
CHESHIRE PAST

an annual review of archaeology in Cheshire



ISSUE 2

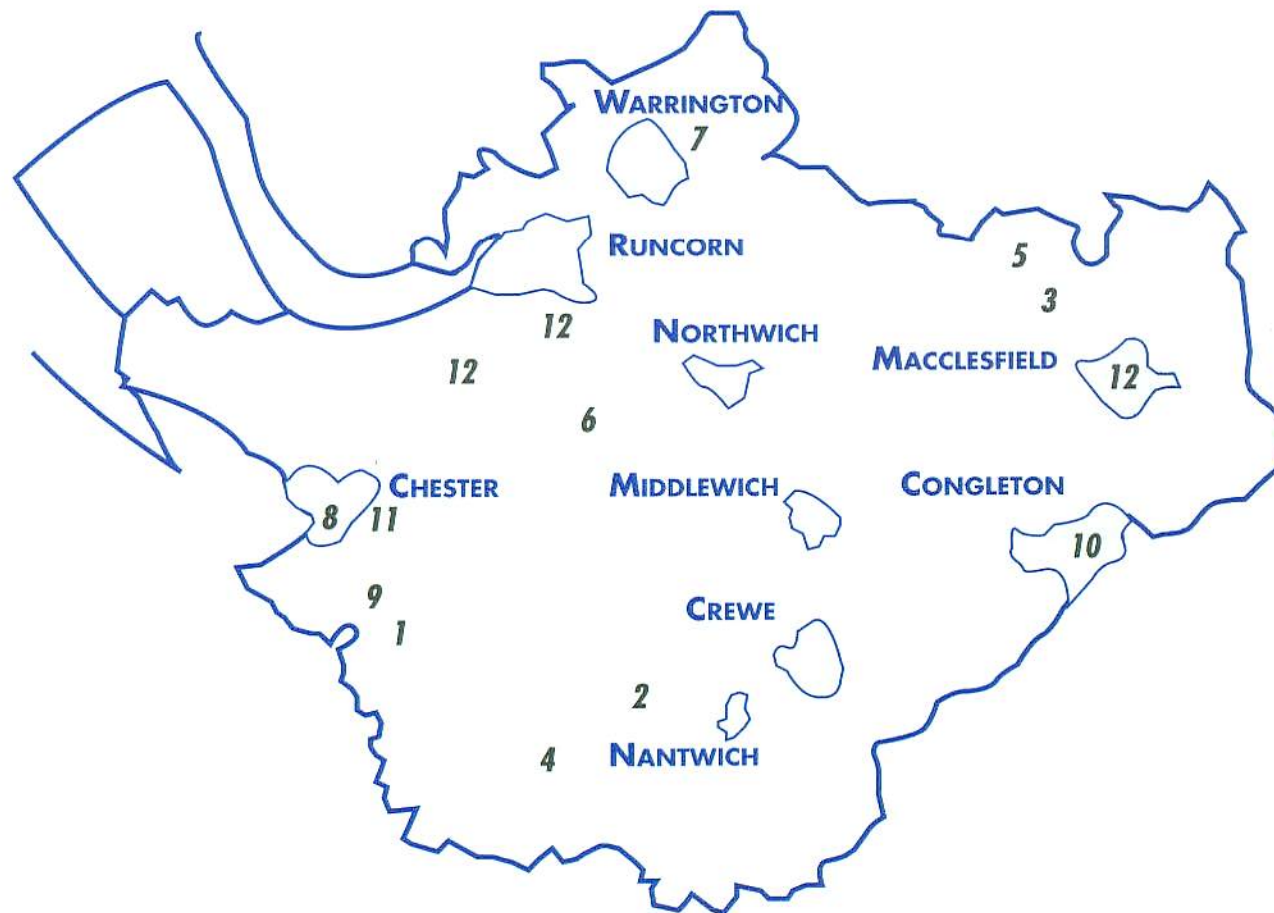
Cheshire County Council





CHESHIRE PAST

an annual review of archaeology in Cheshire



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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second issue of **CHESHIRE PAST** - the annual review of all the latest archaeological research in Cheshire. A generous grant from the John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust has enabled us to increase our print-run for this issue and, we hope, reach many new readers.

Probably the greatest change on the national archaeological scene over the past year has been the creation of a new Department of National Heritage. This has assumed all the heritage powers - including archaeology and historic buildings - previously held by the Department of the Environment. It was a change not universally welcomed by archaeologists, who have argued strongly that archaeology is an environmental matter, and should be dealt with alongside other 'green' issues. How it will fare in the new department alongside sport, the arts and the national lottery, only time will tell.

The present economic recession has led to a national downturn in building and development, and in many areas there has been a corresponding decline in archaeological activity. In Cheshire, however, the pace of archaeological work seems to have continued more or less unabated, with more assessments, field evaluations and full-scale excavations than ever. This is in part due to the impact of recent government planning guidelines, which encourage developers and planners to take archaeology into account at the earliest possible stage when developments are being planned.

As a result, this issue carries reports on the work of four archaeological contractors operating in Cheshire. This includes the varied work of the Chester Archaeological Service in both City and district, the growing role of Gifford and Partners Archaeological Service, and excavations on two of the county's Roman roads by the Lancaster University and Greater Manchester Archaeological Units.

In this issue we report on some important advances in our knowledge of prehistoric Cheshire, including a new Mesolithic site at Aldford, excavations at Alderley Edge, further research on the Lindow Moss bog bodies, and the discovery of several Bronze Age axes and a rare Iron Age coin. We have a report on a new survey of two medieval moated sites near Chester, discoveries along a pipeline in the Weaver Valley, recording work on Macclesfield Castle, and conservation work at Helsby hillfort. Finally we report on one of the most exciting discoveries in recent years - four magnificent hoards of Tudor and Stuart silver coins from near Congleton.



The earliest and latest coins in the Congleton hoards: a shilling of Edward VI, dated 1549-51 (left), and a halfcrown of Charles II, dated 1670 (right).

If you have any archaeological news for CHESHIRE PAST, please contact The Editor, CHESHIRE PAST, CHESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COMMERCE HOUSE, HUNTER STREET, CHESTER CH1 2QP, TEL CHESTER (0244) 603160

1 A MESOLITHIC FLINT SITE AT ALDFORD *Stephen Penney, Cheshire Museums*

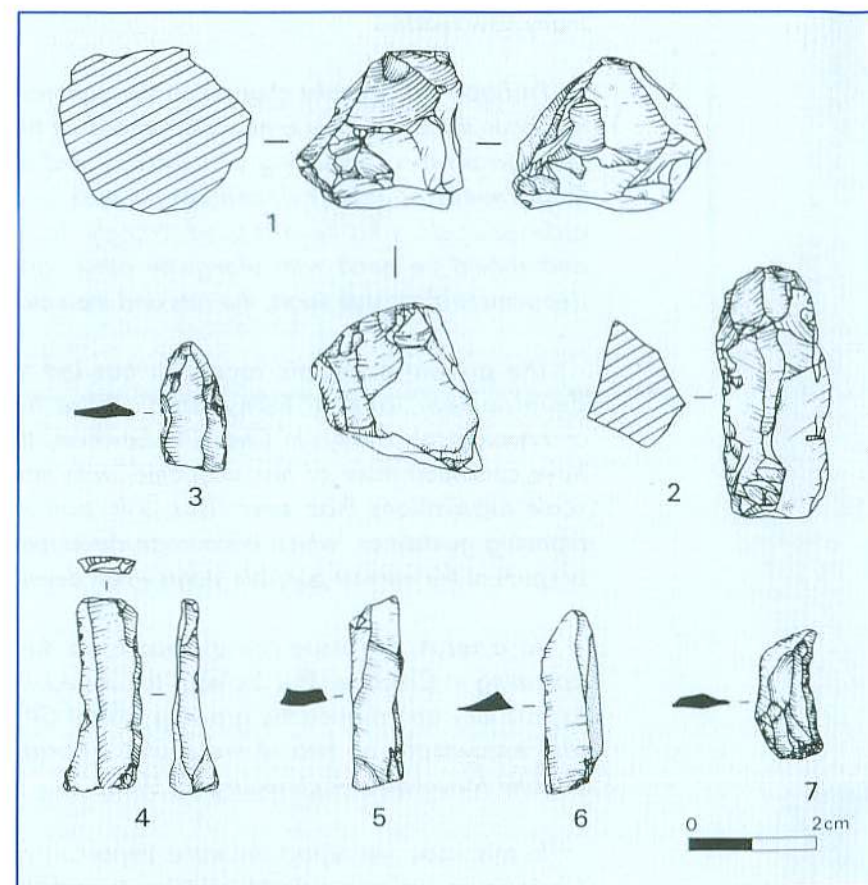
A small quantity of flintwork found in a ploughed field at Aldford has added to the gradually increasing body of information on Cheshire during the Mesolithic period (c8,000-3,500 BC). Only five other sites of this period have previously been found in lowland Cheshire.

The flints were located in a steeply sloping field overlooking the floodplain of the River Dee (SJ 412 585). The riverside location would have been well-suited to the type of hunter-gatherer activity practised during the Mesolithic period.

The first few flints were found by chance in 1989; subsequent investigation in the winter of 1991-2 brought the total to 25 flints. They nearly all consist of waste material, discarded as flint tools were shaped. Three pebble cores (**1-2**), from which blades were struck, indicate tools were made at this location. Narrow blade fragments (**3-6**) and flakes also represent waste products. Only two flakes show any evidence of the very fine chipping or 'retouching' used to produce finished tools - a notched flake and a flake with fine serrations (**7**).

The raw material used covers a surprisingly wide range of flint and chert. Some may well derive from the local drift deposits, but other material was probably collected from further afield. This may be clarified by work currently being carried out at Liverpool Museum, where the sources of lithic material from North West Mesolithic sites are being researched.

The apparent sparsity of Mesolithic sites in Cheshire is almost certainly misleading. The low proportion of arable farming in Cheshire today provides limited opportunity to locate the tell-tale flint scatters indicating Mesolithic and other prehistoric activity. Systematic field survey, such as that currently being carried out in North Cheshire (**CHESHIRE PAST 1**), provides the best opportunity to obtain a balanced picture.



A selection of flints from Aldford (numbers refer to text)

The flints were drawn by Mark Faulkner, arranged through the courtesy of Ron Cowell, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside. Full details are held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No CSMR 2299. The finds are deposited with Cheshire Museums, Accession No 1990.5. For additional background on the Mesolithic in Cheshire see D M T Longley: 'Prehistory' in A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY OF CHESTER (THE VICTORIA HISTORY OF THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND), Vol 1, 36-40, 1987.

