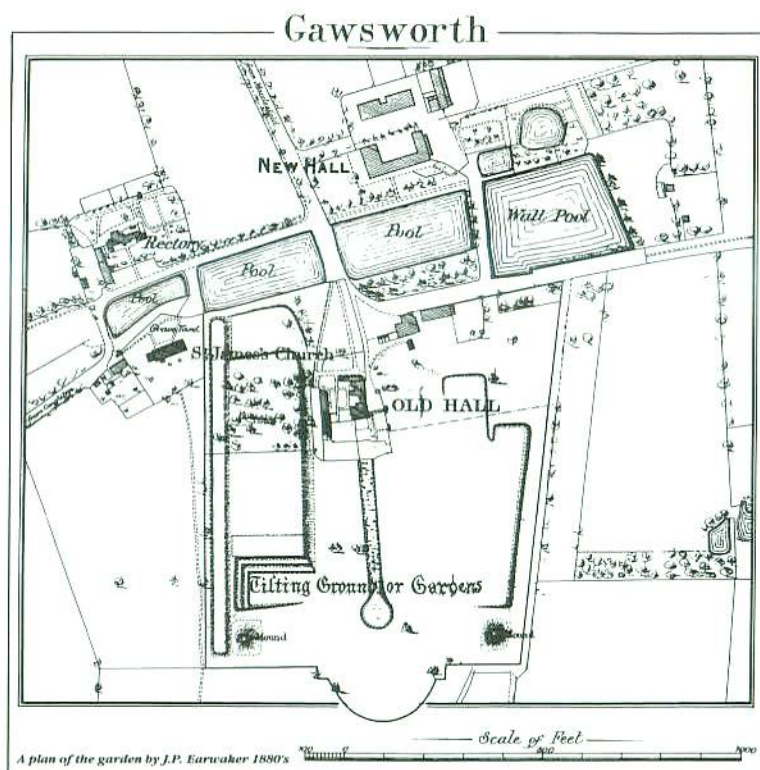


*A possible reconstruction of the medieval timber bridge at Twiss Green, Culcheth (courtesy of Liverpool University Archaeology Unit)*

*The work was funded by Cheshire County Council, English Heritage, and the Department of Transport. Particular thanks to Alex Taylor and other staff of Parkman Consulting Engineers, laboratory staff of Stanger Consultants Ltd, and staff of Gallifords and Sons for their help with the project. Clare Stephens assisted on site, and much help and advice was given by staff of Cheshire County Council Environmental Planning Service and Cheshire Museums. Thanks also to Wayne Cocroft, Vanessa Fell, Janet Rutter, David Higgins and Andrew Lamberton for assistance with the report. The archive and finds are held by Cheshire Museums and a full report on the project is held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No CSMR 197/1.*



**9 AN ELIZABETHAN GARDEN AT GAWSWORTH HALL, NEAR MACCLESFIELD** *R C Turner, CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments*



*Plan of the gardens at Gawsworth Hall, c1880*

Renaissance gardens around some of the great houses of England was rediscovered by Christopher Taylor and his colleagues in the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England in the late 1970s. It was their results that inspired this re-assessment of the remains around Gawsworth Hall. There were three short seasons of fieldwork between 1986 and 1988, which included ground and geophysical survey, selective excavation, mapping and the study of the surviving planting and documentary research. When combined together, this has provided a partial picture of how a 'Great Garden' would have looked in late Elizabethan England, and given some indication of how it was constructed. It was also possible to show that this garden lay within a much larger park of c240 hectares (600 acres), creating a vast private enclave for the Fitton family, from which the medieval village of Gawsworth had been banished.

Around Gawsworth Hall, near Macclesfield (SJ 892 696) are the earthworks, waterworks, structures and perhaps even some of the trees of a great Elizabethan garden. The remains of the garden cover as much as 12 hectares (30 acres) in area, and are remarkably well preserved.

