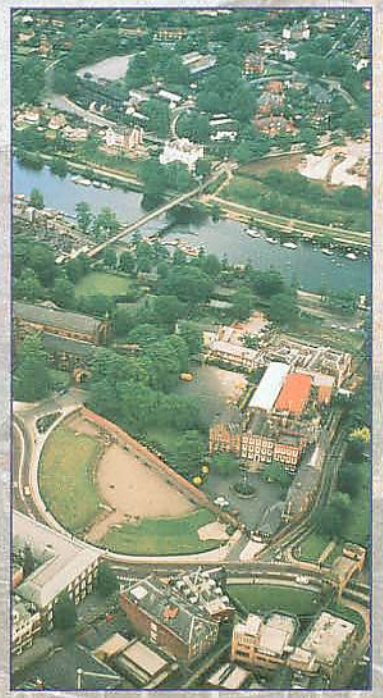
CHESHIRE PAST

an annual review of archaeology in Cheshire



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Cheshire County Council

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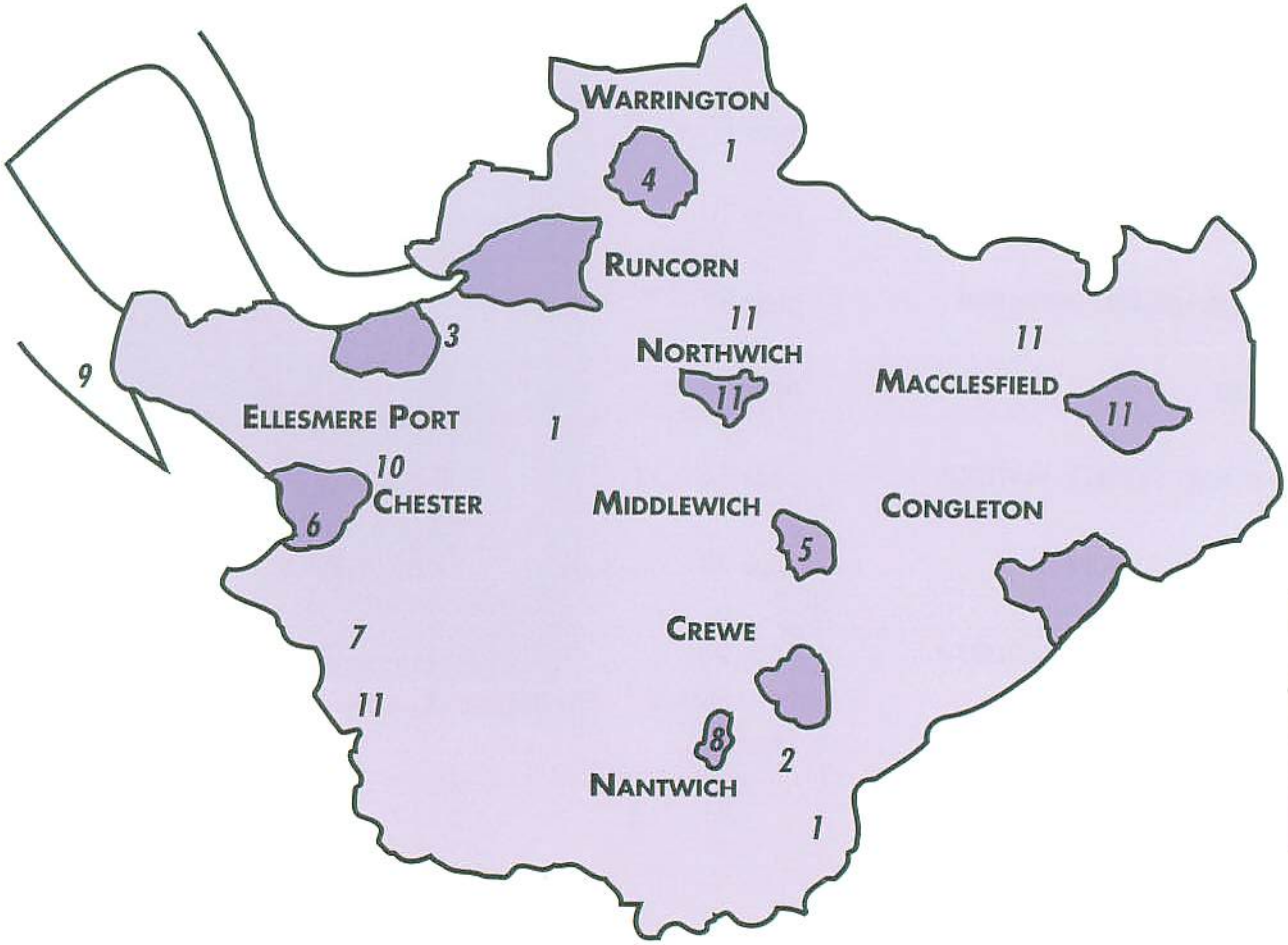

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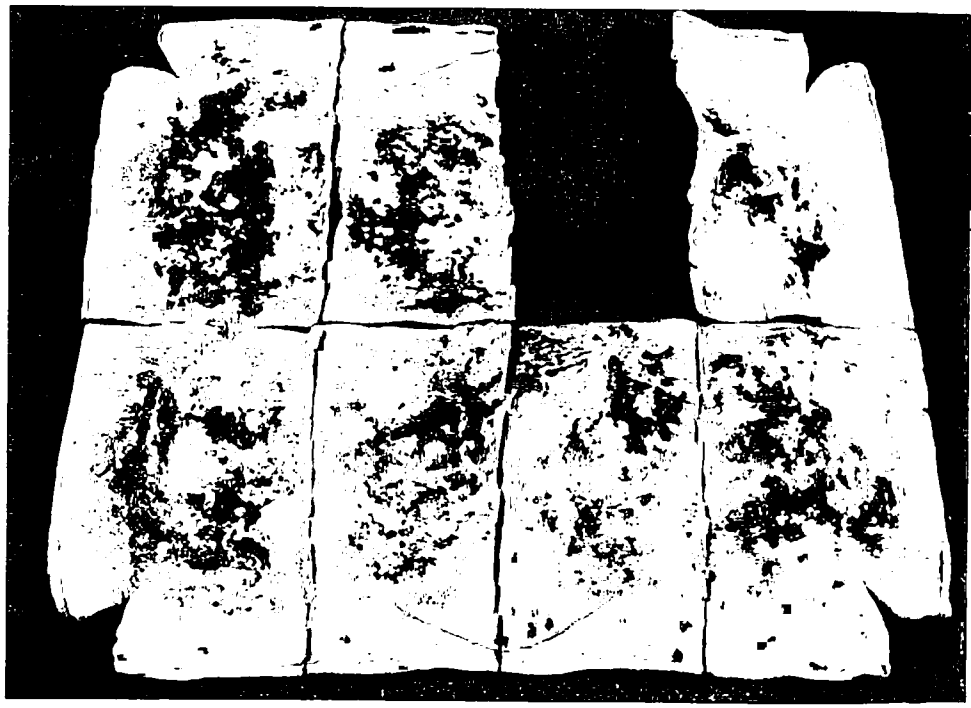


The Shavington salt pan, page 6

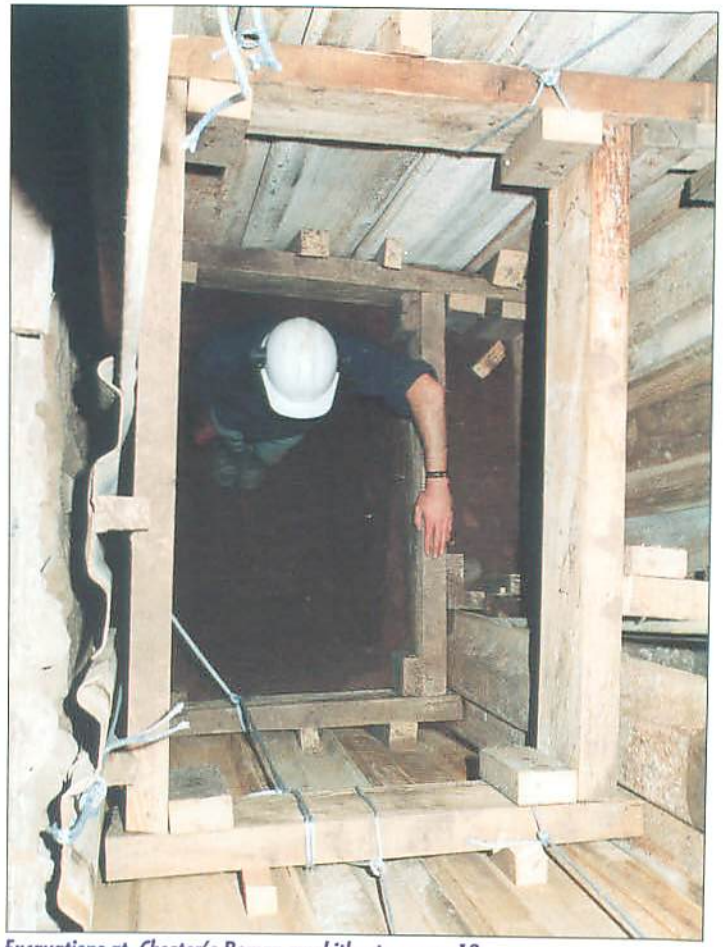
EDITORIAL

Welcome to Issue 4 of ***CHESHIRE PAST*** *- the annual review of all the latest archaeological news in Cheshire. Nationally, there has been continued debate about English Heritage's radical plans to improve visitor facilities at Stonehenge. These have included such solutions as road closures, by-passes, underpasses and even replicas. For those who remember the days when it was possible for visitors to touch and move among the stones, such solutions may seem extreme. But with increasing mobility and a growing heritage market among both British and overseas holidaymakers, visitor figures at such sites have escalated dramatically over the past two decades. It is no longer possible to allow such sites to manage themselves - as we are beginning to learn as we contemplate the problems of tourist erosion on Cheshire's own historic sites, country houses and long-distance footpaths.*

The debate also highlights the difficulties in reconciling the often competing demands of archaeology, landscape and nature conservation. At Stonehenge, for example, one of the alternative plans has been shown to threaten a site of national importance for nature conservation. Clearly, it is as important to strike a balance between the conflicting demands of conservation as it is between those of conservation and tourism.