3 PREHISTORIC MINING AT ALDERLEY EDGE *David Gale, Ancient Metallurgy Research Group, University of Bradford*



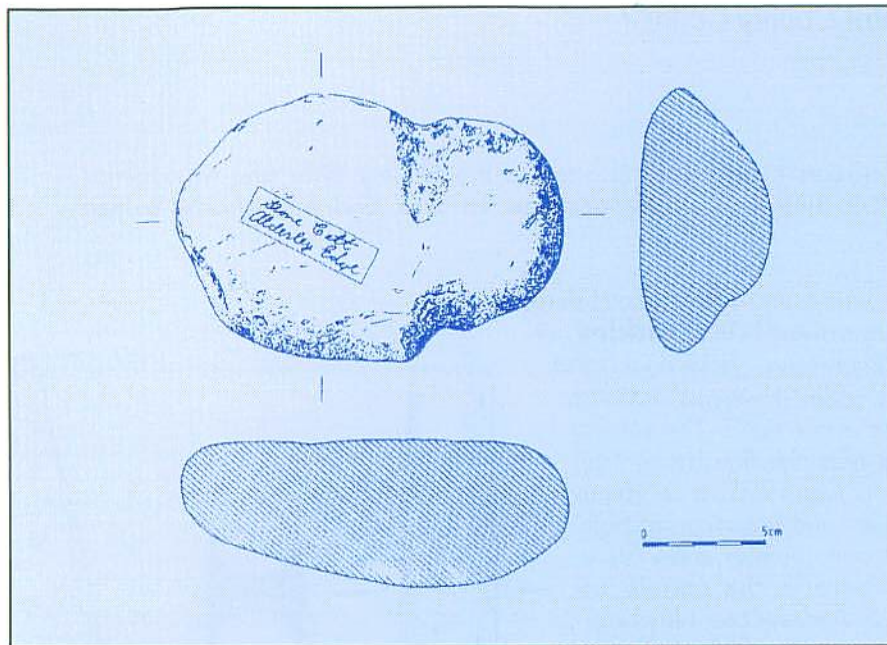
Early mining pits at Engine Vein exposed by later workings

Alderley Edge, a revered local beauty spot, was, as recently as just over a hundred years ago, the scene of extensive mining operations. Towards the end of the life of the mines, discoveries were made at a number of locations which suggested that much earlier, possibly prehistoric, mining activity had occurred. These discoveries consisted of hammerstones, found in profusion, in association with primitive surface pitting of the copper mineralization. The absence of metal tools and tool marks suggested that these workings dated to the Bronze Age (similar sites in Wales and Ireland have recently been radiocarbon dated to between the closing stages of the Early Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age).

Today, these mining pits can still be seen at Engine Vein and Pillar Mine, where they have been cut by later mining. They are readily recognised by their smooth and rounded surfaces, produced by hammerstone tooling, and have survived to a maximum depth of at least 3.5m. They appear to have worked the richest parts of the mineralized faults by fairly continuous pitting. Finds of hammerstones made at the copper mines of Mottram St Andrew, just to the east of Alderley Edge, indicate similar early mining activity. For other mine sites located within the mineral belt of the Cheshire-Shropshire Basin, suggestions have been made for prehistoric working at Hawkstone Park and Beeston Hill, although these have not been substantiated.

The metalliferous ores of the Cheshire-Shropshire Basin are very complex, consisting principally of copper. At Alderley Edge, additionally, lead, silver and cobalt were extracted. Moreover, the minor traces of arsenic (up to 4%) are of great interest to the archaeo-metallurgist. The composition of the earliest copper metalwork, pre-dating bronze, contains varying traces of arsenic. Recent research suggests that this 'arsenical-copper' was more likely to have been produced accidentally from copper-arsenic ores rather than by deliberate and controlled addition of arsenic ores. The copper mining sites in Wales and Ireland, devoid of

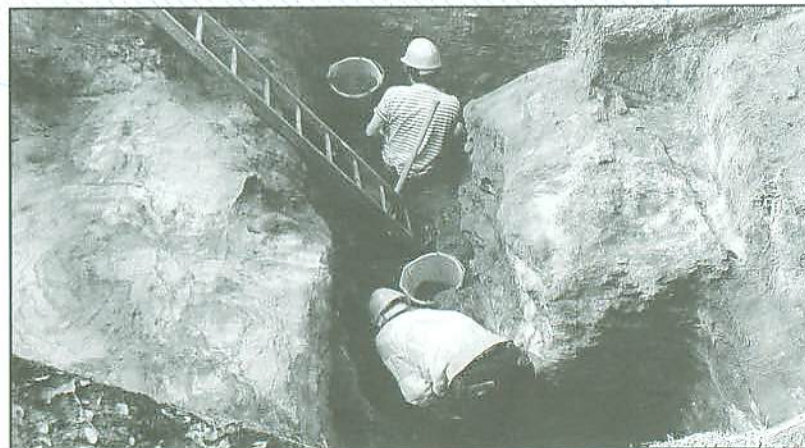
copper-arsenic mineralization, date, at the earliest, to the later Early Bronze Age when tin-bronze had been introduced. Alderley Edge, however, is the only site where early mining activity in association with copper-arsenic mineralization has been identified. This raises the possibility that this mining activity at Alderley Edge may belong to this earliest phase.



Grooved hammerstone from early mine workings at Brynlow Mine, excavated by Prof Dawkins in 1874 (held by Bolton Museum)

This had been worked by trenching, to a depth of 1-1.25m, with shallow, square, pick-cut trial shafts at regular intervals. At a later date this had been reworked by a continuous prospecting trench.

Although initial excavations did not succeed in locating remains of prehistoric mining activity, a thorough understanding of the surface remains was obtained. The absence of remains beyond known, disturbed, sites of early mining activity confirmed that this phase of mining was limited to small scale extraction.

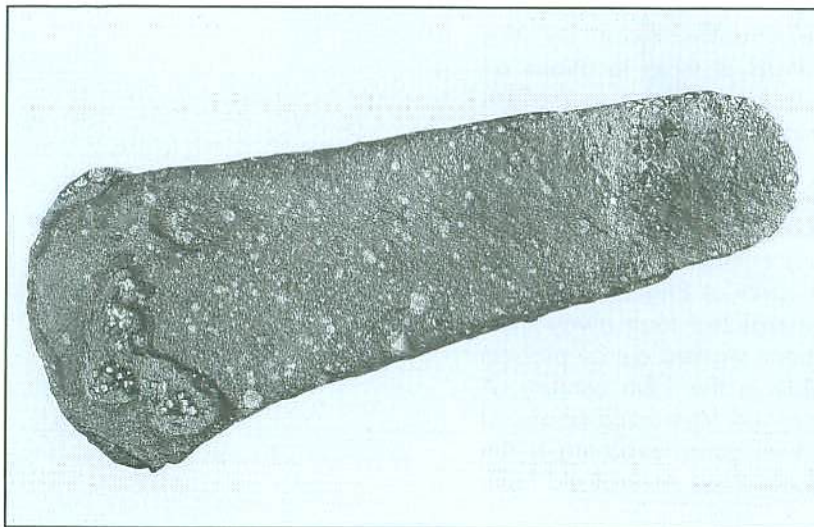


Excavation of 18th century trench working at Brynlow Mine, Artist's Lane

In September 1991, small-scale excavations were undertaken by the University of Bradford at three locations on Alderley Edge, in an attempt to isolate undisturbed prehistoric mining deposits and to obtain samples for radiocarbon dating. Excavations along the Engine Vein Fault at Engine Vein, Beacon Lodge and Wood Mine confirmed that early mining activity had been confined to openworks at Engine Vein. The surface of the mineralized fault away from Engine Vein had been worked out by pick-cut trenching, probably in the 18th century. A similar picture emerged from excavations at Brynlow Mine, Artist's Lane, exposing a 4m length of the surface-worked mineralized fault.

*The project was generously grant-aided by Cheshire County Council, Robert Kiln Charitable Trust, Bradford University, Garfield Weston Foundation, Derbyshire Caving Club, Manchester Museum, The Northern Mine Research Society and the Peak District Mines Historical Society. The excavation took place by kind permission of the National Trust. The site archive and finds are to be deposited with Manchester Museum. For further details on the site, see C R Blick (ed) **EARLY METALLURGICAL SITES IN GREAT BRITAIN**, The Institute of Metals, 1991. A report on the excavations is being prepared for the Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society.*

4 SOME BRONZE AGE AXES FROM CHESHIRE *Adrian Tindall, Cheshire County Council*



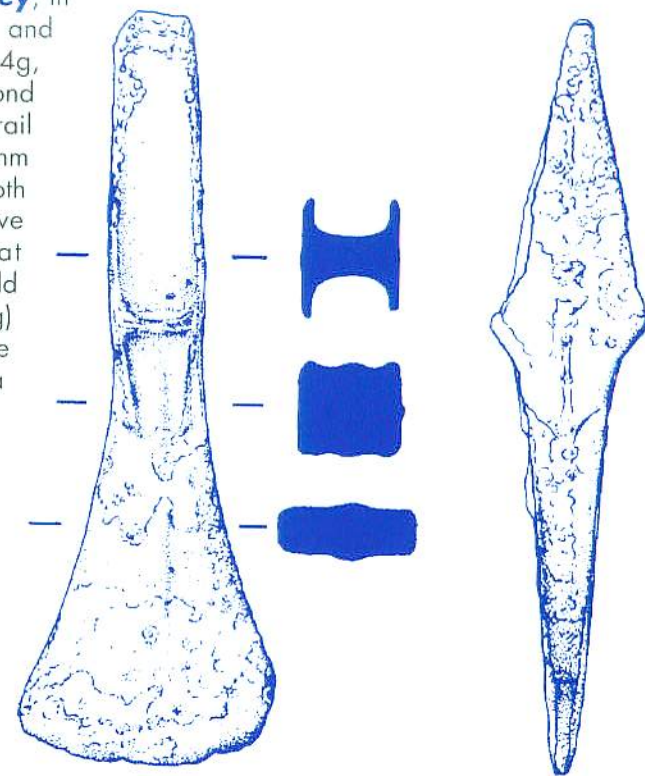
The Bickley flat axe (photo: Cheshire Museums)

Five Bronze Age axes have been reported to the County Sites and Monuments Record during 1991-2. Two are Early Bronze Age flat axes, and three Middle Bronze Age palstaves.