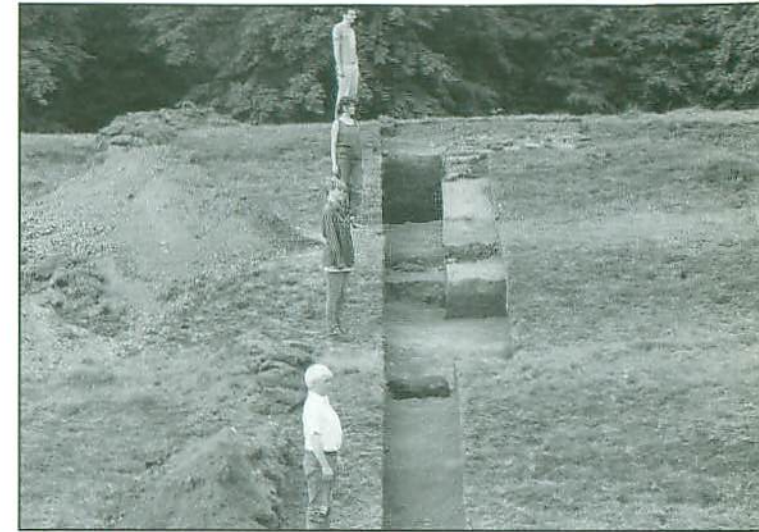
They have been the subject of speculation by antiquarians and historians since the early 19th century, and the first plan was made by Joseph Mayer as long ago as 1849. He identified the complex of earthworks within the walled garden as the remains of a high medieval tilting ground, the site of knightly jousts. An alternative explanation was given by the eminent Cheshire historian, J P Earwaker, who made some remarkably accurate plans of the gardens and their contents in the 1880s. He and others preferred to see them as remains of gardens typical of those found around large Tudor houses. These plans and speculations are the earliest known evidence for an interest in garden archaeology. However the more romantic explanation of the medieval tilting ground has held sway.

The evidence for the survival of Elizabethan and



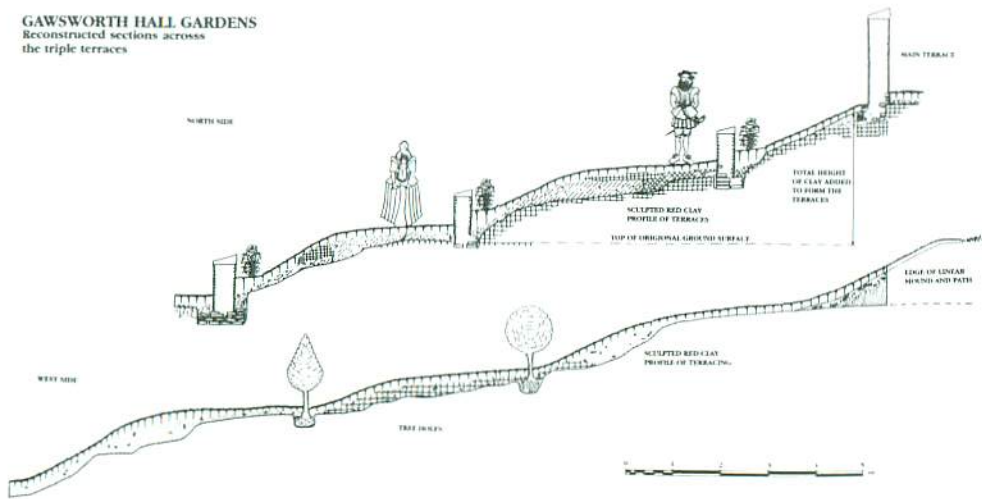
Most effort, and all the excavation, was concentrated on the complex of earthworks on the western side of the garden. These were aligned with the western boundary wall of the garden exactly north-south, and included measurements of whole numbers of yards. The earthworks were constructed by excavating and moving thousands of tons of spoil, by hand and horse and cart, within the garden area; and by building a wall made of over 250,000 handmade bricks.

The long mound which dominates the western side of the garden was shown to have a carefully-constructed pathway along the top. This was an outdoor promenade, carefully designed to maintain privacy within the garden but to give distant views out into the park at either end. The larger terraces below this mound were enclosed by high walls and probably contained a regular plantation of lime trees, of which some of those that survive may be remnants. This would have been what the Elizabethans would have called a 'Wilderness Garden'. The most complex feature on the site proved to be the triple-terraced earthworks in the south-west corner of the garden. Its northern and western sides, though superficially similar, were found on excavation to be totally different. The northern side had a series of now robbed-out revetment walls, flowerbeds and turfwalks, whilst the western showed evidence for turf-covered slopes into which had been planted regularly-spaced trees or shrubs, perhaps cut into topiary work.