This issue of ***CHESHIRE PAST*** *has a strong Roman theme. We have reports on recent work on Chester's walls and amphitheatre, Roman Wilderspool, and two newly-discovered military sites - a Roman fort at Middlewich and a fortlet at Stanlow. We also have news of a further example of an inscribed Roman salt pan, recently discovered near Crewe.*

But other periods have not been ignored. We have reports on a new survey of the Norman motte at Aldford and on an unusual piece of medieval stonework at Nantwich Church. We also report on Bronze Age Alderley Edge and on preliminary results from the Cheshire phase of the North West Wetlands Survey, as well as somewhat more recent remains, in the form of 18th century memorials and 20th century holiday cabins! And finally, in a year which marks the 1,200th anniversary of the Viking landings in Ireland and the 450th anniversary of the sinking of Henry VIII's flagship the Mary Rose, we have the first report of a new underwater survey being carried out by local divers in Liverpool Bay.



Excavations at Chester's Roman amphitheatre, page 12

CHESHIRE PAST is edited by Adrian Tindall , Cheshire County Council Environmental Planning Service and designed by Cheshire Museums Service. Issue 1 is out of print, but Issues 2 and 3 are still available in some bookshops and by post from the Editor. If you have any items of archaeological news, please contact the Editor, CHESHIRE PAST, Cheshire County Council, Environmental Planning, Commerce House, Hunter Street, Chester CH1 2QP, Tel Chester (0244) 603160.

1 THE NORTH WEST WETLANDS SURVEY: RESULTS FROM CHESHIRE *Mark Leah, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit*

A Neolithic chert arrowhead, flint scraper and flaked flint axe from Oakmere

Over the years the wetlands of lowland England have produced many spectacular archaeological finds, preserved from the normal processes of decay by the waterlogged conditions in which they lay. The discovery of Lindow man in 1984 showed the potential of Cheshire's own wetlands.

It was in recognition of this potential, and the threat posed to the region's lowland peat by drainage, refuse disposal and peat extraction, that English Heritage commissioned the North West Wetlands Survey in 1988. Since then, survey work has been going on across much of the North West, and began in Cheshire in 1993.

Systematic fieldwalking of arable land within and on the margins of present or former wetlands has been used to locate settlements and other sites. During this process any pieces of pottery or flint are collected and their position plotted. Concentrations of such material may point to significant human activity and, by plotting their distribution, a meaningful pattern may emerge. Of course, parts of Cheshire lack large amounts of arable land and, where wetlands occur in these areas, one has to be content with examining the pasture or woodland for evidence of earthworks.

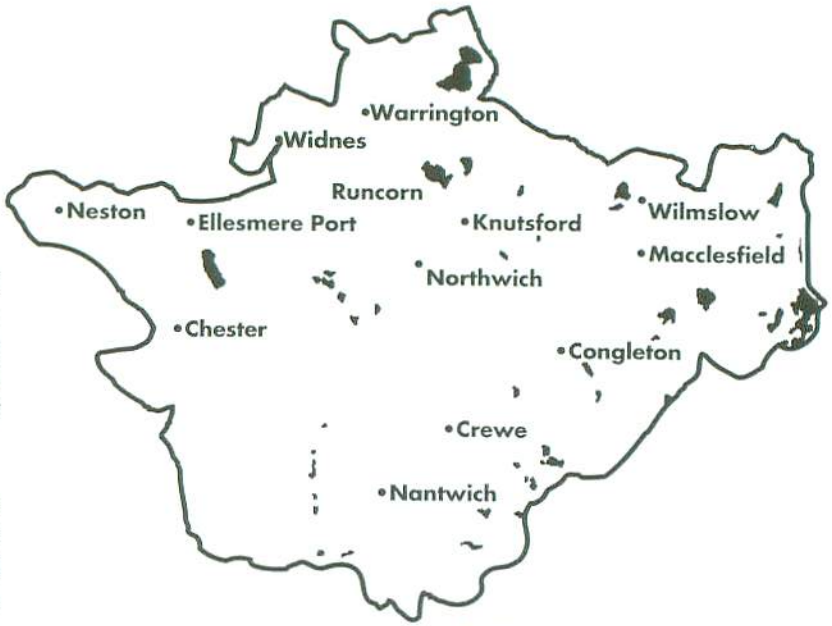
In addition to the archaeological survey, a full programme of environmental sampling has also been undertaken. This has allowed not only the depth and state of preservation of the peat to be established, but has also revealed the way in which the vegetation changed as it built up. Scientific techniques such as radiocarbon dating allow precise dates to be assigned to these changes, which can sometimes be tied in with the archaeological evidence.

Not all of the work has been field based, and much useful information has been gained from documentary evidence. An examination of early maps may show the former extent of wetlands now reduced in size, or reveal ones that have otherwise disappeared. Similarly, examination of the sources can reveal a wealth of information on the early uses of the wetlands, such as for peat cutting, and on the history of their reclamation. Although a full season of fieldwork has now been completed, the process of analysing the evidence has hardly begun. Even at this stage, however, it appears that there is a pattern to the distribution of finds in certain areas.

Fieldwalking over the extensive wetlands of Rixton and Risley Mosses, on the north bank of the Mersey, has revealed a sparse spread of artefacts in the fields bordering the deep peat. This has included two small concentrations of

struck and burnt flint, probably dating to the Later Mesolithic period (c8000-6000 years ago) and evidence of short visits to the area by small groups of hunter-gatherers. Other flint tools recovered from this area are not so obviously datable, but probably originate in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (c4000 years ago). This material does not occur in concentrations but as a diffuse spread of material, occurring in most fields around the edges of the mosses.

Further south, the wetlands and mosses in the Delamere area have seen much activity. At Oakmere, for example, it proved possible to examine a significant amount of arable land around the lake. Pieces of worked stone were relatively abundant in this area, and included a flint axe and scraper and a chert arrowhead. These objects may show that this area was important in earlier prehistory, just as the enclosure on the lake shore indicates that the area was of some significance at the end of the prehistoric period.



The distribution of lowland peat in Cheshire

A selection of flintwork from the Rixton/Risley area

Close to the Shropshire border, a large block of arable land was examined at Doddington. This area was of interest not just because it is the site of several mosses but also because of the presence of Doddington castle, a medieval tower house. In this area only a few pieces of flint and burnt stone were found. More common were pieces of medieval and early post-medieval pottery, probably deposited during the spreading of manure and household rubbish on the fields. In one place, however, enough pottery was recovered to indicate a possible settlement dating to the 16th or 17th century. It is hoped that detailed documentary research will confirm this.

The evidence from the three areas gives a flavour of the results of the project's work in Cheshire. Space does not permit the evidence from all of the sites visited to be described, but it is already clear that the project has established a base from which further research can proceed and consideration given to preserving some of the best preserved wetlands.

The North West Wetlands Survey is sponsored by English Heritage. Fieldwork in Cheshire has been carried out by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, supported by Cheshire County Council. The author would like to thank the many landowners in Cheshire who have allowed access to their land for the purposes of the survey. Further details of the project's results may be found in the North West Wetlands Survey's annual reports, available from Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, The Storey Institute, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster, LA1 1TH.

2 AN INSCRIBED ROMAN SALT PAN FROM SHAVINGTON

Stephen Penney, Cheshire Museums Service, and David Shotter, Lancaster University

The inscription VIVENTI

In September 1993 an inscribed Roman lead salt pan was found with a metal detector on farmland at Shavington, near Crewe (SJ 707 517). It had been cut into eight roughly equal-sized sections in antiquity. Seven of these were found stacked together at approximately 200mm depth; the eighth was not located. In its original condition, the 8mm thick pan would have measured c1m x 900mm x 140mm, and weighed about 118kg. An inscription cast in low relief along one side reads *VIVENTI COPI*. The 'N' is reversed.