The first flat axe was found with a metal-detector on the surface of a harrowed field at **Bickley**, in May 1991. It is 92mm long, 9mm thick, and the blade is 36mm wide. It weighs 103.4g, and its outer surface is corroded. The second example was found near the Sandstone Trail at **Burwardsley**, in July 1991. It is 96mm long and 67mm wide, and is broken at both the blade and the butt. Similar axes have been found elsewhere in the county at Tattenhall, Mottram St Andrew and Newbold Astbury. A small example (only 60mm long) was found at Kinderton, a larger one (136mm long) at Grappenhall, and a fragmentary example at Malpas.

Both the Bickley and the Burwardsley axes are examples of the very simplest form of flat axe. They probably date to c2,000 BC, when bronze technology was in its infancy, and when more complex shapes were beyond the technical capabilities of the bronzesmith.

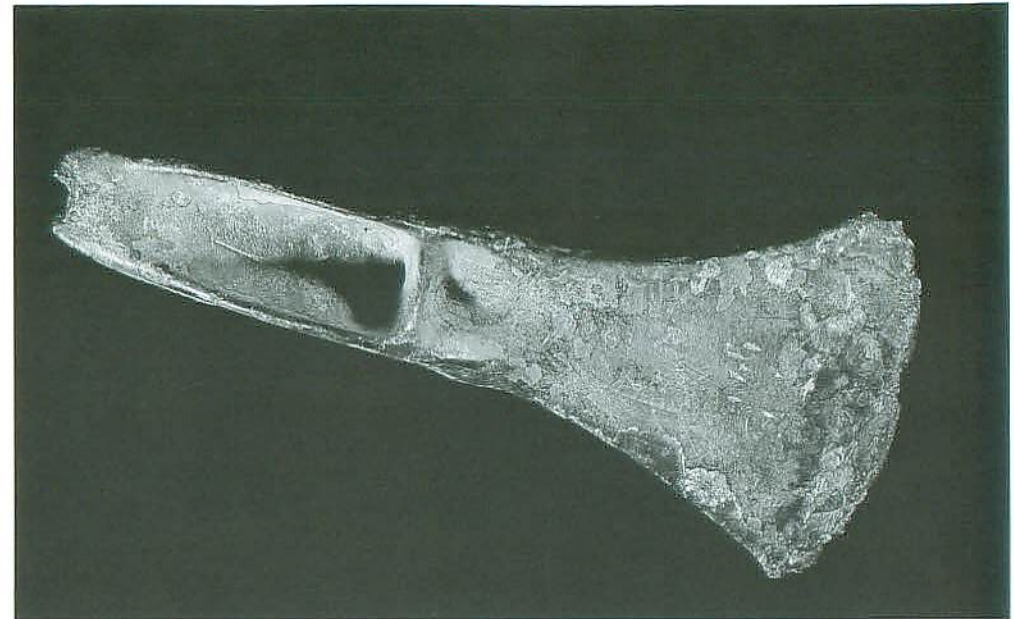
By c1,400 BC, advances in bronze technology had led to the flat axe being succeeded by the more sophisticated palstave. This was made in a two-piece clay mould, and was provided with side flanges and a stop-ridge to prevent the axehead from splitting the wooden haft when in use.



The Marbury palstave (drawing: Chester Archaeological Service)

Three examples of palstaves have been reported. The first was found around 1985, during drainage operations at **Twemlow**. It has an overall length of 172mm, is 74mm across at the widest point of the blade, and has flanges which extend to a maximum width of 37mm. It is 9mm thick at the butt end and about 15mm towards the stop-ridge. It weighs 591.6g. It has an expanded blade, which shows signs of being sharpened over its outer 5mm. The casting seams from a two-piece mould are visible along both edges, and the axe shows signs of corrosion and recent damage.

The Twemlow palstave probably belongs to the early stages of the 'Pickering Phase' of the Middle Bronze Age in Northern England, dating to around 1,400-1,300 BC. The best local comparison is with the much-damaged object found in 1810 in a rabbit warren inside the hillfort of Kelsborrow Castle.



The Twemlow palstave (photo: Cheshire Museums)

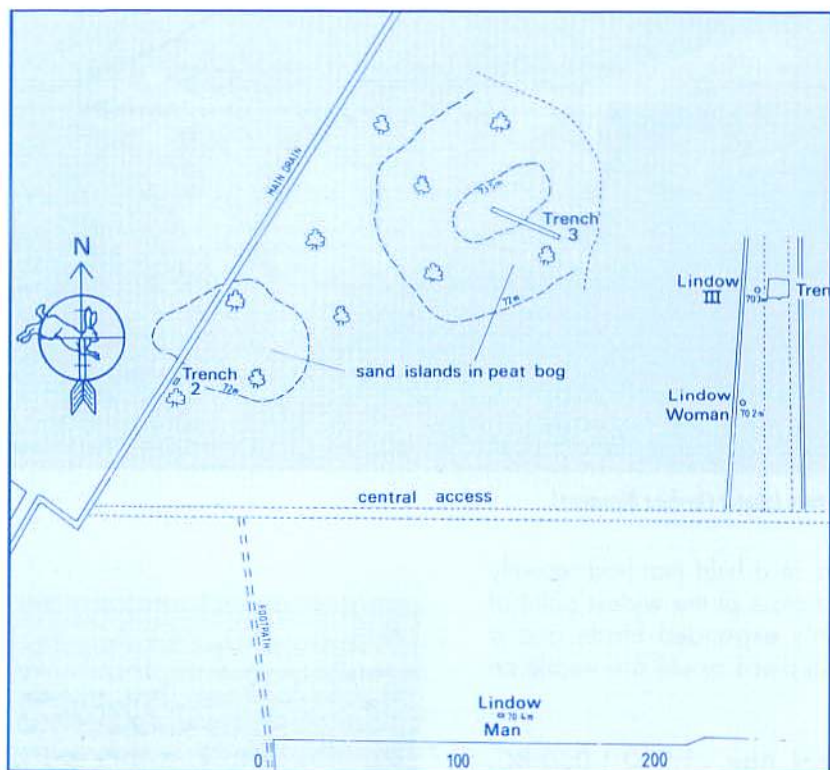
The second palstave was found in May 1991 on ploughland at **Marbury**. The findspot was on a low terrace overlooking an old stream bed to the north, in a field that had recently been subsoiled and deep ploughed. The axe has an overall length of 166mm, is 53mm across at the widest point of the blade and 33mm thick at the stop-ridge. It weighs 421.5g. The axe has a slightly expanded blade and a pronounced stop-ridge. There is a 'trident' design on either face. Casting seams from a two-piece mould are visible on both edges, and it again shows signs of corrosion and recent damage.

The Marbury palstave probably dates to the 'Hotham Carr Phase' of the Middle Bronze Age, c1,200-1,000 BC. There are a number of similar examples from the North West, including one from Castle Hill, Lancaster, one from the River Ribble and another from Warrington.

The third palstave was found in a garden at Hough Lane, **Alderley Edge**, in June 1991. It is 157mm long, 56mm wide at its blade, and 26mm thick at its stop-ridge, and weighs 336.8g. It is heavily corroded, but faint traces of a shield pattern are visible below the stop-ridge. It probably dates to around 1,400 BC.

The author is grateful to the finders, John Ward, Ross Leeding, Michael Kelsall, Terence Foster and John Laverack, for reporting the finds, to Dan Robinson of the Grosvenor Museum and Dr John Prag of the Manchester Museum for bringing the Burwardsley and Alderley Edge axes to his attention, and to Dr Peter Davey of the University of Liverpool for his comments on the Bickley, Twemlow and Marbury axes. All the finds are now in the possession of the finders. Further information on each is held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record Nos CSMR 2309, 2311, 2312, 2313 and 2315.

5 THE LINDOW MOSS BOG BODIES: FURTHER RESEARCH *Rick Turner, CADW: Welsh Historic Monuments*



Plan of Lindow Moss, showing the findspots of the bog bodies

In January 1992, a seminar was held in Cardiff to consider progress on research into the bog body known as Lindow III and wider aspects of the bog body phenomenon. Lindow III was discovered in February 1987, at the same site as the famous Lindow Man ('Pete Marsh') was found in August 1984.

Lindow III was recovered from already excavated peat in over 70 different pieces. These formed the body of a young naked adult male, of average height (about 5ft 5in) and slim build. Nearly all the body was found with the exception of the head, which is likely to have been buried separately. The man had the unusual peculiarity of a grossly malformed thumb on the right hand. Part of the gut and its contents survived, but no other organs. His last meal was dominated by crushed hazelnuts with some wheat bread.

There is exciting evidence of this body being painted with a bright blue clay-based copper paint. This is not the woad of schoolbook translations of Caesar, which does not appear in the archaeological record until the Saxon period. However, here at last is evidence for the blue-painted naked Celtic warriors that struck such awe into the Roman soldiers. Subsequent re-examination of Lindow Man shows the same group of chemicals in his skin.

The insect assemblages from around both bodies showed there to be no carrion fauna in either case, implying both bodies had been rapidly submerged in the peat. The biochemical mechanisms for the miraculous preservation of these bodies are now better understood. It relies on a tanning agent produced by decaying sphagnum moss, not on the acidity or anaerobic conditions present in the bog.

One part of the body, an arm, was recovered in a block of peat. It is possible to link this block of peat into the main stratigraphy on the site. This shows that Lindow III was found lying on a peat surface dating to c2,250 BC. Lindow Man was recovered from a bog pool a little earlier in date. However the radiocarbon dates of the newer body have again proved younger than the date of the peat in which it was found. In this case the two radiocarbon laboratories, Oxford and Harwell, have produced complementary dates which, when calibrated, give a range AD25-230 with 95% confidence limits: ie the first half of the Roman occupation of Britain.

There is much debate about how to resolve the dating differences between the Lindow bodies and their stratigraphic positions. It is possible that there are ways that bodies can be immersed or incorporated into the lower levels of a peat bog without disturbance to the stratigraphy. The most likely date for Lindow Man is the 1st century AD, and Lindow III the 2nd century AD.

It is now thought that the head of the so-called Lindow Woman (now Lindow I) is the head of Lindow III, and the buttocks and legs found in 1988 are those of Lindow Man. So Lindow Moss has produced the bodies of two young adult men, both violently killed, one by an elaborate triple death, one by beheading. Both may have been warriors, for their bodies were painted and their fingernails show no evidence of manual work. They both died just before or during the first half of the Roman period and were immersed naked into the peat.