*Excavation down the northern side of the triple-terraced feature. The people stand above each of the robbed-out walls*

**GAWSWORTH HALL GARDENS**  
Reconstructed sections across  
the triple terraces



*Reconstructed sections across the triple terraces*

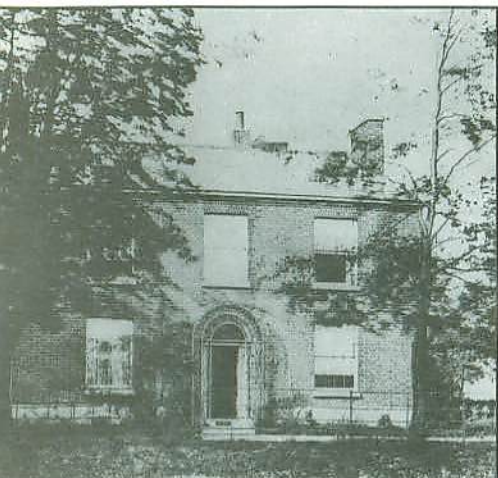
There is no documentary evidence showing who built this garden, but it would seem most likely to have been Sir Edward Fitton III (1550-1606): a man on the fringe of the court circle, perhaps trying to capitalise on the success of his famous daughter, Mary, as a lady-in-waiting to Elizabeth I. What has survived is evidence of the scale and sophistication of the gardens of those at this high level of Elizabethan society.

A history and guide has been published by the Macclesfield and Vale Royal Groundwork Trust, and the gardens have now been made more accessible to visitors to Gawsworth Hall. Nothing on this scale survives elsewhere in the North West, and they are well worth a visit.

*The work was generously grant aided by Mr and Mrs T Richards, The British Academy, Macclesfield Borough Council and Cheshire County Council. The archive and finds are held by Cheshire Museums. For further information, see R C Turner **GAWSWORTH HALL GARDENS Macclesfield and Vale Royal Groundwork Trust 1990** (available at the Hall), and R C Turner 'The Archaeology and History of the Gardens at Gawsworth Hall, Cheshire' **GARDEN HISTORY** (forthcoming).*



## 10 EXCAVATIONS AT LEWIS CARROLL'S BIRTHPLACE, DARESBUY *Adrian Tindall, Cheshire County Council*



*Photograph of Daresbury Parsonage, believed to have been taken by Charles Dodgson*

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) was born on 27th January 1832 at Newton-by-Daresbury Parsonage, near Warrington (SJ 593 805). The third of eleven children, he lived at the Parsonage throughout his boyhood until his father, the Vicar of Daresbury, moved to the Yorkshire parish of Croft in 1843. Dodgson was a gifted scholar, who went on to become a mathematics don at Christ Church, Oxford. There he met Alice Liddell, daughter of the Dean, who was to inspire the famous Alice books - **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland** (1865) and **Through the Looking Glass** (1872).

The Parsonage itself lay about two miles south of Daresbury village, at Glebe Farm. It was built in 1819-20 at a cost of £1275 by a local builder, Thomas Haddock, and the plans and original specifications still survive. Early photographs, believed to have been taken by Dodgson himself, also survive. In 1883 the Parsonage was burnt to the ground, and in the following years provided building materials for many of the local farms. Today the site lies under grass in open farmland, the only clue to its importance being an inscribed plaque by the roadside.

In 1990, the Lewis Carroll Birthplace Trust asked the County Council to carry out an exploratory excavation on the site, with two aims - to find the exact limits of the Parsonage, and to see whether it would be suitable for future display.

Before excavation, a geophysical survey of the site was carried out by Manchester University. This revealed areas of very high resistance which later turned out to be the filled-in cellars of the Parsonage. Later in the project, a sub-surface radar survey produced similar results.

As excavation began, it soon became clear that the building had been dismantled right down to foundation level. This was not a serious problem, however, because the trenches left by the wall-robbers allowed the exact plan of the Parsonage to be recovered. Gradually, the various rooms of the Parsonage were uncovered, each marked by robber-trenches filled with discarded debris - broken brick, roof slate, glass, sandstone and plaster. No floor levels survived, and there were signs of damage by ploughing.