It can be identified as a pan in which brine was heated to manufacture salt. The inscription and other features clearly indicate a Roman date, and bring to eight the total number of confirmed Roman salt pans from Cheshire. Whilst none of these has been excavated in a Roman saltworking context, their identification with saltworking is clearly indicated by comparison with well-documented lead salt pans of medieval and later date.

The inscription is of considerable interest, as it hints at how the late Roman salt industry in Cheshire may have been organised. There is little doubt that the first word is the possessive genitive of the name *Viventius*. The second word *COPI* is incomplete, the first letter(s) having been on the missing section. As there is what appears to be part of a reversed `S' at the fracture, it is suggested that the second word is *EPISCOPI*, which can mean `overseer' or, in a Christian context, `bishop'.

The meaning of the inscription will then be either `of *Viventius*, the overseer (or bishop)' or `of *Viventius*, in the charge of the overseer (or bishop)'. The name *Viventius* is 4th century, and has Christian connotations. If `bishop' is the correct reading, the significance of this inscription would be considerable, suggesting the involvement of the early church in local industry in the 4th century.

The discovery of a Roman salt pan at Shavington need not in itself indicate Roman saltworking in the area, particularly since the pan had been reduced to scrap. However, there is increasing evidence that Roman saltworking was not confined to Middlewich (*Salinae*) and Northwich (*Condate*), but extended into rural areas where there were formerly brine springs. A brine kiln reported from Tetton, *briquetage* from Moston, and two Roman lead salt pans found near Nantwich all suggest a more scattered salt industry.

The inscription ... COPI

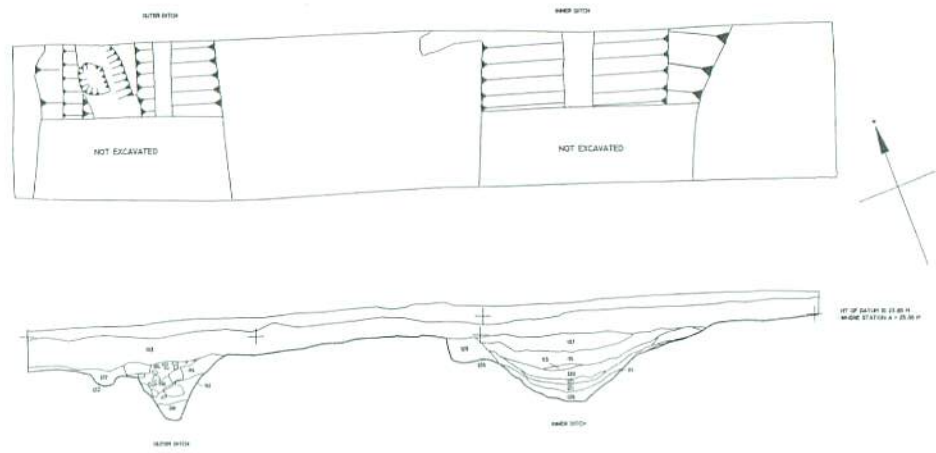
The authors are grateful to Gordon Sandland for reporting the discovery and donating the pan to the Salt Museum (Acc No 1993.36). Further information is held in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR 2400). A full report will be published in the Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society.

3 A NEW ROMAN FORTLET NEAR STANLOW

Robert A Philpott , National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside

The site during excavation

Aerial photography in June 1992 revealed a previously-unknown Roman fortlet at Ince, near Stanlow. The site showed up as a cropmark in the form of a double-ditched enclosure with an entrance on the southern side. Computer plotting of the aerial photographs shows that it measures externally about 72m north-south by 60m east-west, giving an internal area of c0.35ha, or 0.9acres.



Plan and section of the defences of the Roman fortlet at Ince

In March 1994 a small-scale excavation was carried out to assess the condition and date of the site. Two trenches were opened, one on the line of the defences, the other inside the enclosure. The interior trench revealed two certain and one possible post-holes, but no dating evidence. The other trench was more productive, showing that the ditches had been cut into Bunter sandstone, 4.8m apart. The outer ditch was shallower and narrower with a steep profile on the inner side, and contained slumped sandstone. The inner ditch had been partly filled with blue clay, probably from the marshes to the north and east of the site. Near the inner ditch was a large squarish post-hole. The ditches appeared to have been backfilled deliberately with material from the rampart.

The only dating evidence from the site was a thumbnail-sized fragment of decorated Samian ware, found in a modern feature. The sherd was probably produced at La Graufesenque, cAD 80-100/110. It was suggested initially that the Ince fortlet belonged to the early invasion period, but the excavation suggests a later date, probably after the foundation of the legionary fortress at Chester, cAD 79. A strong connection between it and the fortress only 12km to the south seems certain, possibly linked by a road branching near Bridge Trafford close to that suggested by Watkin in the late 19th century.

The Ince fortlet is similar in form to the later fortlet at Castleshaw, and may have performed a similar strategic function. It lies on a steep-sided promontory overlooking the Mersey, with sweeping views to north Wirral and Runcorn, and was perhaps established to control traffic along the important routeway of the Mersey estuary.

Thanks are due to the site owners, Shell UK, their agent Mr Alan Birch, and the tenant farmer Mr A Whitby, for permission to excavate. The fieldwork was undertaken by Mark Adams, George Luke, Rosalind Mann and Lynn Smith. I am grateful to Cheshire County Council for a grant towards the cost of the excavation, and to Mrs Margaret Ward for identifying the Samian sherd. For further information, see R A Philpott: 'New Light on Roman Settlement : Recent Aerial Photography in Cheshire' in CHESHIRE PAST 3, 1994, 6-7; and WT Watkin: ROMAN CHESHIRE, 1886 (reprinted 1974).

4 ROMAN REMAINS AT LOUSHERS LANE, WILDERSPOOL *Will Walker, Earthworks Archaeological Services*

Roman masonry exposed in a service trench at Loushers Lane Special School, 1993

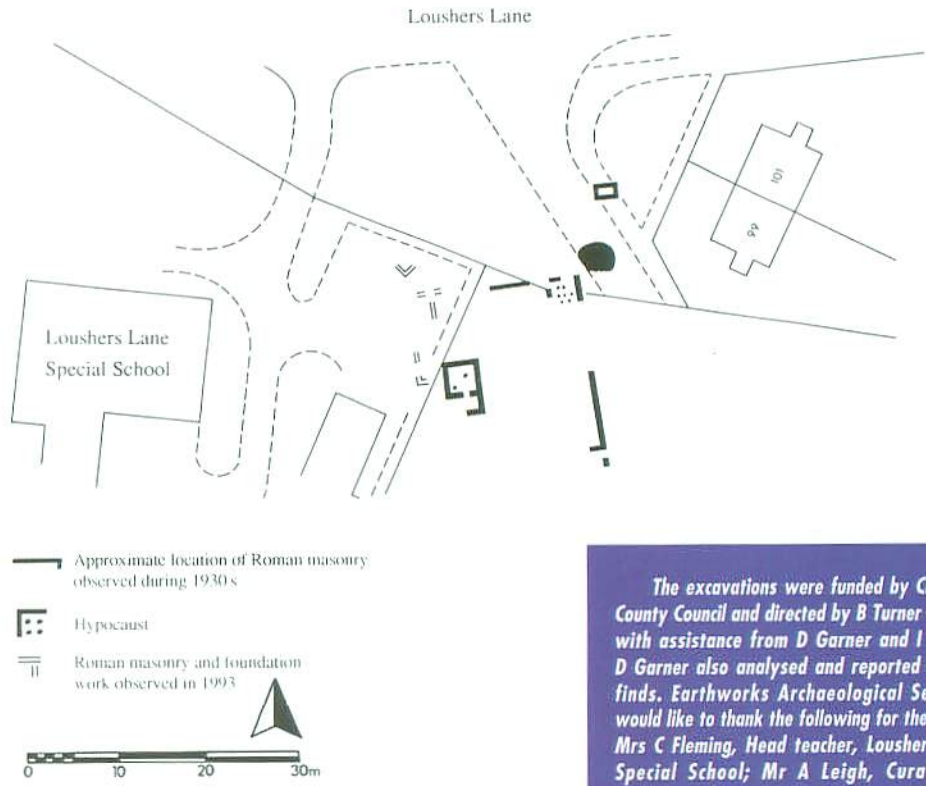
Since the late 18th century, the Wilderspool area of Warrington has produced large quantities of Roman material. The earliest finds were observed in 1770 during canal construction, and subsequent chance discoveries, together with large-scale archaeological excavations since the late 19th century, have demonstrated that the Roman settlement was very extensive with, as yet, no obvious nucleus.

The possibility remains that an early fort was sited in the Warrington area, but the evidence to date suggests that Roman Wilderspool was a purely civilian settlement, dominated by timber buildings, that came into existence towards the end of the 1st century AD. Activity appears to have been largely industrial, with iron, bronze and lead working, together with pottery production and perhaps glass making.