The evidence for bog bodies is now widespread across Britain and Ireland, with over 200 separate discoveries recorded. Radiocarbon dating of these bodies where they survive shows a range of dates from the Neolithic to the Middle Ages. Only a proportion of these bodies are likely to be ritual sacrifices, but these seem to belong to the Iron Age and Roman periods. The remains of Worsley Man and its garrotte, rediscovered in 1986, show striking similarities to Lindow Man.

Detailed research on Dutch bog bodies has shown many similarities to those from Britain. Radiocarbon dating has given a range from the Middle Bronze Age (a man dressed in an elaborate embroidered cloak) to the early years AD, with about 48 individuals as potential victims of ritual sacrifice. So this phenomenon has been shown to have occurred across the whole of Northern Europe from Sweden to Ireland, and involving Celtic and Germanic peoples. There is a wealth of early Celtic myths involving sacrifice, magic cauldrons, peat bogs and watery places. These tales are full of ambiguities and rich images, and must contain the essence of the ritual which has left us these marvellous discoveries to wonder at.



The hand of the Lindow III body, showing the malformed thumb

Thanks are due to all contributors to the seminar, which was grant-aided by Cheshire County Council and the British Academy, and hosted by Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments. The finds and excavation archive associated with Lindow III will be deposited at the British Museum. For further information, see R C Turner and R G Scaife (eds) BOG BODIES, British Museum Press, 1993.

6 A ROMAN ROAD AT CROWN FARM, OAKMERE Rachel Newman (with Sonia Ely, Dave Johnson), Lancaster University Archaeological Unit

A site evaluation of 40ha of farmland was undertaken in connection with a planning application for sand extraction at Crown Farm, Oakmere (SJ 570 700). A number of sites, ranging in date from the Bronze Age to the medieval period, had been identified in the vicinity. Aerial photographs of the area suggested that the Roman Road from Northwich to Chester ran through the site.

The evaluation took the form of a search through the County Sites and Monuments Record, aerial photographs, maps (including 1st Edition OS maps and a plan of Delamere Forest drawn in 1627) and county and local histories, to produce as full a picture as possible of the archaeological potential of the site. This work was followed by a rigorous fieldwalking programme of the fields within the planning application area. A slight linear terrace was identified, which agreed with the projected line of the Roman road. This was carefully mapped. A single Bronze Age flint from a field to the north of the possible road was the only other find from this work. A geophysical survey across the terrace located areas of high resistance, which could be interpreted as a road surface, and perhaps also surrounding occupation.

Trial trenching took place across the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. This identified a metallised surface above an old turf line, with ditches to either side. The road demonstrated no particular engineering work, and seems simply to have comprised a dump of gravel bounded by the ditches, perhaps mounded to a slight camber. However, its width of 13m suggests the importance of the route. There were some indications of re-metalling, with a possible slight shift in alignment.

In the central part of the site, trial excavations revealed possible activity immediately to the north of the road, which seemed to be contemporary with at least one of its phases. Although this was very fragmentary, it is likely to represent wayside occupation - most likely of fairly low status, although the possibility of an official *mansio* (or posting-station) cannot be entirely discounted.



A vertical air photograph of Crown Farm, showing the probable line of the Roman road (arrowed)

The evaluation was funded by Tilcon Limited. The geophysical survey was undertaken by Geophysical Surveys of Bradford. The site archive is currently held by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit for eventual deposition with Cheshire Museums. A full report on the work is held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No CSMR 844/1. For further information on the road see T Kirk 'Roman Roads in the Delamere Forest' TRANS LANCASHIRE CHESHIRE ANTIQ SOC, 3, 111-133, 1885.

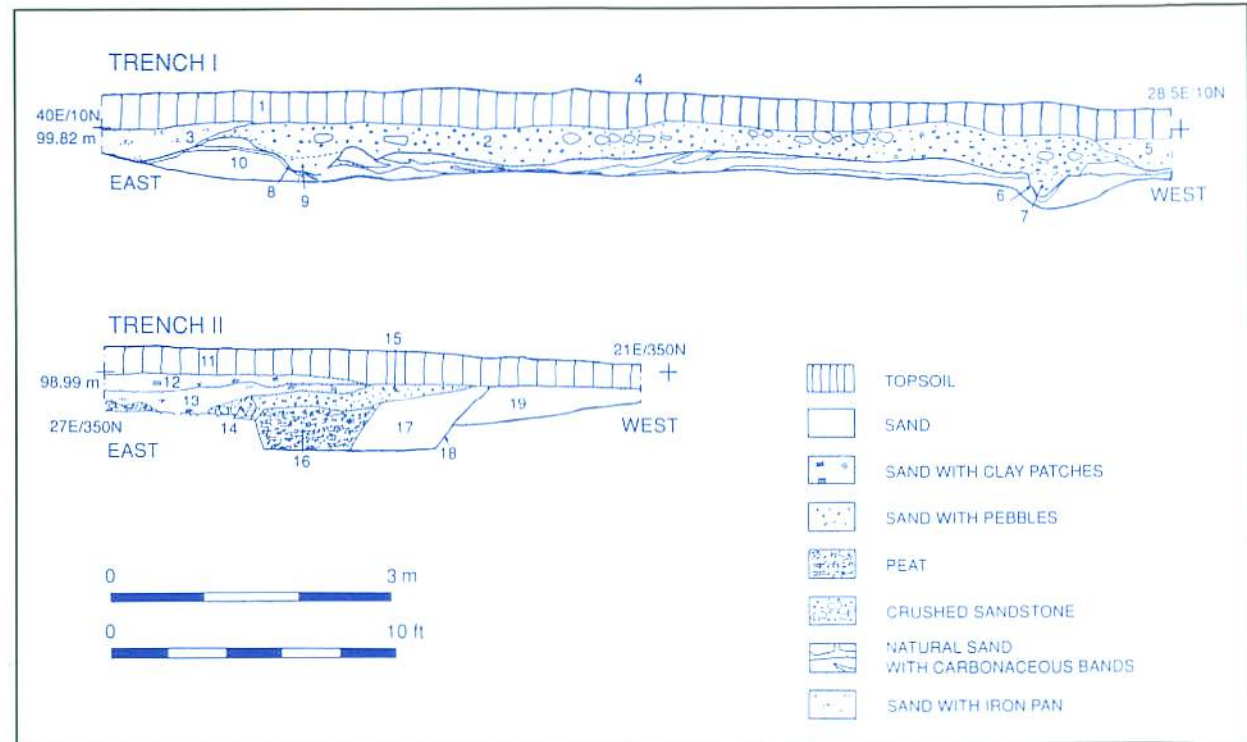
7 A ROMAN ROAD AT ALDER ROOT FARM, WINWICK

Mark Fletcher and Robina McNeil, Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit

The 1st Edition OS map for the Winwick area, published in 1849, clearly shows the route of the Roman Road between Wilderspool and Wigan as a dotted line, and a number of antiquarians commented on its line and condition. In 1932, investigations established that the line of the road varied from the suggested OS line, which lay further west. A number of sections were excavated, revealing sandstone blocks overlain by gravel surfacing.

The Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit was commissioned to carry out investigations at Alder Root Farm (SJ 590 934) in order to prove the road's alignment and to provide details of its construction. The line was established by resistivity profiles across the centre of the field. Excavation showed that the road had two V-shaped ditches, one either side of the road, and was constructed with a layer of irregular sandstone blocks with gravel surfacing. The width between the ditches was 8.5m. The evaluation confirmed previous findings about the road.

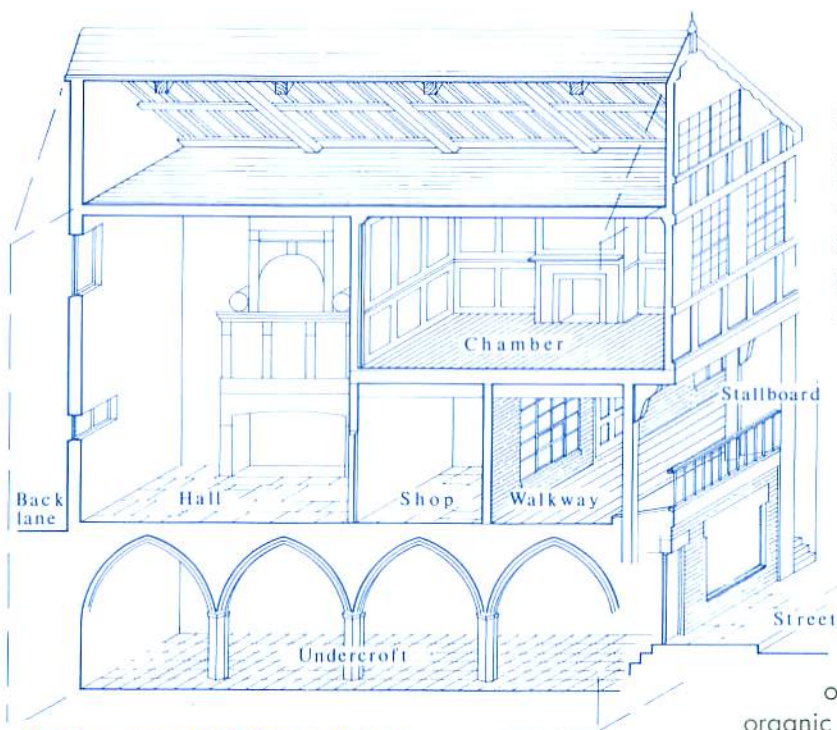
In the medieval period the road may have served as a field boundary or plough headland. Another trial trench further north revealed a peat-filled channel, possibly a prehistoric stream bed.



Trench I : section through the Roman road showing ditches, sandstone blocks and gravel surfacing

The landowner, Mr Lander, allowed access to the site. A full report on the work is held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No CSMR 614/1. The site archive is held at the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit, who will publish the final report.

8 CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE, 1991-2 Michael Morris, Chester Archaeological Service



Typical arrangement of buildings in the Rows

The Service had another busy year and achieved a great deal, despite the financial pressures being experienced by local government and the slump in development activity. We have also expanded our outreach and information service to the public. Leaflets have been produced to provide easy-to-understand guides for visitors to two of Chester's important historic monuments, the City Walls and Minerva Shrine. Work is also well advanced on a guidebook to Chester's Rows. This is being produced in conjunction with the City's Conservation Section, and is due to be published in the late summer.