The best rooms - the entrance lobby, parlour and sitting room - were at the front of the building, looking south across the rolling Cheshire countryside. Behind these were



*The Parsonage during excavation (photo: S Reynolds)*



the 'business' rooms of the house - the kitchen and back-kitchen, the pantry and lock-up pantry, the study used by Rev Dodgson, and the schoolroom in which the Dodgson children were taught. At the rear was an open yard with a well, a shed for four cows, a stable for two horses, and the privies, or "necessaries", as the builder called them. There were originally seven upstairs rooms, and two cellars. The house was built of red brick, and the out-houses floored with red sandstone from the local quarry. A small gig (or carriage) house was added at a later date.

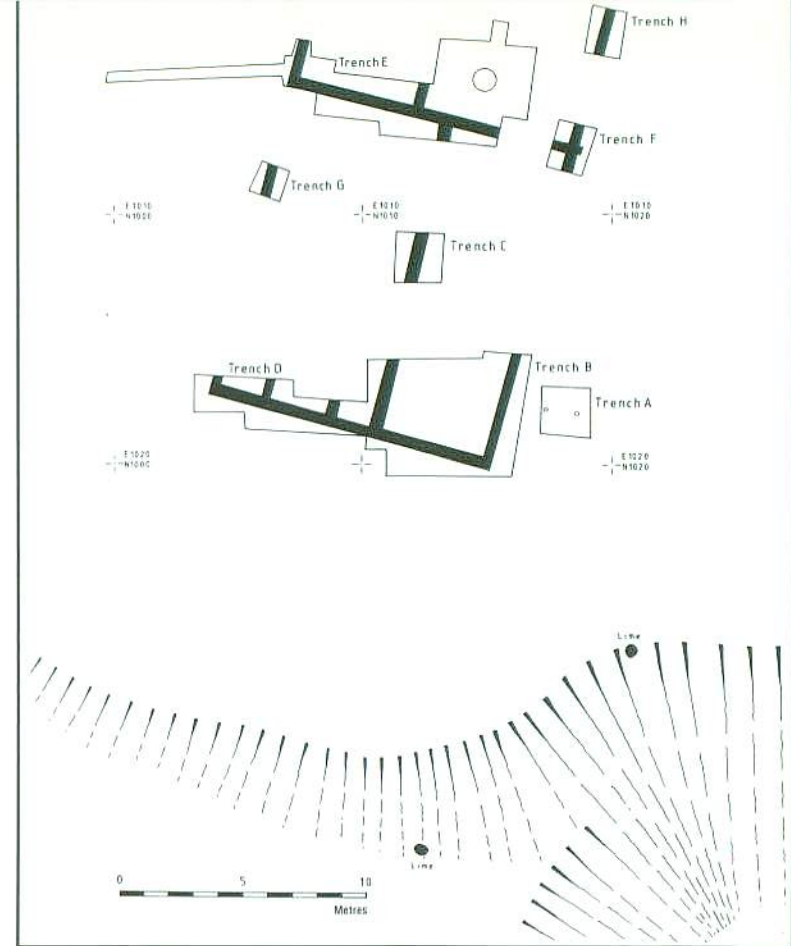
Beneath the front parlour was an elaborate drain, probably built soon after the Parsonage was dismantled. Towards the end of the excavations, the cellars themselves were found below the kitchens - over two metres deep and filled with massive quantities of brick and other rubble.

The best-preserved feature on the site was the well. This was brick-lined and over four metres deep. Keele University took core samples from the silt at the bottom of the well, and these revealed a layer of charcoal - perhaps dating from the burning down of the Parsonage. No pollen survived.

Near the centre of the field were two native lime trees, and along the edge a row of beech and horse chestnut. Cores were taken from these for tree-ring dating, to see whether they could have been contemporary with the Parsonage. The limes turned out to be over 150 years old, and some of the beeches over 250, so these trees were certainly alive in Dodgson's time, and may even have appeared on some of the early photographs.

Finds from the site were typical of what might be expected from a comfortable 19th century country residence. They included fragments of porcelain and glassware, metalwork, clay pipes and domestic rubbish. There were large quantities of animal bone, much of it showing signs of butchery. Notable finds included fragments of slate pencil from the schoolroom area.

The site has now been backfilled and a report on the excavations prepared for the Birthplace Trust. The work has revealed the exact position of the Parsonage and has shown that, though heavily robbed, it could easily be displayed for the benefit of the many Carroll enthusiasts who visit Daresbury from all over the world.