In the Loushers Lane area, towards the eastern side of the Roman settlement, the character of the occupation was somewhat different. The masonry foundations of a substantial Roman building were investigated during the 1930s, and at least one room possessed an underfloor heating system, or hypocaust. A smaller structure, measuring c6m x 3.6m and constructed of sandstone with a clay floor, lay some 12m to the west; north of the building complex lay a sandstone tank and the remains of a circular sandstone base, both of uncertain function. To the east, more extensive excavations in the 1970s revealed the remains of circular timber buildings of pre-Roman character, together with timber structures within rectangular enclosures. These buildings appeared to be associated with domestic, industrial and agricultural activities. The remains of decorated column capitals were also found.

In June 1993, prior to the construction of an extension to Loushers Lane Special School (SJ 6162 8682), an archaeological evaluation was carried out. The site lies very close to the remains observed during the 1930s. Three trial trenches were excavated, and showed that considerable damage to the archaeological levels had occurred as a result of modern development. However, the sandstone footings of a Roman wall and associated clay floor survived. These remains were considered to form the west side of the imprecisely-located, small rectangular building exposed in the 1930s. Their survival, well below the general level of the natural sandy subsoil, indicates a partially sunken room and suggests that this area too once formed part of a hypocaust.

Sandstone hypocaust pillars in situ, May 1930



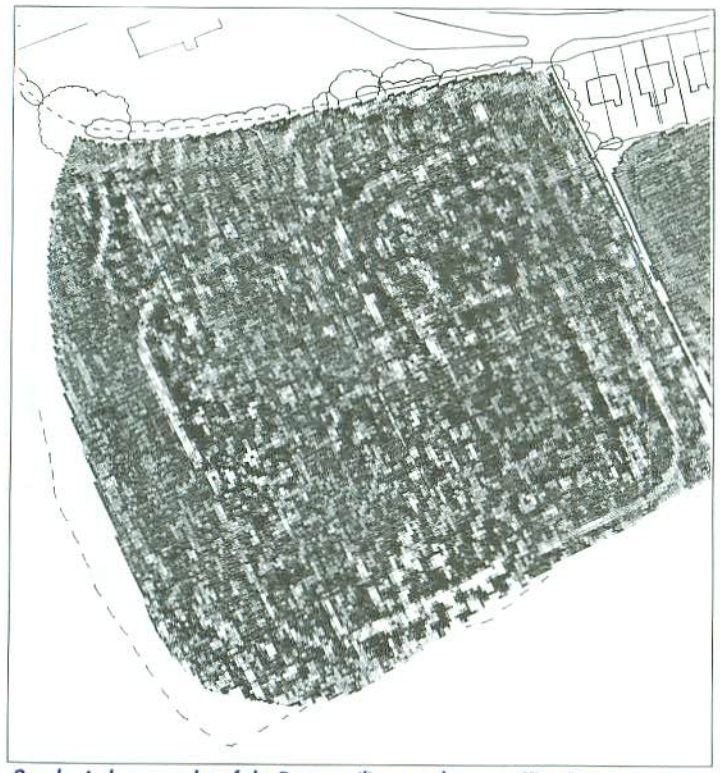
Further observations, during levelling operations for a new car park at the school, demonstrated that pockets of undisturbed archaeological deposits and features have survived modern activity. Traces of surface metalling were found, together with the sandstone rubble wall foundations of differently-aligned buildings, perhaps indicating separate periods of activity on the site. Pottery from the site indicates occupation from the 2nd to the 4th centuries AD but, at present, the relationship between structures cannot be established.

The evidence demonstrates that some of the buildings in the vicinity displayed sophistication and wealth, including luxuries of the day such as underfloor heating, decorated stone columns, window glass, painted wall plaster and, perhaps, a bath-suite. The character and quality of the structures may indicate the presence of a suburban villa complex on the east side of the Roman settlement.

Currently, a programme of grant-aided archaeological work is under way, with the aim of identifying the broad limits and state of preservation of the site. Several test trenches have already been excavated, and the initial results are most encouraging. Further trenches are planned during the next phase of the project, when it is hoped that a greater understanding of the site and its potential will be achieved.

The excavations were funded by Cheshire County Council and directed by B Turner-Flynn, with assistance from D Garner and I Smith. D Garner also analysed and reported on the finds. Earthworks Archaeological Services would like to thank the following for their help: Mrs C Fleming, Head teacher, Loushers Lane Special School; Mr A Leigh, Curator of Warrington Museum; Mr G Ashby, Deva Living History Service; Mr G Barnes, Cheshire County Architectural Services; and Mr M Roberts and Mr P Haslam, Warrington Borough Council. Copies of the evaluation report have been deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR 435) and with the site archive at Warrington Museum. For further information on Roman settlement in the Loushers Lane area, see D F Petch: 'The Roman Period' in A HISTORY OF THE COUNTY OF CHESTER (The Victoria History of the Counties of England), Vol 1, 1987, 196-7; J Hinchliffe and J H Williams: ROMAN WARRINGTON: EXCAVATIONS AT WILDERSPOOL 1966-9 AND 1976, Brigantia Monograph No 2, Manchester University 1992; S Grealey: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WARRINGTON'S PAST' Warrington New Town Development Corporation, 1976.

5 ROMAN MIDDLEWICH AND OTHER WORK IN CHESHIRE 1993-4 *Gifford Archaeology Service*



Geophysical survey plot of the Roman military enclosure at King Street, Middlewich (courtesy of Stratascan)

Gifford's work in Cheshire during 1993-4 involved a wide variety of work. Field evaluation, including geophysical survey and trial trenching, was undertaken in the vicinity of **King Street, Middlewich** (SJ 668 708). Here, a Roman military enclosure was located within Harbutt's Field, and has now been Scheduled as an ancient monument. The military enclosure, which may have been a temporary camp or a more permanent fort, measures 125m north-south and 112m east-west, with an internal area of 1.4ha. Possible beam-slots identified within the enclosure suggest a permanent occupation. The camp or fort probably only housed the smallest Roman army unit, a *cohors quingenaria peditata* of around 500 auxiliary infantrymen.

The site lies c100m to the west of King Street. It would appear therefore that it is not contemporary with the route of King Street reflected by the present B5309, although its general route must have been established when the military enclosure was constructed. Fragments of Roman armour and military fittings dating to the Flavian period (late 1st century AD) have been discovered during excavations at Wilderspool. Thus, although the Roman road which links Chester, Northwich and Manchester has always been assumed to be the main military route north in the early conquest period, it would now appear that King Street (a much more direct south-north route) may also have had a military function during the Roman conquest of the north in AD 71-9.

The evidence collected during the major excavations at **Wilderspool, Warrington** (SJ 612 865, see **CHESHIRE PAST 3**) is currently being analysed for publication. A watching brief has been maintained over the construction of the new supermarket, and provided some further information on the layout of the Roman settlement. A further evaluation in the Old Brewery area identified no Roman deposits or features, and demonstrated that this area has been heavily disturbed by modern construction. The first publication on the recent archaeological work at Wilderspool will be a lavishly illustrated book (to be published by the Greenalls Group) dealing with the origins, development and decline of the Romano-British industrial settlement. A full academic publication of the results is also in preparation.

Other projects undertaken in 1993-4 included a number of field evaluations. Along the **A550 Deeside Park-M53 Improvement** (SJ 320 680-SJ 355 795) a series of features was recorded, ranging from a medieval boundary bank and ditch in Shotwick Park to a Second World War pillbox near Sealand Airfield. At **Weaver Street,**

Chester (SJ 406 660), remains related to the western defences of the Roman fortress of *Deva* were recorded, together with deposits associated with medieval and post-medieval occupation along the Weaver Street frontage.

Coin of Caracalla (AD 198-217) from Weaver Street, Chester.

Watching briefs were undertaken during several developments. Deposits related to medieval/post-medieval moated manor houses were identified and recorded at **White Hall, near Wilmslow** (SJ 844 796) and **Wybunbury** near Nantwich (SJ 702 495). At **Lewin Street, Middlewich** (SJ 704 661), medieval and post-medieval deposits and pits were identified. In consultation with the Chester Archaeological Service, specifications were prepared for archaeological evaluations at **Dee House, Chester** (SJ 408 663), the site of Chester's Roman amphitheatre (see below, page 12).