During the year, the Service carried out four excavations (two on a large scale), six evaluations, three major watching briefs and numerous smaller ones, three desk-based assessments, and two restoration projects.

The site at **5-7 Foregate Street** (SJ 407 664) lies just outside the Roman fortress and medieval City Walls north of the Eastgate. Here, a complete section across successive defensive ditches was excavated in advance of redevelopment. Remains of two successive Roman ditches were found. Cut into the top of these was a U-shaped ditch, possibly of late Saxon date. This was succeeded by two, or possibly three, phases of medieval ditch. These had been used for rubbish-dumping over a long period, and the fills provided excellent conditions for the preservation of organic artefacts and environmental evidence. Some evidence for the activities carried out on the outer edge of the ditches was also recovered. By the 17th century the final medieval ditch had been infilled, and development had spread across its site and so, interestingly, there was no ditch in this area during the Civil War siege.

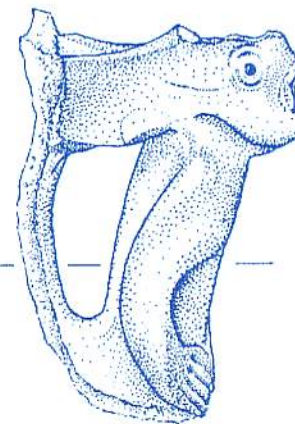
At **35-47 Lower Bridge Street** (SJ 406 659), excavations clipped the edge of a late medieval kiln or oven, constructed of clay and sandstone. Most post-medieval surfaces had been truncated, but a late 17th century rubbish and cess pit was rich in artefacts.

At **49-51 Lower Bridge Street** (SJ 406 659), excavation revealed a series of Roman features including several cremations, timber buildings and ovens possibly associated with lead-working. A pit containing 10th century Chester Ware was found with a contemporary road surface, possibly an earlier and more northerly line of St Olave's Lane.

Jug spout shaped like a man or gargoyle, a locally rare decoration. Probably made locally during later 13th or early 14th century. Found in the fills of the second medieval ditch, 5-7 Foregate Street

The medieval period was represented by several rubbish pits producing 13th and 14th century material. The foundations of a house shown on Speed's 1610 map of the city were discovered. Its cellar was backfilled with burnt debris, dated to the 1640s.

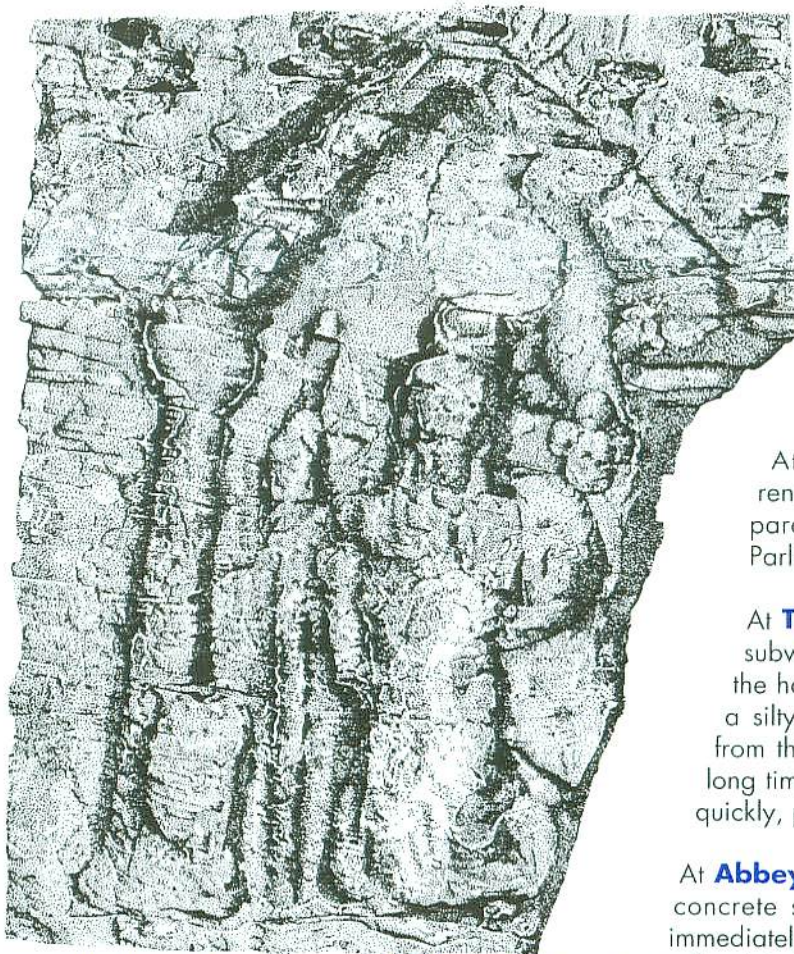
At **3-9 Eastgate Row North** (SJ 405 663), excavation revealed little Roman archaeology. Overlying Roman deposits was a gravel surface containing Saxon pottery. This was probably the northern edge of the original market place, known to have been in Eastgate Street. Associated with it was a quantity of worked horn and antler. The medieval line of the Row appears to have lain somewhat north of its present line, which was established in the middle of the 17th century. Foundations of 15th century date appear to have been the north wall of a structure known as the 'Buttershops'. A narrow passageway led from it to the cellar of 4 Northgate Street. The standing buildings, dating from the early 18th to 20th centuries, were also examined. The upper storey of one contained late 19th century pharmacist's workshop fittings.



An evaluation at **12-22 Commonhall Street** (SJ 404 662) showed that the southern part of the site had been open ground in Roman times, possibly a minor east-west street. To the north a culvert filled with building debris indicated the presence of buildings. A 4th century hearth and surface in the southern area pointed to occupation and possible structures encroaching into this area in the late Roman period. Saxon activity was represented by two pits and a post-hole.

At **32-36 Foregate Street** (SJ 408 663), an evaluation in the yard of the New Union Hall revealed part of a late medieval timber-framed structure and associated floor. Beneath this were several surfaces of earlier medieval date. During the 17th century the site was an open yard, with traces of light industrial activity.

At **Chester Royal Infirmary** (SJ 401 665), evaluation showed that the Infirmary buildings had destroyed most of the archaeological deposits. Around the edges, several Roman gullies - probably drainage or boundary features - survived. The tail of a bank against the rear of the northern City Wall could possibly have originated in the Saxon period. Over most of the site the only medieval feature was a soil layer, confirming that this area was cultivated during the Middle Ages. The traces of a building along the eastern edge of the site may relate to the tithe barn of St Werburgh's Abbey which is known to have lain in this area. The most significant post-medieval feature was a pit containing a large quantity of mid-17th century tobacco pipe kiln waste.



The Minerva Shrine as it appears today (drawing: Tim Morgan)

An evaluation at **Queen's School, Bedward Row** (SJ 401 663) found surfaces and structures associated with the 19th century city gaol. Below these was a thick dump of river sand, possibly dumped for the construction of the 13th century Franciscan Friary. Below this, traces of two Roman buildings were found: a 1st century timber structure, which may have burnt down, and a later stone-walled structure.

At **27 Watergate Row** (SJ 404 663), small-scale evaluation of a yard area on the south side of Watergate Street was carried out prior to grading down. Most of the area proved to have been a cellar back-filled in the 1950s. A brick-built bread oven built into the north wall of this structure was probably late 18th or early 19th century in date. An evaluation was also carried out at **Grosvenor Park** (SJ 412 663).

At **18 Frodsham Street** (SJ 407 664), a watching brief during building renovation recorded an undated turf mound which may have bordered the Roman parade ground. Alternatively, it could have been a Civil War gun mount, as the Parliamentary besiegers are known to have built one in this area.

At **The Roodee** (SJ 402 660), a watching brief took place during construction of a subway beneath the race track. The Roodee was once the head of the Dee estuary and the harbour of Chester, but is now completely silted up. A fine sand c3.5m thick sealed a silty, organically-rich deposit c2-3m thick. The silt contained a wide range of finds from the Roman period to the 17th and 18th centuries. It probably accumulated over a long time in slow-moving water in the river channel. The sand above was deposited more quickly, possibly in decades, when the Roodee grew rapidly.

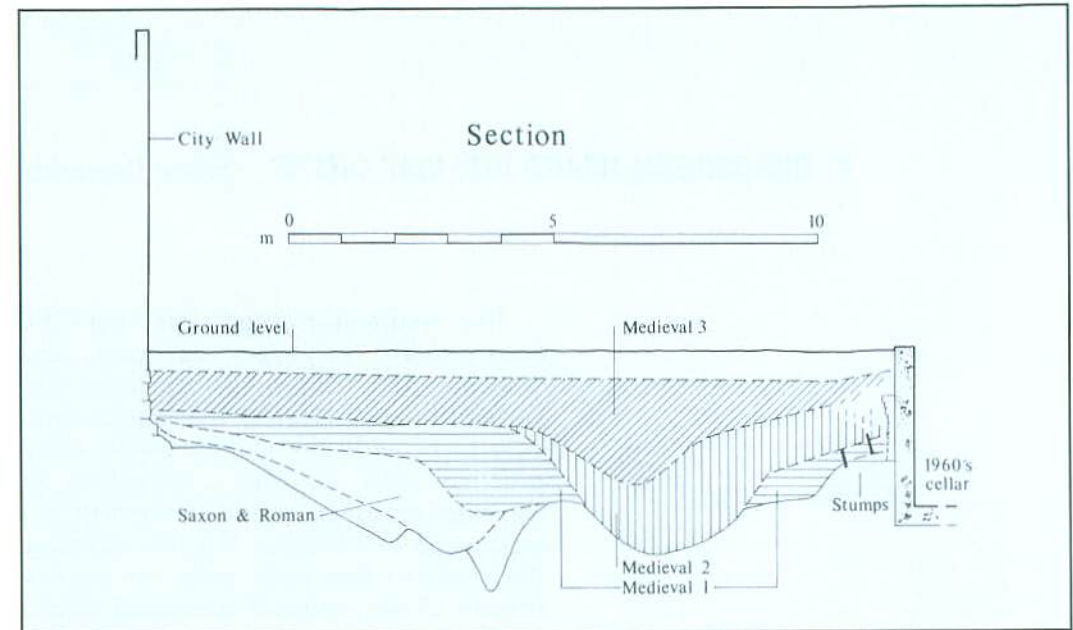
At **Abbey Square** (SJ 405 664), a watching brief was carried out during removal of the concrete surface outside the west range of the medieval abbey cloister. Bedrock lay immediately underneath most of the pavement. The foundations of two westward extensions to the cloister were found. One appeared to be a garderobe, the other a staircase. The edge of a stone-lined well was also found: a 17th century plan labels a well at this spot "abbots well".