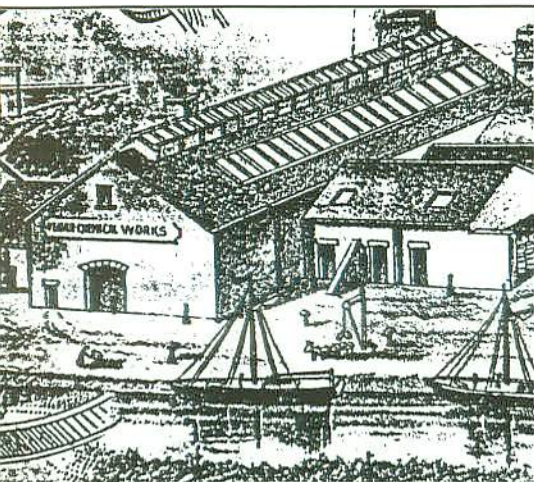


*Plan of the Parsonage as excavated  
(drawn by W Cocroft)*

*The excavation was by kind permission of the landowner, Mr F Thornley. It was funded by Cheshire County Council, the Lewis Carroll Birthplace Trust and NNC Ltd. The work was carried out by Graduate Work Experience students from Chester College, and was supervised by Susan Reynolds. The archive and finds are held by Cheshire Museums and a full report is held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No 2257.*



## 11 EXCAVATIONS AT FRODSHAM SALTWORKS *William Hawkin, Frodsham and District Local History Group*



*Illustration of Heywood and Massie's Weaver Chemical Works c1890, from the company's letterhead*

At the end of the 17th century three works were set up for processing rock salt from the Central Cheshire salt field. The first of these was at Frodsham in 1694. By 1772, William Crosbie and John Urmson, who both lived in Main Street, Frodsham, were operating a salt works near "Saltworks Farm" at Frodsham Bridge (SJ 527 786), and this is clearly shown on a Cholmondeley Estate Map of 1778. In 1792 this works was producing between 6,000 and 7,000 tons of refined salt per annum. A fleet of seven sailing flats (or barges) was employed, transporting coal from South Lancashire, and rock salt from Northwich to Frodsham Bridge, and then exporting the finished product.

The gradual improvement of the River Weaver for navigation made it possible to transport coal to the salt field, which enabled the rock salt to be processed *in situ* and the refined product to be exported. This was a more efficient arrangement, and in time the old 17th century saltworks became redundant. They did not close down however, but were adapted for other purposes.

The Frodsham Sewerage Map of 1879 described them as a "Glue Works", and the 1883 Kelly's Directory refers to a firm called "Heywood & Massie, Chemical Manufacturers, Weaver Chemical Works". We have a picture of the works, taken from one of the company's letterheads. In it they describe themselves as "Manufacturers of boiled bones and special manures for all crops, horse, cattle and poultry spice, calf meal, &c.". This ties in with the previous reference to a glue works, for which animal bones would undoubtedly be used. The works survived perhaps until about 1923, when it closed and the site became derelict.

The Saltworks Farm area is the subject of an application for large-scale development, and the Group decided to undertake an exploratory excavation of the site in July 1990. A trench 66m long by 1m wide was excavated parallel to the quay wall. At the southern end were found wooden sleepers from the old quayside railway upon which a crane for loading and unloading the flats once ran. Half way along the trench was a large brick-paved area. Here the trench was extended to 4m wide, to reveal curved brick channels lined with pitch, which may have been used to carry acid into the vats or tanks used for processing the bones.

Further north was an area of ash and cinders containing many pieces of iron, and a concrete base, 1.2m x 800mm, in which two large steel bolts were embedded. This was enclosed by what seemed to be the corner of a building, provisionally interpreted as a forge or smithy. Other features of potential interest on the site include an underground arched brick structure just north of the excavation area, and a large circular structure shown on the 1778 Cholmondeley map and the 1874 OS map within the northern part of an 'H'-shaped building. The excavation proved very worthwhile, and it is intended to carry out further research into the history of the site and the various processes carried on there. It is also hoped that there will be an opportunity to extend the excavated area.