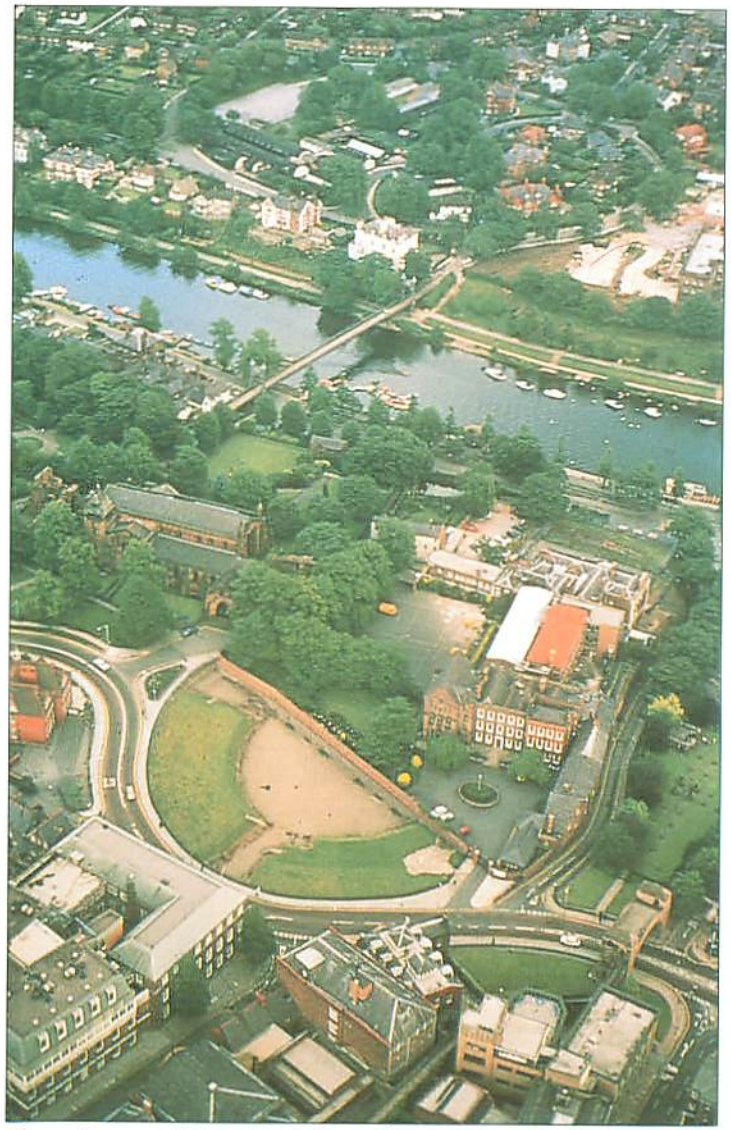
Aerial photograph of the Roman military enclosure at King Street, Middlewich (photo: Cheshire County Council)

A desk-based appraisal and surface inspection was undertaken of land at **Sutton Hall Farm, Sutton Weaver** near Runcorn (SJ 543 790), identifying the possible route of a Roman Road between Chester and Wilderspool and the possible sites of medieval and post-medieval mills. A desk-based appraisal of the route of the proposed **Warrington Southern Expressway** (SJ 605 884) was undertaken, and later a programme of assessment and recording of a Georgian Listed Building, 14 Bewsey Street, undertaken in the same area.

The projects were funded by the Greenalls Group Plc, W M Morrison Supermarkets Plc, Cheshire County Council, North West Water, British Telecommunications Plc, David McLean Holdings Ltd, the Seddon Group Ltd, Harding Wragg Associates, Mr M Faulknor and Rondel Palmer and Tritton. Gifford and Partners also wish to thank Mr A Tindall, Dr J Collens, Mrs C Appleby and Mr S Jardine of Cheshire County Council and Dr J Lewis and Roger White of Liverpool University for their co-operation and support. Giffords would also like to thank Mrs Lynne Walker for her assistance in the recording of 14 Bewsey Street and Earthworks Archaeological Services for on-site excavation and recording works. Project archives will be submitted to suitable local museums and depositories. Copies of the project reports, together with reproducible elements of the archives, will be lodged with the County Sites and Monuments Record and National Monuments Record. For further information see A Johnson : ROMAN FORTS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND CENTURIES AD IN BRITAIN AND THE GERMAN PROVINCES, London, 1983, 292; I D Margary: ROMAN ROADS IN BRITAIN, London, 1973, 302, 304; A C and E Waddelove: BRITANNIA, Vol XXI, 1990, 331.

6 CHESTER ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE: EXCAVATIONS IN 1993

Katherine Buxton, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit



Chester Roman amphitheatre from the air (photo: Cheshire County Council)

In early 1993, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit undertook an evaluation on the site of Dee House, Chester, prior to its proposed redevelopment. The aims of the work were to examine the foundations of the existing building and to establish areas and depths at which significant archaeological deposits survived.

Dee House and grounds stand high above the north bank of the River Dee. They are bordered to the west by Souters Lane, to the east by St John's Church, and to the north by the displayed remains of the northern part of the Roman amphitheatre.

The amphitheatre, discovered in 1929, originally comprised a timber structure, built around AD 76-8. This was replaced, some time in the very late 1st century, by a larger stone-built amphitheatre, measuring some 105 x 90m. This building probably coincided with the garrisoning of *Deva* by *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*, and appears to have continued in use throughout most of the Roman occupation of Chester. From 1960-69 the northern half of the site was excavated by F H Thompson, whose report was published in 1976. Dee House itself was built *c*1730 for a Chester merchant. It later served as both a vicarage and a convent boarding school, undergoing extensive alterations until its purchase by British Telecommunications plc in 1970.

During the 1993 excavations, a total of 35 trenches was excavated, covering the entire site. Although the construction of Dee House and the buildings to the rear have obviously destroyed a considerable depth of deposits, there were few trenches in which no deposits of archaeological interest were found. The Roman deposits can be divided into three groups: those associated with the amphitheatre itself, those on an upper terrace directly outside the amphitheatre, and those on a lower terrace to the south of it.

In brief, the stone amphitheatre comprised an oval area, surrounded by an arena wall and a massive, buttressed, outer wall. The space between these walls was occupied by a third concentric wall and a mass of bank material (redeposited during the construction of the arena) supporting the stadium

seating. This concentric wall is thought to be approximately 2m in width, and comprise two bonded walls enclosing a rubble core. A large section of it was found only 750mm below a modern surface inside Dee House. The remains of the wall, the footings of which were not found, comprised six courses of large,roughly-dressed sandstone blocks, bonded with compacted mortar and clay, and enclosing a rubble and clay core. The outer face of the wall was not located. Material butting it, which was also found in other trenches across the site, seems to be part of the bank material that supported the seating. It comprised dark brown sandy clay, containing sandstone fragments and a few finds. Other features within the supposed circuit of the amphitheatre have been interpreted as the truncated remains of structures connected with entrances to the seating bank, although this interpretation remains speculative due to the limited nature of the deposits.

The concentric wall of the amphitheatre, visible on the left of the trench

The position of known Roman structures to the south of the site suggests the area was terraced from Roman times. This hypothesis was supported by the relative levels of natural material, and by Roman and medieval deposits which imply such a terrace, possibly bounded by an east-west retaining wall. The buildings to the rear of Dee House appear to have destroyed the upper Roman horizons in this area, although the lower horizons suggest the terrace was covered by a series of metalled surfaces surrounding the amphitheatre. Interpretation of the lower terrace remains tentative. However, the existence of structures to the south of the site, and their possible association with a wall, a possible well, and substantial amounts of demolition rubble found during the excavations, implies that the rear wall of the Dee House complex is aligned with Roman structures on this lower terrace. The excavations produced a good range of largely well-preserved material, namely Roman, medieval, and post-medieval pottery, glass, metalwork, bone, shell, stone and building ceramics. The Roman pottery comprised mainly 1st-2nd century coarse wares, predominantly jars and flagons, although a small amount of good quality Samian ware was also recovered. All would appear to be domestic in nature, and may have served the needs of the amphitheatre's patrons for prepared food and drink.

The work was commissioned by Gifford and Partners Ltd on behalf of British Telecommunications plc. The author is grateful to all concerned with the excavations, particularly Ian Miller, Andy Lovatt and Steven McDowell for on-site work, and Christine Howard-Davis for finds analysis. Thanks are also due to both Anne Thompson and Tim Strickland of Gifford and Partners. The archive has been deposited with the Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