Three desk-based assessments of farmland have been carried out prior to proposed golf courses. At **Grange Farm, Mollington** (SJ 390 695), a well-preserved enclosed landscape was revealed. Some fields retained post-medieval type ridge-and-furrow under pasture; some appeared to be medieval. In places soil marks demonstrated that earlier ridge-and-furrow ran at right angles to the post-medieval earthworks. Of the many marl pits, some may have been medieval. A quarry, probably from construction of the Shropshire Union Canal in 1793-5, was also located. Close to Mollington Grange, a house of 16th or 17th century origin, were earthworks which may be building remains. One was associated with the field-name Kiln Croft.

At **Brown Heath, Christleton** (SJ 455 657), assessment revealed that traces of post-medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation were extensive in 1947, but have now largely disappeared. The heath was enclosed piecemeal during the 18th century. At **Brookdale Farm, Waverton** (SJ 465 640), assessment showed that a rich medieval landscape still existed in 1947. This has now largely vanished. Some ridge-and-furrow survives east of Guylane Brook; elsewhere it is visible as soil marks. Numerous marl pits also survive.

Two restoration schemes were carried out. A further stretch of the front face of the **North Wall** (SJ 403 667) was rebuilt. Several courses of the Roman fortress wall in poor condition were falling outwards and were rebuilt on their original line. The rest of the front of the wall was found to be Victorian, probably rebuilt in the late 19th century after a section of the wall collapsed.

The **Minerva Shrine** at Edgar's Field (SJ 406 656) is a unique survival of the Roman occupation of Britain. The shrine to one of the major Roman deities is carved in low relief on a rock face in the quarries on the south side of the River Dee. It has suffered over the years from the friable nature of the rock, from weathering and pollution. Cleaning and conservation have been carried out, an explanatory panel erected and a leaflet published. Its condition will be monitored over the next five years.



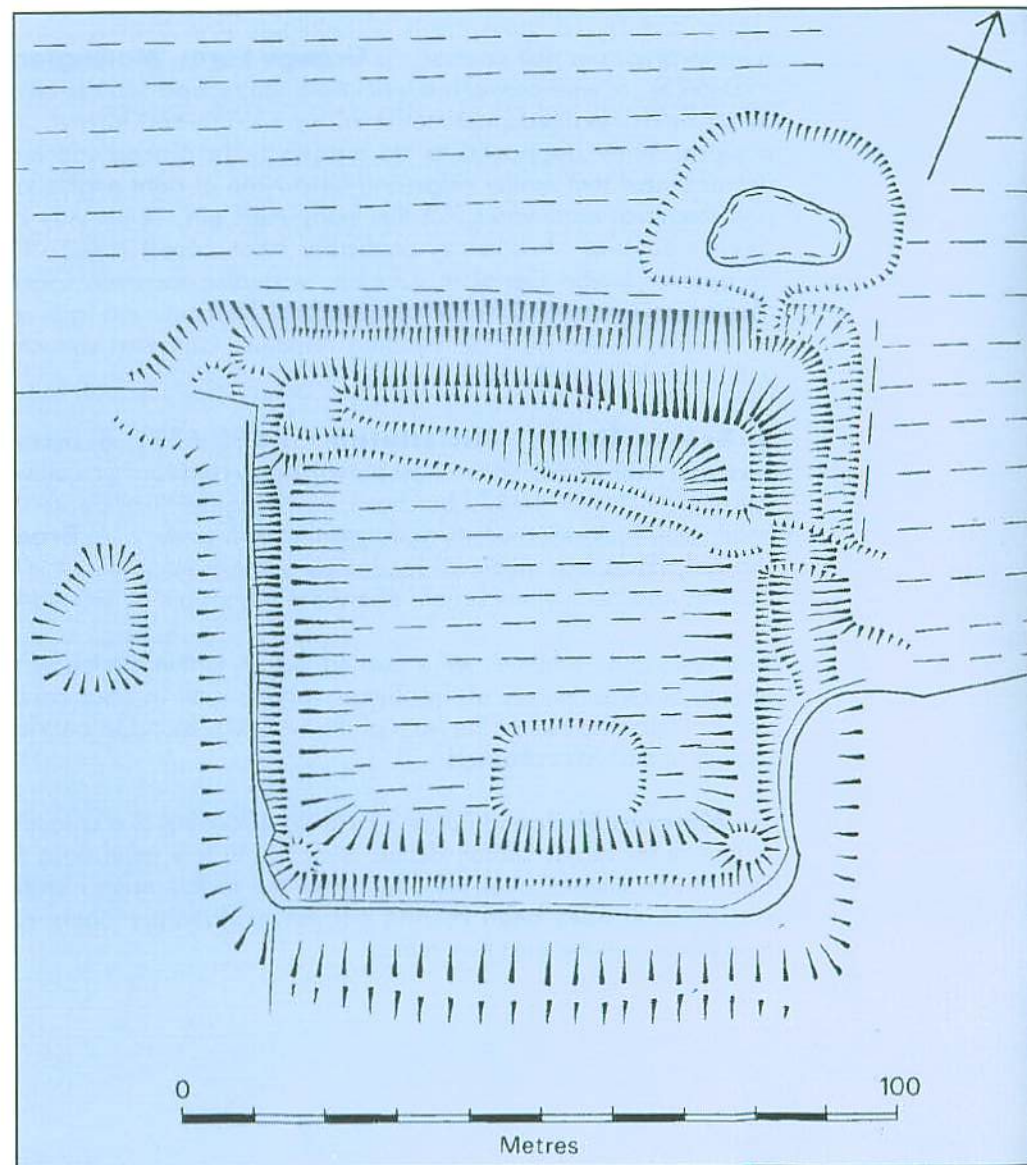
Section through the Roman, Saxon and medieval ditches, 5-7 Foregate Street

The projects were funded by Chester City Council and by contributions from the various developers: W H Smith Ltd, Talbot Properties Ltd, Mr D Palumbo of the Hotel Romano, Refuge Assurance plc, Cavendish Woodhouse plc, Manweb plc, the Mersey Regional Health Authority, Stroud Nullis Partnership, Davies and Hadkinson, Architects, Littlewoods plc, Chester Racecourse Company, the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral, Long Collins Partnership, Prospective Leisure Ltd, and Chris Cowing Partnership. Restoration projects were supported by English Heritage. Projects were directed and undertaken by S W Ward, K J Matthews, W Walker, C Quinn, F Challoner and I Harrison. Conservation work on the Minerva Shrine was carried out by Hanna Conservation Consultants. The archives are held by the Chester Archaeological Service at the Grosvenor Museum.

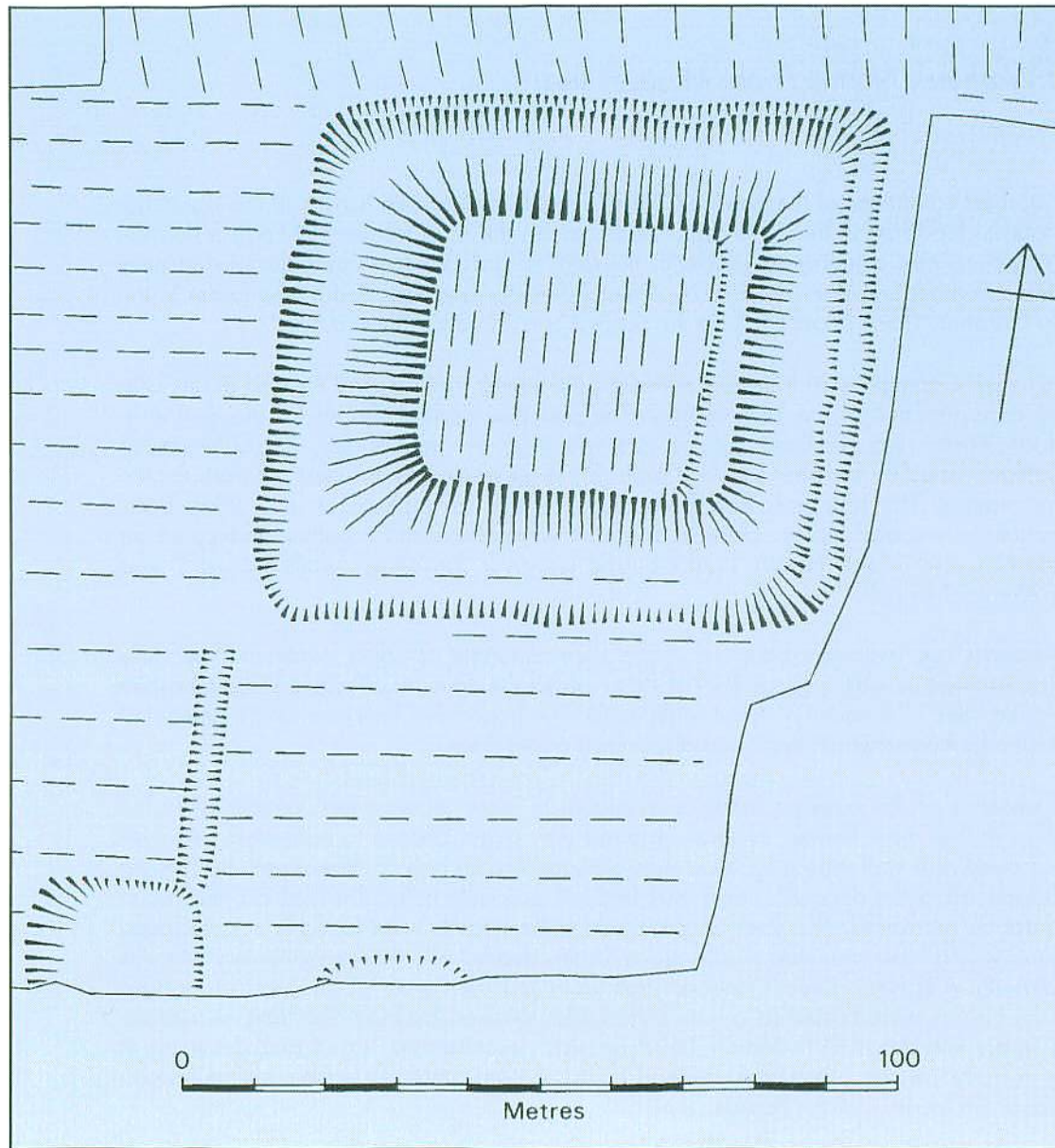
9 TWO MEDIEVAL MOATED SITES NEAR CHESTER *Susan Reynolds*

Two medieval moated sites near Chester have been surveyed as part of an archaeological field survey course for Chester College history students. The course aims not only to provide the students with valuable practical skills, but also to contribute to the improved recording and understanding of field monuments in Cheshire. The sites surveyed by the students this year were the earthwork remains of two medieval homestead moats: the most numerous class of medieval field monuments in the county.