*Mr L Crampton, the landowner, kindly allowed access to the site. Cheshire County Council grant-aided the work, which was carried out by volunteers from the Local History Group, local schools, girl guides and other interested people.*



## 12 CHESHIRE COUNTY SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD *Jill Collens, Cheshire County Council*

The County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR) is a computerised list of all the known archaeological sites, monuments and finds in Cheshire. All counties now maintain a Sites and Monuments Record, usually based in the county planning department. The Cheshire CSMR was started in 1974 on the County Council's IBM mainframe computer, and in 1986 was transferred onto a personal computer as part of a complete overhaul and enhancement programme.

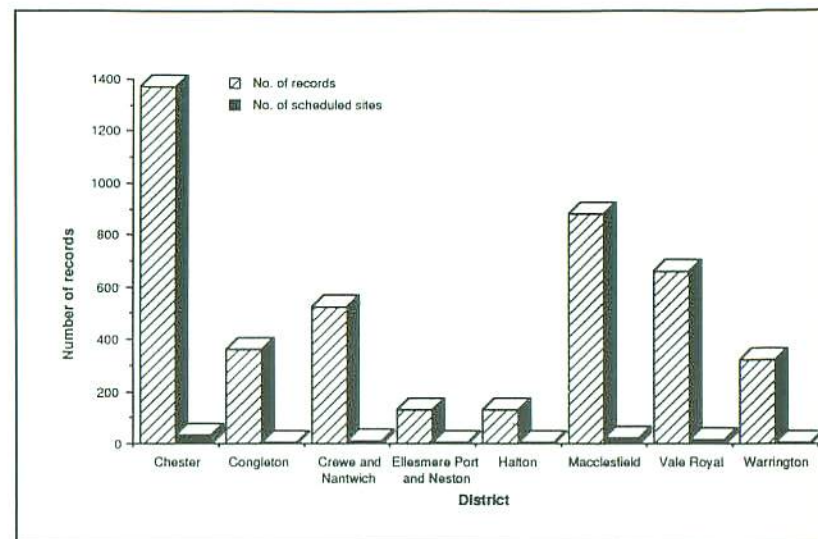
Each site record in the CSMR contains locational details, a short description, bibliographic references and a note of any finds associated with the site. All sites are plotted onto OS 1:10,000 base maps, and backup files contain background information such as reports, drawings or photographs.

The database currently holds over 4,300 records on archaeological sites and finds throughout the county, ranging in date from the prehistoric period to 1700 AD. It includes earthworks, standing buildings or structures (including all pre-1700 Listed Buildings), isolated finds, and sites which are no longer visible. Some categories of site - such as most post-1700 and industrial sites - are not yet included.

The CSMR is continuously updated and amended. Additional information may be provided about known sites, or about new ones, from a variety of sources. Students preparing dissertations, farmers uncovering objects during ploughing or archaeological contractors carrying out fieldwork, all provide valuable information. The County Council's own programme of aerial reconnaissance, as well as research by groups and individuals grant-aided from the Archaeological Grant Fund, also provide data for the CSMR.

The main function of the CSMR is protection of the county's archaeological resource. It is at present being heavily drawn upon by English Heritage, as part of the Monuments Protection Programme (MPP). This is a ten-year nationwide project to reassess the number of legally-protected Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the country. As part of MPP, all sites in the CSMR have been evaluated, and lists prepared for English Heritage of those sites which may qualify for scheduling.

At present only c2% of sites in the CSMR have legal protection. Whilst MPP may eventually double this number, the only protection for the vast majority of sites lies in the planning process. The principal use of the CSMR is therefore in development control. It is used to provide an advisory service to the district councils on the appropriate archaeological response required by particular developments. Advice is also given to other County Council departments on highways and minerals proposals, as well as to any public and commercial organisations involved in development. The CSMR is also increasingly being used for research. It is often used as a starting point for students or private researchers, and is also used by schools for the History Study Units of the National Curriculum.



**Graph showing the total number of archaeological records and Scheduled Ancient Monuments in each borough**

*The CSMR was established with the aid of a grant from English Heritage. It may be consulted for research purposes by prior appointment. For further information and conditions of use contact Dr J Collens, Environmental Planning, Cheshire County Council, Commerce House, Hunter St, Chester CH1 2QP, tel : Chester (0244) 603204.*