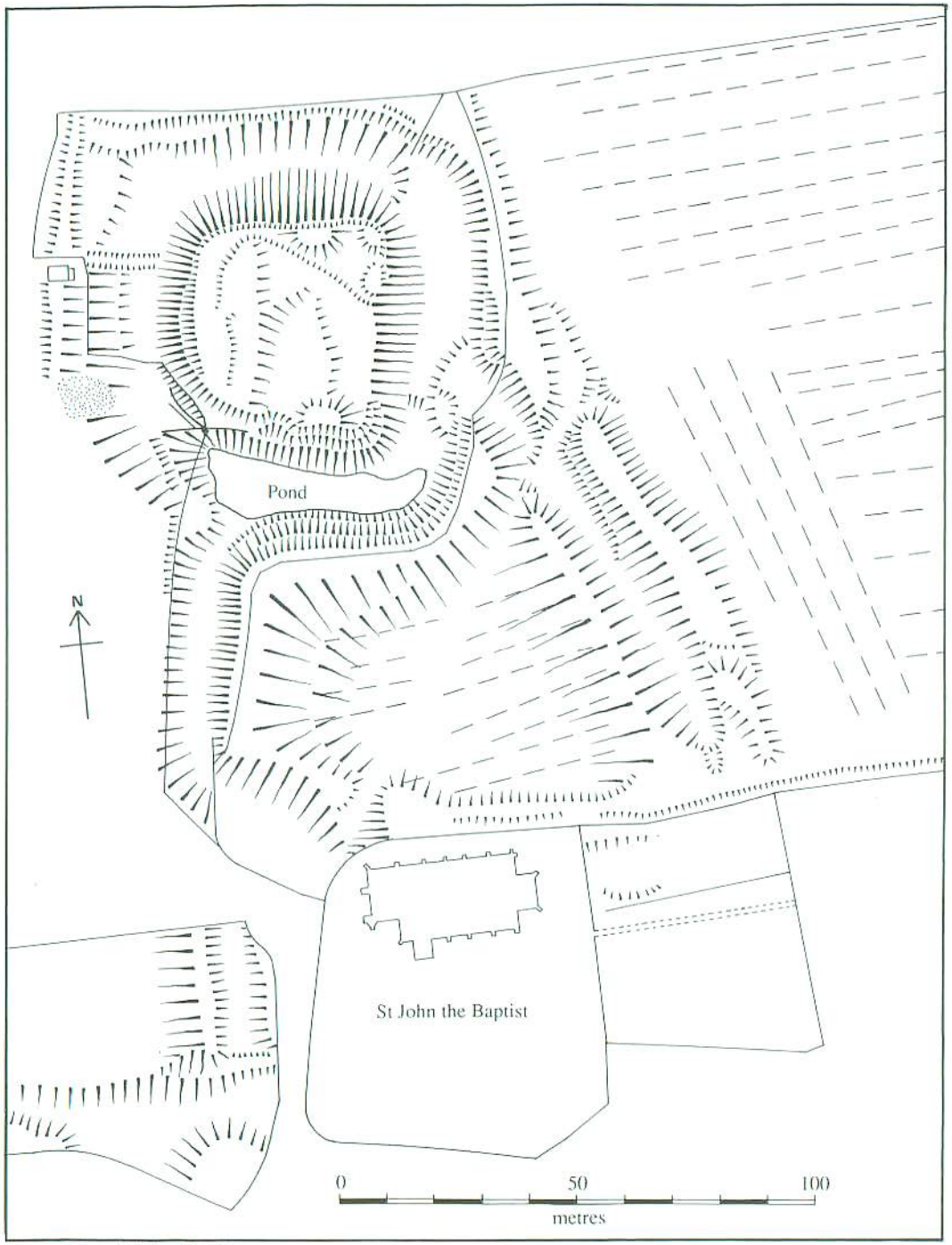
7 A SURVEY OF ALDFORD CASTLE *Susan Reynolds and Graeme White*

The bailey ditch looking north towards the motte

Very often it is assumed that a landscape feature as distinctive as a castle represents only a single phase of activity, falling into disuse and decay to produce the field monument we see today. Through a detailed analytical survey of the surface earthworks, it is possible to suggest that the earthwork motte-and-bailey castle at Aldford was replaced by a later stone house. This was in turn demolished, and the castle mound altered, to form a landscape feature within the park of Eaton Hall.

Aldford Castle (SJ 4186 5957) is one of a series of Norman castles located on the western border of Cheshire. The castle is sited at the confluence of the River Dee and Aldford Brook, commanding the old Dee crossing, and now spanned by the 1824 Ironbridge leading to Eaton hall. Aldford Castle does not appear in the Domesday Book in 1086, although the land was held by one of the more important Cheshire land holders, Bigot de Loges, and was the administrative centre of his estate. The first documented mention of the castle was in 1276, and in 1286 reference is found to the continued maintenance of its defences. By the 12th century the castle was held by a family that took the name Aldford, and later passed to the Arderne and Stanley families, before coming to Henry VIII by forfeiture.

The square shape of the motte is unusual, as a circular shape is more common in the early conquest period. The shape may however be explained by a later modification of an earlier castle. Fragments of red sandstone masonry are visible on the motte top, suggesting that an earlier timber castle was replaced by a large stone manor house. The actual area available on the motte top differs little from that on most medieval moat islands in the county. To the south of the church is the area of the bailey, delimited by banks and ditches. The former boundary of the bailey is unclear



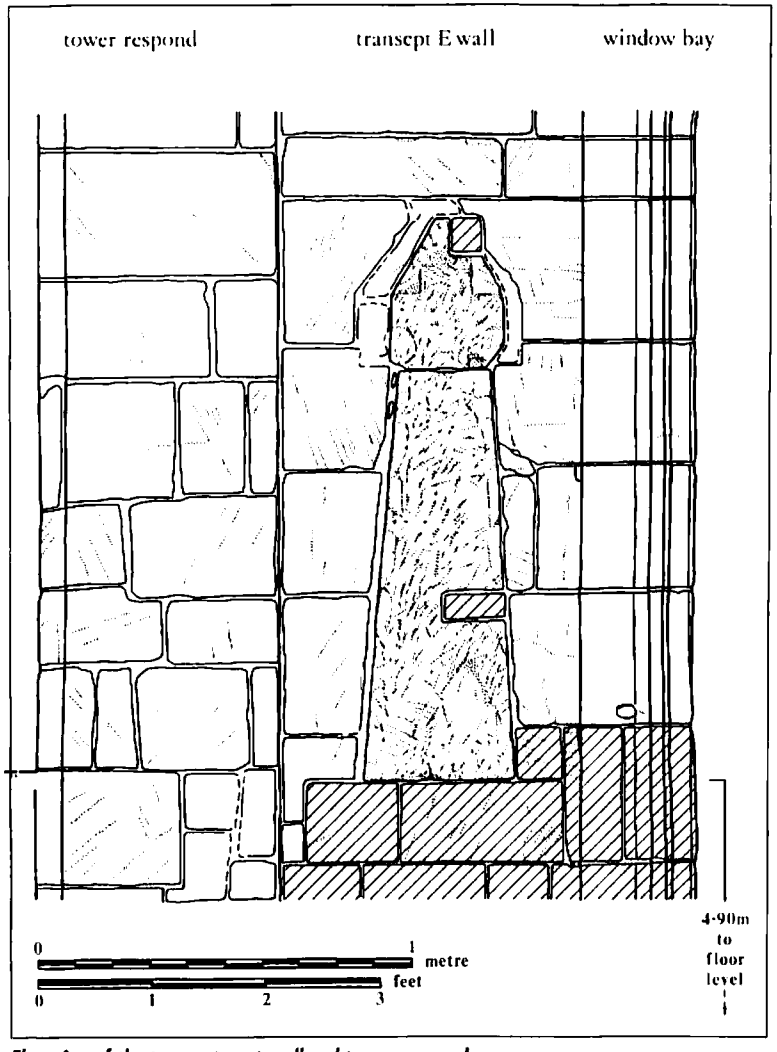
Survey plan of Aldford Castle

due to later development, although the ditch to the west may suggest it extended further southwards. If this were so, then St John the Baptist's church may lie within the former castle bailey. This land would have lain in the possession of the lord of the manor to gift to the church. The site of the medieval church lies slightly to the south of the present church, designed by John Douglas and built in 1866.

The manor of Aldford was purchased by the Grosvenor family in the early 18th century. An estate map of 1738 marks the motte as 'Blob Hill' and the bailey as 'Hall Yard'. During the re-landscaping of the park around Eaton Hall, the northern external bank of the castle was removed and the top of the motte planted with ornamental trees, including Scots pine. The removal of the external bank and the planting of trees was designed to enhance the motte as a landscape feature when viewed from Eaton Hall, the vista completed by Aldford church.

The archive will be deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR 1836). The survey was undertaken by kind permission of the landowner, His Grace the Duke of Westminster, through his agent Mr Barter. The survey was carried out as part of a field survey course arranged by Graeme White of Chester College and taught by Susan Reynolds. The students taking part in the survey course were Angela Griggs, Annette Jones, Richard Jones, Caroline O'Reilly, Denise Smith, Cheryl Swift, Joanne Taylor and Lynn Wain. The drawing was prepared for publication by Wayne Cocroft.

8 AN UNUSUAL ARCHITECTURAL FEATURE IN ST MARY'S CHURCH, NANTWICH *Paul Everson*



Elevation of the transept east wall and tower respond

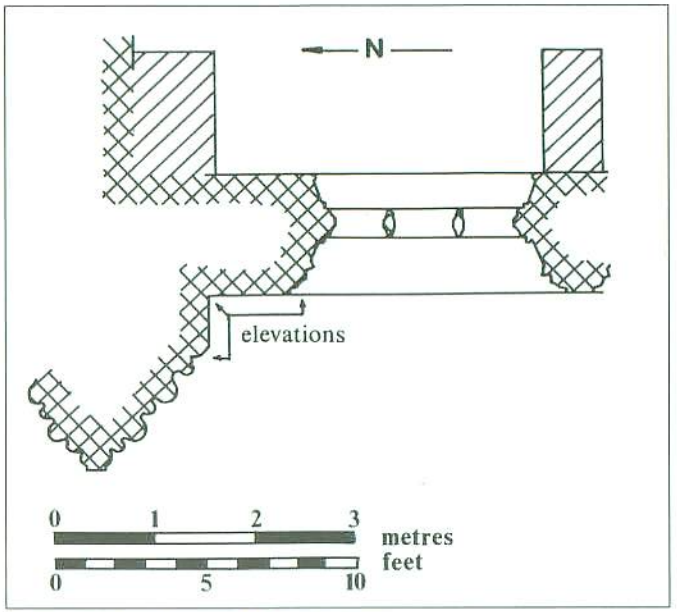
St Mary's Church at Nantwich is well known for its outstanding architecture and decorative detailing, principally of 14th-century date. Yet like so many of our ancient churches it also contains in its fabric anomalies and clues which, viewed archaeologically, can afford evidence of lost features and otherwise unrecorded aspects of development.