The first moat, on the southern boundary of Huntington parish (SJ 429 620), is square with the traces of an external bank on three sides. A small stream occupies two of the moat arms, though the remainder of the moat ditch is dry. The internal platform is bounded by a slight bank with slightly raised corners. The platform is covered by the remains of ridge-and-furrow cultivation, which has subsequently been cut by a pond and the line of a public footpath.



Moat in Huntington parish



Moat in Eccleston township

The second moat surveyed lies within Eccleston township (SJ 401 626). The moat is almost square in shape, with dry ditches. The internal platform is raised slightly above the surrounding ground surface. This platform too is covered by the remains of ridge-and-furrow cultivation, ploughed in a separate operation from the surrounding fields.

In common with many other moats in Cheshire, remains of ploughing were found on the platforms of both moats. This need not preclude their interpretation as medieval homestead moats, as recent excavations elsewhere in Cheshire have found traces of medieval occupation beneath over-ploughed moats. It is thought that the ploughing may be of 18th or 19th century origin, and may have been associated with the growing of cereals and potatoes.

The surveys were carried out with the kind permission of His Grace, The Duke of Westminster, Mr P M Williamson of Saughton Hall Farm, and Mr A D Jones of Hill Farm, Eccleston. The survey course was arranged by Dr Graeme White and taught by Susan Reynolds. The students taking part were Michael Andrews, Claire Giblin, Christopher Taylor-Green, Maureen Hyde, Caroline Thorpe, Nicholas Alsop, Anna-Marie Harvey, Lorraine Lynch, Daniel Osbaldaston and Rebecca Smith. The drawings were prepared by W D Cocroft. The original field diagrams, panned drawings and detailed monument descriptions are deposited in the County Sites and Monuments Record, Record Nos CSMR 1945/1/1 and CSMR 1966.

10 FOUR COIN HOARDS FROM CONGLETON *Margaret Warhurst, Norton Priory Museum Trust*



Did this bottle, which contained Hoard 2, belong to John Walker of Congleton?

The disturbed conditions of the English Civil War and its aftermath have had the result that coin hoards deposited in the 17th century are among the most frequent of English hoards. Few, however, can compare in size with the total of 3,409 silver coins discovered near Congleton in the late spring of 1992 by a metal-detector and reported by the finder to the County Coroner. These hoards will be the subject of a Treasure Trove inquest.

The coins were contained in four earthenware pots dating from around the end of the 17th century or the first half of the 18th century. The pots are unusual shapes for this period in the North West. Two are black-glazed jars with lids; two are bottles. The bottles each bear initials - one FR, the other J&CW - probably representing the owners' or perhaps the makers' names. The four pots had been buried close to each other in a steep bank overlooking a wooded valley. Hoards 3 and 4 were deposited together and could be regarded as one hoard. Hoard 1 was buried just over 2m away, while Hoard 2 was about 25m to the north.

These hoards are important because of the sheer quantity of coins involved. Potentially they can provide us with a great deal of detail about the coins in circulation in a Cheshire town in the later 17th century. What really marks the hoard out, however, is the amount of historical information which has been discovered about them.

In the absence of the banking facilities available in more recent times, people often hid valuables in their own homes. In times of unrest they might choose to bury their valuables in the ground at a spot whose location was perhaps known only to themselves. If anything then happened to the depositor, or if they had not precisely noted the location, the hoard would not be recovered. The steep slope in which the hoards were found is in a secluded spot, and would have provided a safe place for the deposit of valuables with very little risk of accidental discovery. Recent research has identified the owner of this land at the time when the hoards were buried as a man called John Walker. He may also have owned the coins. In his will dated 29th March 1675 he was described as "aged and declining of health in body". In the event he was dead by April 24th, perhaps without telling anyone else about the location of the hoards.

John Walker belonged to a prominent and wealthy Congleton family. He was mayor of the town three times. During the English Civil War he was a Royalist supporter and was fined for his Royalist sympathies by Parliament on at least one occasion. If he was indeed the owner of the coins, this may be one reason why he buried one of the hoards whose latest coin dates to 1649, the year Charles I was executed. Other pieces of



*Halfcrowns issued by the Royalist mint at Oxford (above)
and by the Tower mint under Parliamentary control in 1641-3 (below)*

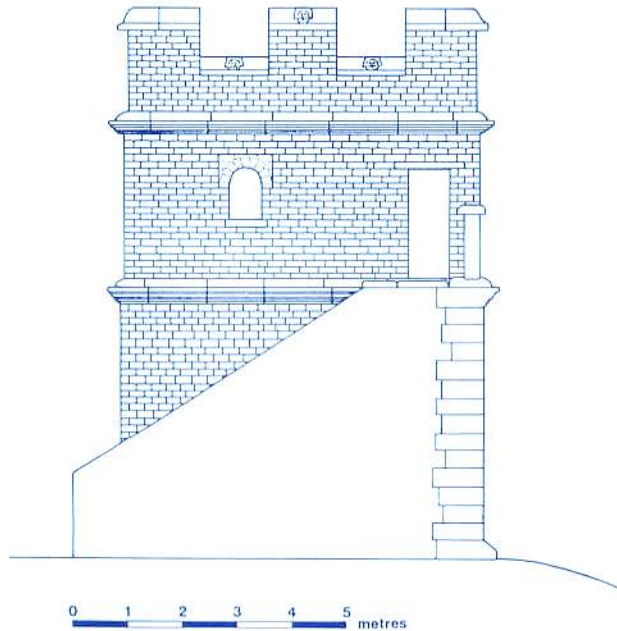


evidence strengthen the possibility that John Walker was the owner of the coins, or was at the very least involved in their burial. The initials J&CW on one of the bottles may be those of him and his wife, whose name has not yet been traced. A number of coins from Hoard 4 have the letter W incised on them, which could be seen as helping link the hoard to him.

The coins from the hoards are in line with what is known of 17th century currency, with coins dating from the mid 16th century to the date of deposit. A few coins of Edward VI (1547-53) and of Philip and Mary (1553-8) are included. These represent the first issues of good silver standard after the debased coinages of the end of Henry VIII's reign. There are large numbers of Elizabethan sixpences and shillings - over half the total number of coins from the four hoards. The most recent coins are halfcrowns of Charles II, dated 1670. As is usual in 17th century hoards, the denominations range from five shillings (crowns) down to sixpences. All the coins were manufactured at the Tower mint in London, apart from a handful struck at Aberystwyth and various Royalist Civil War mints, including Bristol, Oxford and Truro, plus two Scottish coins, one Irish coin and one forgery, all from Charles I's reign.

The total face value of the four hoards is £172 8s, a very considerable sum at the time. For comparison, the annual salary of a schoolmaster was £16 during the early years of Charles II's reign and that of a minister was £25. If the coins did belong to one person it was someone very well off like John Walker. These hoards have great potential for research, and it is to be hoped that such an exciting and historically interesting find can be kept together in Cheshire for this to take place.

The hoards were reported by the finders, Keith Pay and Donald Oxley. The field survey and documentary research was funded by Cheshire County Council and carried out by Robert Philpott and Susan Nicholson of the National Museum and Galleries on Merseyside. A report on the pottery vessels was prepared by Julie Edwards of Chester Archaeological Service. The author is grateful to Lynn Fewster, Jon Marrow, Sandy Campbell, Catrina Appleby and Julie Vint for help in identifying and cataloguing the coins. Detailed analysis is continuing, and a full report will be published elsewhere. Listings of the hoards, along with reports on the pottery, field survey and documentary research are held in the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No CSMR 2373.



Cross-section through the Flavian turf-revetted rampart, Trajanic curtain-wall and an interval tower at Chester, illustrating the results of current research (drawing: Tim Morgan for Gifford and Partners, who retain copyright)

The projects were funded by Chester City Council, St John's House Trust, Gifford and Partners, Greenall's Group plc, Stratton Project Management Ltd, Cheshire County Council, Rendel Palmer and Tritton, the Department of Transport, and Mr P Ward. The project archives are held by Gifford and Partners, and full reports are deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record.

Work has begun on preparing the report on the 1960s excavations of the so-called **Elliptical Building** (SJ 404 664), which lay at the centre of the Roman legionary fortress at Chester. The Elliptical building is unusual not only because of its extraordinary plan - an oval courtyard surrounded by a concentric range of wedge-shaped rooms, fronted by a colonnade and set within a rectangular frame - but also because of its monumental character and the fact that it was one of the few buildings of the original fortress to have been built in stone. The original building, whose construction is dated by an inscribed lead water pipe to AD 79, was left unfinished and used as a rubbish dump until c220 AD, when it was laid out afresh and completed. It continued in use until the closing years of the 4th century. Although its plan is now clear, identification of its function is hindered by the lack of close parallels from elsewhere.

As part of the continuing long-term research into the structure of the defences of the legionary fortress at Chester - closely related to the identification of appropriate solutions to the problems of movement in the **City Walls** near the Northgate and Kaleyard Gate, for which Giffords have been retained as Consultant Engineer by Chester City Council - the latest evidence for the parapet and interval tower superstructures has been drawn together for the first time. It is expected that the results will be published as a volume in Chester City Council's now well-established monograph series.

Archaeological evaluations and desk-based assessments in advance of redevelopment have been carried out at **105-109 Foregate Street, Chester** (SJ 410 665), **Oscroft**, near Tarvin (SJ 510 663), and the preferred routes of three road schemes: the **A523 Poynton By-Pass**, the **A533 Davenham By-Pass**, and the **A550 Improvement (Deeside Park to M53)**. Preliminary evaluations at the Greenall Whitley brewery site at **Wilderspool**, near Warrington (SJ 612 865) revealed truncated Roman deposits in some areas. Further, more extensive, evaluation is planned for 1992-3.