## ROUND-UP

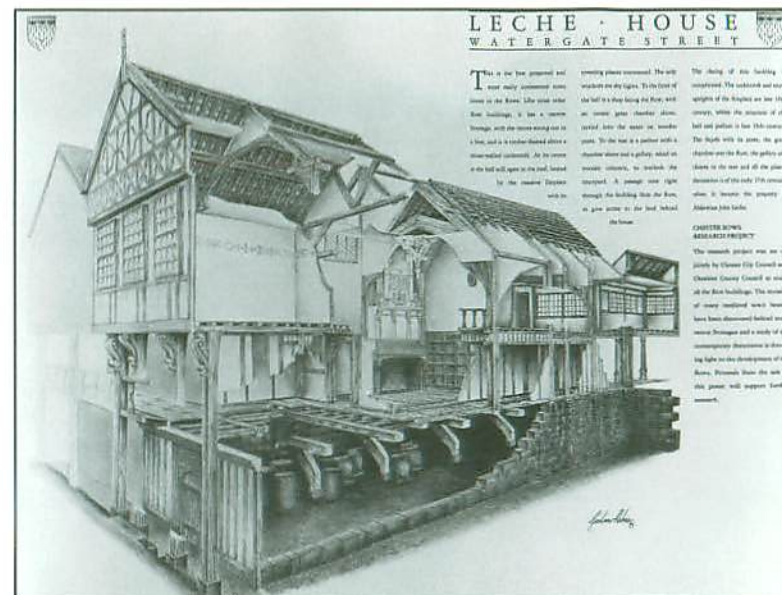
Work has started on the final report on the **Eaton-by-Tarporley Roman Villa** (SJ 572 634): the first, and still the only, Roman villa to be found in Cheshire. The principal residence was a sophisticated stone building of 'winged corridor' plan, incorporating a number of heated rooms and an integral bath-suite. Constructed in the early-mid 2nd century AD, it replaced an earlier timber building of much simpler plan. The stone house was rebuilt c300AD, and continued in use well into the 4th century. The report is being prepared by the Archaeological Section of Gifford and Partners Consulting Engineers.

At **Holford Hall, Plumley** (SJ 709 755), an evaluation by Gifford and Partners revealed the sandstone foundations of the original north wing of the Hall, of medieval or early post-medieval date, as well as other features representing occupation from the 16th century to the present day.

Work on the **Chester Rows Research Project** is entering its final stages. Since 1985, it has examined the 200 or more city centre buildings forming Chester's Row system. Detailed survey, scientific dating and documentary research have helped answer many questions: it is now clear, for example, that the Row system emerged between the mid 13th and mid 14th centuries. The survey was completed in June 1990, and since then writing up has been underway. The resulting book, addressing the later development and survival of the Row system as well as its medieval origins, is due for publication by English Heritage in 1992-3. Three full-colour posters, showing reconstructions of well-known Row buildings, have also been produced.

An ice-house at **Poynton Hall** (SJ 929 843) has been surveyed by C J Crowe, after its clearance by members of Poynton Local History Society. The chamber is shallower than the classic pattern, and is a beautifully-constructed dome of local brick with a hatch at the top and a side entrance vaulted into the dome. The shallow depth of the chamber may have been to overcome the drainage problems of the site. Connected to it by a short passage is a stone-built antechamber, with benches and a carved basin, which appears to be an area where meat was prepared prior to being laid up in the chamber. The stonework appears to be of a 17th century date and is probably contemporary with Poynton Old Hall. The brick chamber is probably 18th century in date.

Archaeological assessments have been carried out by Gifford and Partners in advance of two planned road schemes - the **A523 Poynton By-Pass** and the **Wilmslow/Handforth/Prestbury/Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road**. Field evaluations have been undertaken at **Lapwing Lane, Chelford** (SJ 820 730) by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, and at **Old Abbey Farm, Risley** (SJ 662 936) by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit. Watching briefs have been carried out by the County Council at **High Street, Tarporley** (SJ 554 625), **Tatton Old Hall** (SJ 756 814), **Neston Parish Church** (SJ 292 774) and **St Bartholemew's Church, Church Minshull** (SJ 666 606). The most significant results were at Church Minshull, where repair work on the Wade family vault revealed eleven lead coffins spanning the period 1720-1774.



*The Leche House, Watergate Street, is featured in one of three posters of Row buildings*

Further details of all these projects may be obtained from,  
The Principal Archaeologist,  
Cheshire County Council,  
Environmental Planning,  
Commerce House,  
Hunter Street,  
Chester CH1 2QP,  
Tel Chester (0244) 603160.





**Cheshire**  
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