When in spring 1993 the organ at St Mary's was removed from its place in the north-east corner of the south transept for cleaning, a hitherto-hidden stretch of internal fabric of the east transept wall was revealed. High up within the coursed stonework a cross-shaped object was noticed, set upright and situated 5-6m above floor level, opposite the end of the south aisle. Though much mutilated by having had its surface hacked back at some time in the past, it looked from pavement level suggestively like a pre-Conquest shaft of a form known from examples at St John's in Chester and other churches in the Wirral, with a tapering shaft and ring or circle around the cross head.

The opportunity was taken to record by measured drawing both the object itself and the surrounding wall fabric, before the organ was replaced in position. This closer and systematic examination from scaffolding and through record drawings confirmed quite clearly that the object was not a pre-Conquest cross shaft, and showed that it had been deliberately inserted into the 14th-century wall fabric at some later date rather than being included during the building of the wall. The appearance of a ring- or circle-head to the cross resulted from a band of small stone and mortar packing of the hole made for the insertion.

In practice the object was made up of two separate stones, measuring 1.5m by 500mm overall. The upper had traces of a cross decorating it, but extended upwards into a regular mitred terminal. On the larger lower stone the cut-back decoration retains traces of what may have been a pattern of something like foliage tendrils, arcading or scalloping towards either edge. Both were of similar red sandstone to the wall fabric; and both probably were parts of medieval grave covers, perhaps of 13th-or 14th-century date, though it is less certain whether they were parts of the same cover.

The `cross shaft' in the east wall of the south transept



Plan showing the location of the elevations

What is additionally remarkable is the deliberate re-use of the stones in this way. It is plainly not just a functional re-use of stones as building materials after their primary use had been superseded. The two stones were deliberately selected and seem to have been trimmed to shape; they were deliberately set up together in this way and in this prominent location to look like a cross. This sort of re-use has been termed `iconic'. It seems to occur when the re-users wished to assume for themselves the virtue, idea or authority that the original was believed to enshrine. At the simplest level it might, for example, have been intended to associate a new church building or part of one with earlier Christian uses of the site.

The precise date and context for this event is not clear and may remain a puzzle. But the piece of recording work has contributed in a small way to the body of information available to those who in future wish to study the architectural development of St Mary's, and to enquire into the ideas and beliefs of those who have worshipped there.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the help of the following: the rector of St Mary's, Canon Richard Price, and his church wardens for their encouragement of the recording's taking place; the church architect, Jim Edleston of Bower Edleston Architects, for practical arrangements; Timothy Morgan as draughtsman for his efficient fieldwork and finished drawings. The original archive has been deposited with the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR 179/1/1), and dyeline copies of the drawings, plus the text, have been lodged with Nantwich Museum and St Mary's Church. For further reading see R N Bailey: VIKING AGE SCULPTURE, 1980 (especially chapter 8); P Everson: `Not a Saxon cross shaft - but an interesting historical witness', THIS MONTH AT ST MARY'S - the magazine of Nantwich Parish, May 1993, 4; P Everson: Note, THIS MONTH AT ST MARY'S, June 1993, 6; J Hall: A HISTORY OF THE TOWN AND PARISH OF NANTWICH, 1st edition 1883, reprinted 1972; J M Maddison: `Master masons of the diocese of Lichfield: a study in 14th-century architecture at the time of the Black Death', TRANSACTIONS OF THE LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, Vol 85, 1988; N Pevsner and E Hubbard: THE BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND: CHESHIRE, 1971.

9 UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY IN LIVERPOOL BAY *Bryan Atkin*

The author diving onto the wreck of the 'Lelia' (now thought to be that of the Calcium)

The history of seafaring has had until recently to be interpreted from surviving port installations and from pictures scratched in rock or painted on pottery. The invention of modern diving equipment has changed all that. The final expression of this history, the ship itself, is now available to us in the form of the shipwrecks which litter the seabed.

It would be all too easy to ignore the marine dimension altogether, faced as we are with an enormous resource of sites on land. This would, however, ignore the fact that an ancient ship represented the peak of technology for that society - a complex web of tools, techniques and traditions. The sites of shipwrecks do exist, and they represent in the North West a massive dimension of our history, without which we are in danger of distorting the historical picture.

The problem we face at the moment in protecting and investigating our underwater archaeological resource is that we do not know what that resource is. This question gave rise to the Liverpool Bay Archaeological Survey, which aims over the next five years to explore anomalies in Liverpool Bay and categorise the wrecks that lie there. The bay stretches from the Isle of Man south to the Great Orme and north to Southport, in a great triangle. For at least 6,000 years, its waters have been travelled by settlers, raiders, merchants, pirates and soldiers.

Naturally, because the sites are underwater, they present greater problems of investigation than a land site. On land we can use fieldwalking, aerial photography and chance finds to indicate sites, whilst at sea, even to investigate an area of $50m^2$ can take months, allowing for weather, underwater visibility and tides.

How are we conducting this investigation? Obviously we could not carry out a foot by foot search of the seabed. What we needed was a filter, a mechanism which would indicate what positions were worth a second look, and we found this information from four sources.

Firstly, there are the records of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC), which has conducted extensive sonar surveys within the bay and keeps records of known and unidentified wrecks in its archives. Secondly, we have the Royal Navy Hydrographic Survey (RNHS), which contains details of wrecks sometimes duplicated by the MDHC. However, the RNHS information is expensive, and a volunteer project like ours can only access a small proportion of it. Thirdly, there are the companies exploring Liverpool Bay for minerals, which have been contacted for access to shipwreck data encountered during their seismographic and sonar surveys. Lastly, there is the Kingfisher information. This organisation collects details from fishermen and trawlers in the bay area on obstructions and good fishing areas - fish tend to concentrate over wreck sites. It is this information which forms the core of the survey at the moment.

Sites are selected and the local diving clubs briefed. A series of dives is carried out after locating the site with radar and echo sounder, and a description of the wreck written up in reports. In fact, the past year was bedevilled with bad weather, wave action preventing echo sounder location, and plain bad luck where the site could not be found. However, the survey still managed in its first six months to identify three slate wrecks of the early/mid 19th century, a deep wreck with cannon on it (of unknown date), and the wreck of a very early steam vessel, the Rothesay Castle.

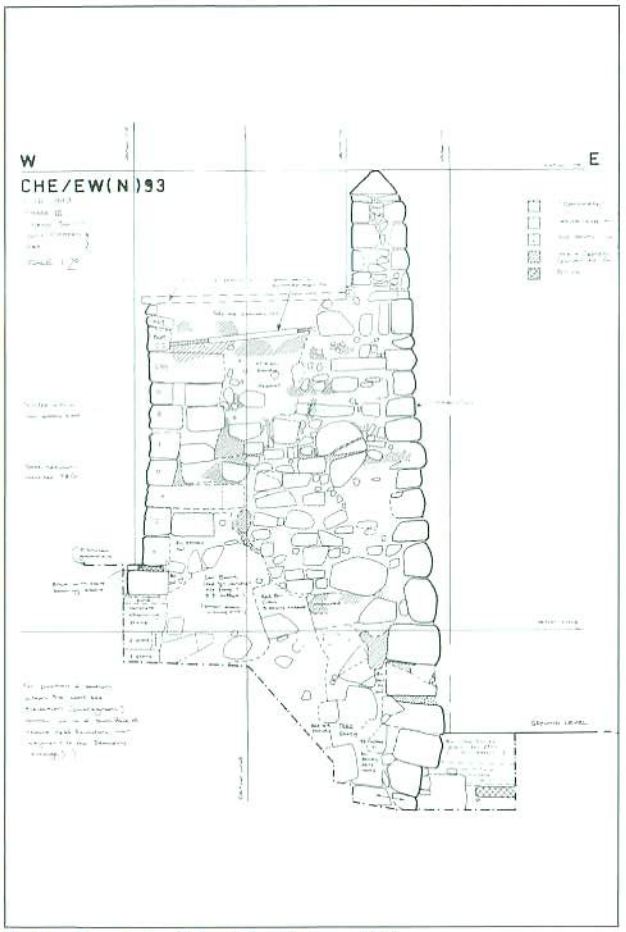
Other sites were investigated and found either not to be wrecks or to be the wrong ship. For instance, the RNHS gives the position of the Lelia, a blockade runner built for the Confederacy and wrecked in the bay in 1862. This position was dived upon and remains found. However, these contained electrical cabling and we now believe them to be the wreck of the Calcium, a small steamship lost in 1940.