12 OTHER NEWS

The construction of a pipeline for Shell Chemicals UK from Grangemouth to Stanlow uncovered a number of unexpected finds in the **Sutton Weaver** and **Aston** areas. These were recorded by Shell's project archaeologist and by staff of the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit.

There were several prehistoric finds, including an early Neolithic leaf-shaped flint arrowhead from Aston Lane (SJ 555 789), a flint thumbnail scraper and two chert flakes found near Beckett's Wood (SJ 550 790 - SJ 537 792), and a shallow ditch or gully, at least 2m long, 1.06m wide and 250mm deep, filled with burnt sand and pebbles and containing a single burnt struck flint, found near Bird's Wood (SJ 564 785). These finds suggest that the Lower Weaver Valley may have been an area of considerable prehistoric activity.

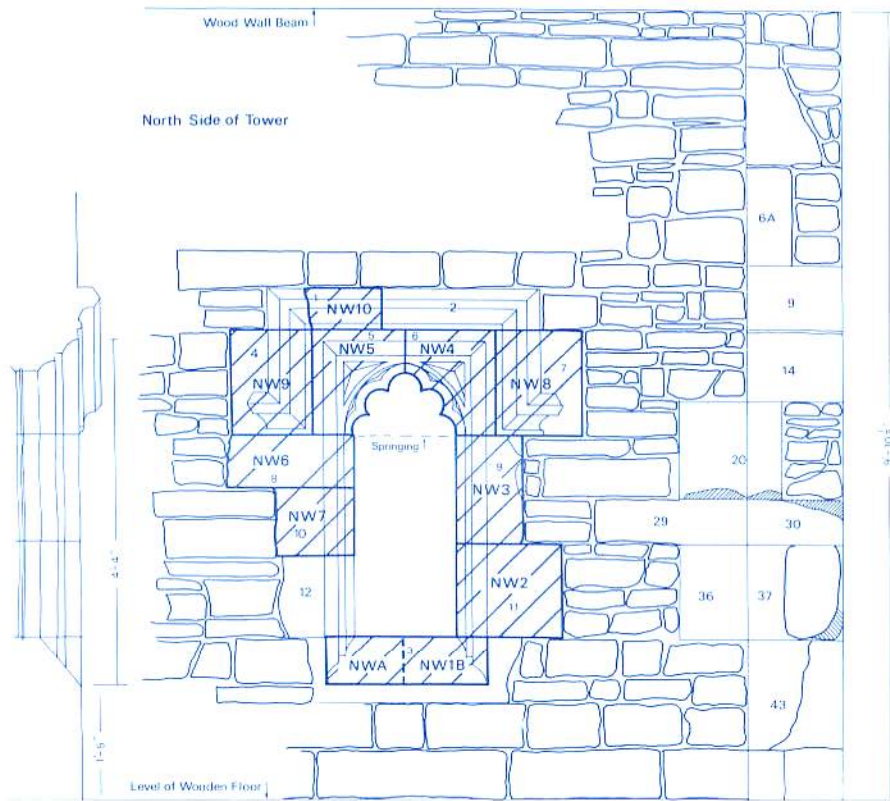
There were also a number of post-medieval features, including a pit containing large quantities of 18th-20th century domestic pottery at Beckett's Wood (SJ 547 787) and a brick-lined probable cess-pit of 18th-19th century date at Sutton Bridge (SJ 534 789). The most significant discovery, however, was the remains of a brick kiln on a steep ridge overlooking the Weaver Navigation, near Beckett's Wood (SJ 542 786). It consisted of parallel rows of hand-made bricks, set in the natural clay and interspersed with ash, coal, burnt clay and sand. It extended for nearly 30m, and seems to have been a brick kiln of 'clamp' type, in which alternate layers of clay brick and firing material were built up, covered and then fired. There is no documentary evidence for the site, which was probably used for a short period during the late 18th or early 19th century.

At **Helsby**, repairs to the western defences of the Iron Age hillfort (SJ 492 754) were carried out by Jeremy Milln of The National Trust, with the help of volunteers under the Trust's Acorn Camp project. Natural and visitor erosion of the banks has been repaired with a protective layer of introduced topsoil, bound to the bank with a biodegradable geojute matting, sown with a suitable grass seed and protected with brush. The former access path (probably the original entranceway) has been closed and repaired using the same technique. A new temporary access has been constructed, via a flight of timber steps laid onto the earthwork.

In August 1991, the right jawbone of a cow was found during peat cutting at **Lindow Moss**, Wilmslow (SJ 818 806). It is believed to have come from a depth of c3m - considerably deeper than the level at which Lindow Man was found. It is small with a pronounced curve, and the dental pattern suggest an individual of 2-3 years old. It shows no signs of butchery. Its size, shape and dental pattern suggest that it may be an early (possibly Iron Age) form of the species *Bos taurus*.



*The brick clamp-kiln at Beckett's Wood, during excavation
(photo: Lancaster University Archaeological Unit)*



Macclesfield Castle: original architect's drawing with re-identified decorative stonework shown hatched

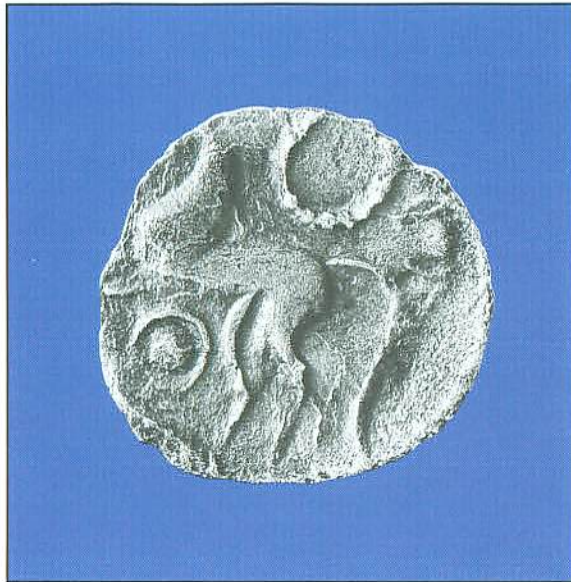
Macclesfield Castle (SJ 917 736) was one of the very few fortified townhouses ever built by a commoner in medieval England. Begun by John de Macclesfield in 1398, it was added to and embellished during the 15th century. By 1585, it was abandoned and in decay, until only the porch remained. The porch was surveyed in the 1930s before being dismantled. Recently, the dressed stone and 1930s architect's drawings were rediscovered, and the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit was commissioned to identify the surviving decorative stonework and relate it to the drawings. Part of the four-centred and two-centred arched doorheads were recovered, in addition to bosses, a spandrel, springers and ribs, all belonging to the vaulted porch. These have now been positioned with interpretive panels in the courtyard of the new Macclesfield Town Hall extension.

Marl has been used as a fertiliser in Cheshire since the Middle Ages and, although marling no longer takes place, marlpits in their thousands have become a characteristic feature of the Cheshire landscape. However, there has been a continuous decline in their numbers, from over 42,000 in the 1870s to less than 20,000 today. From Autumn 1991, a major three-year research project, led by Dr Andrew Hull of Liverpool John Moores University and grant-aided by Cheshire County Council, will assess the rate of decline of the county's ponds, their biological and archaeological importance, and the ways in which they can be conserved and managed.

An evaluation by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust at **Lea Forge Farm, Checkley** (SJ 706 486) has revealed evidence of the iron forge that stood alongside Checkley Brook from c1650-1820. Elsewhere, watching briefs have been carried out during development at **Vicarage Lane, Sandbach** (SJ 740 613), **Ryder Street** (SJ 652 735), **Chester Road** (SJ 653 734) and **Queensgate, Northwich** (SJ 651735), **St Matthew's Church, Stretton** (SJ 620 827), **Vale Royal Abbey** (SJ 638 698), and **St Anne's Lane** (SJ 648 523) and **The Market Hall, Nantwich** (SJ 652 523). At Queensgate, a hearth and cobbles associated with 2nd century pottery probably represents evidence of the civilian settlement, or *vicus*, of Roman Northwich. Assessments have been carried out by the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit on the proposed **A556 (M56-M6) Improvement**, and by Chester Archaeological Service on the proposed **A51 Duddon-Clotton By-Pass**. The Roman villa at **Eaton-by-Tarporley** (SJ 572 634) has undergone the first phase of a conservation programme, grant-aided by Cheshire County Council.

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.

2 AN IRON AGE COIN FROM NEAR NANTWICH *Adrian Tindall, Cheshire County Council*



The reverse face of the coin, showing the outline of the horse (photo: Cheshire Museums)

A rare silver coin of the pre-Roman Iron Age has been found on ploughland at Brindley, near Nantwich. It was found with a metal detector in March 1992, and promptly reported to the County Sites and Monuments Record.

The coin weighs 1.097g and is 13mm in diameter. The face bears the indistinct outline of a boar, and shows signs of heavy wear. The reverse is much clearer, and depicts a horse facing to the left, with rings and pellets above and below. It too shows signs of having been in circulation for some time.

The coin is a large denomination issue of the *Corieltavi* (formerly known as the *Coritani*): an Iron Age tribe centred in the East Midlands around Leicester and Lincoln. It probably dates to the last few decades of the 1st century BC. Most Corieltavian coins are found in Lincolnshire, though they have been found as far afield as South East Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. Very few have been found west of Leicester, however, and the Nantwich example is well outside their normal distribution.

Nantwich may have been an important centre of salt-production from as early as the Iron Age: we know from the example of Droitwich (Worcestershire) that salt was a highly-valued and widely-traded commodity at this period. However, during the Iron Age Cheshire fell within the tribal territory of the *Cornovii*, centred in Shropshire, who did not mint coins and may indeed have had no use for them as objects of trade. Coins may have had a number of other uses - as ritual offerings, taxes, dowries or symbols of wealth - and it remains unclear why such a coin should be found so far from its area of origin.



The author is grateful to the coin's finder, Gordon Sandland, for reporting it, and to Dr Jeffrey May of the University of Nottingham and Dr Andrew Burnett of the British Museum for their comments upon it. The coin is now in the possession of the finder. Further information is held in the County Sites and Monuments Record, Record No CSMR 2318.





Prehistoric mining at Alderley Edge, page 6



Bronze Age axe from Marbury, page 8



Medieval pottery from Chester, page 14



Produced by Environmental Planning
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