Gravestone of a Roman soldier lost at sea (photo: Grosvenor Museum, Chester)

And so the survey goes on, at the moment bidding to be the largest voluntary survey ever undertaken in Europe, both in terms of area covered and number of people involved. That early wrecks do exist is certain - testified by a gravestone in the Grosvenor Museum of a Roman soldier lost at sea. Whether we can locate these within the survey is unknown, but any results obtained will be due in large measure to the hundreds of divers from the sub-aqua clubs taking part.

The author wishes to acknowledge the help of Cheshire County Council, The Grosvenor Museum, Chester, Oxford University MARE and Bangor University Department of Marine Studies. The Liverpool Bay Archaeological Survey archive is held by the author.

10 CHESTER CITY COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE 1993-4 *Michael Morris, Chester City Council*



Section through the City Wall at Kaleyard Gate (working drawing by Cheryl Quinn)

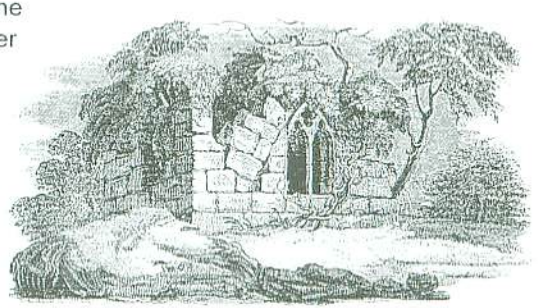
The recession continued to restrict the amount of 'rescue' work undertaken by the Service. However, a total of twelve fieldwork projects were carried out, and efforts devoted to a wide range of outreach activities.

In **Commonhall Street**, on the west side of Bridge Street (SJ 4048 6616), excavations in the newly-opened 'Deva Roman Experience' revealed the fragmentary remains of a long-lived Roman building. This lay to the south of the tribunes' houses and was possibly associated with them, although its plan and function are unknown. A minor street lay to the south on the line now followed by Pierpoint Lane.

After the levelling of the Roman building, a considerable depth of 'dark earth' built up over its northern part. Over the southern part and adjacent street, there appears to have been a 10th-century timber building. After the Norman Conquest, buildings were concentrated along the Bridge Street frontage, with the areas behind left open. The back cellar wall of one of these buildings stood on the remains of one of the Roman walls. On Pierpoint Lane the first building was probably erected in the 13th or 14th century; the remains of its walls survived beneath those of a 16th-century building.

The period from the 16th century to the present day was marked by infilling of the areas behind the main streets. Brick buildings separated by small yards covered the site. Under its southern end lay the sandstone-walled cellar of a fine 18th-century town house. This replaced the 16th-century building and encroached right across the end of Pierpoint Lane. It was replaced by the existing brick building in the middle of this century. The site was rich in finds from the 17th to the 19th centuries, thrown as rubbish into the backyards or pits.

Restoration of part of the eastern sector of the City Wall, north of the medieval **Kaleyard Gate** (SJ 4064 6667), showed that the upper courses of the outer face had been rebuilt using Roman masonry, including two pieces of cornice. The lowest courses were probably Roman work *in situ*. The inner face appeared to be an 18th/19th-century reconstruction, resting on an earth bank of unknown date reinforcing the Roman rampart. Below the bank was a stone building of uncertain purpose, possibly a latrine. A water channel consisting of a row of five massive gutter stones with a fall to the south lay on top of the bank. Its purpose and date were unclear, although the stones were certainly of Roman



Late 19th-century view of Wervin Chapel from the north-east

Shotwick Castle as it might have appeared in the 13th century (reconstruction painting by Tim Morgan)

workmanship. Finds from the bank included roof tile, stone ballista balls, a pottery lamp and a bone bow-strengthener. This material may have come from the ruins of the adjacent barracks.

A watching brief was maintained on a housing development on the site of **Pemberton House**, in the north-western corner of the legionary fortress (SJ 4025 6650). Engineers' trial pits revealed a substantial surface of cobbles, tile fragments and sandstone along the western side of the site. This would have been part of the *intervallum* road which ran around the interior of the defences. On the eastern side of the site, a drainage pit revealed a section of east-west Roman wall, apparently a partition wall inside the second centurion's quarters from the west.

A watching brief during cable laying at **Chester Castle** (SJ 4045 6577) revealed Roman pottery (suggesting the area may have been occupied during the Roman period), painted wall plaster, and finds associated with Thomas Harrison's late18th/early 19th century rebuilding of the castle. A watching brief at the **South - East Angle Tower** of the City Walls (SJ 4075 6616) and an evaluation at **Dee House** (SJ 4085 6611) revealed no finds of significance.

A survey of the 13th-century chapel of ease at **Chapel House Farm, Wervin** (SJ 419 718) revealed its condition had deteriorated considerably since it was first recorded in detail in the 1950s. The east wall was the best preserved, with part of the window moulding surviving. The north wall had largely disappeared, although its foundations could be traced for a short distance. A resistivity survey of the chapel and the mound on which it stands located the south and west walls, and a possible cemetery to the west. This may account for stories of bodies being found when an area west of the chapel was quarried in the 1790s for the Ellesmere Canal.

Elsewhere, desk-based assessments were carried out on a proposed residential development at **Saltworks Farm, Frodsham** (SJ 525 788), a proposed golf course at **High Legh** (SJ 705 836) and the preferred route of the **Wheelock By-Pass** (SJ 750 590). At High Legh, a Roman road, late Saxon deerpark and probable Bronze Age burial mound were identified within the application area, while the Wheelock assessment confirmed that a late medieval cornmill and 17th-century saltworks lay close to the proposed route. Evaluations were carried out at **Barrow Old Hall, Great Sankey** (SJ 562 896) and **High Street, Tattenhall** (SJ 487 585), without significant results.

Fragments of Twentieth Legion antefixes, discovered during work on the City Wall

Palaeoenvironmental assessment of a proposed motorway service station at **Hapsford** (SJ 465 748) located estuarine peat of possible Early Flandrian date (*c*8,100-5,000 years old). Archaeological audits were conducted at **Ashfield Hall Farm, Great Neston** (SJ 292 792) and **The Meadows, Chester** (SJ 415 660), where an early trackway and a possible pumping-mill of post-medieval date were identified.

The end of the year was marked by two publications. **Excavations at Chester: Saxon occupation within the Roman fortress**, by Simon Ward and others, records discoveries made during six excavations since 1971. It includes discussions of the nature of late Saxon occupation and of the port which are essential reading for serious students of the period. **The English Heritage Book of Chester**, edited by Peter Carrington, reviews the city's history from an archaeological and architectural angle, and should appeal to a wide range of readers.

Between February and April, the Service mounted its largest exhibition in the Grosvenor Museum for several years. **Dig '94** was aimed primarily at schoolchildren, and attempted to explain the archaeological process. Visitors could 'excavate'and interpret the remains of a Saxon sunken hut and check their ideas against a reconstruction, identify finds, draw a human skeleton, reconstruct and identify a dog skeleton, and try to identify 'mystery' objects. It was seen by an estimated 5,000 schoolchildren and 14,000 other visitors.

Our series of reconstruction paintings of local sites continued, with a view of Shotwick Castle as it might have appeared in the 13th century. This was based on existing surveys of the surviving earthworks and a study of the documentary evidence.

Schoolchildren 'excavating' the Saxon hut during the Dig '94 exhibition

Projects were funded by Chester City Council, Cheshire County Council, Siddell Gibson Partnership, Brockway Dunn Partnership, McLean Homes plc, Mr P Dentith, English Heritage, The European Regional Development Fund and the St John's House Trust. They were directed and carried out by G J Davies, Rob Cleary, J Easton, K J Matthews, C Quinn, S Ward and G Watts. The publications EXCAVATIONS AT CHESTER: SAXON OCCUPATION WITHIN THE ROMAN FORTRESS and THE ENGLISH HERITAGE BOOK OF CHESTER are available from the Grosvenor Museum price £21.60 and £15.99 respectively, including p&p.

11 OTHER NEWS *Adrian Tindall , Cheshire County Council*

Sketch drawing of the Alderley Edge Bronze Age sword (not to scale)

At **Alderley Edge**, new light has been shed on two old discoveries. An oak shovel, found during excavations by Prof William Boyd - Dawkins in 1875 and long dismissed as Victorian, has been radiocarbon dated to the Middle Bronze Age. Analysis at the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit produced an uncalibrated date of 3,470+/- 90 BP (OxA-4050), giving a calibrated date of around 1,888-1,677 BC. Bronze Age copper mining has long been suspected at Alderley Edge (see **CHESHIRE PAST 2**, 6-7), but this is the first scientific evidence of it.

A Bronze Age sword, found at Alderley Edge in November 1871, has turned up again in Lincolnshire. Known as 'Merlin's Wand', it was apparently used at Alderley Edge every Hallowe'en in ritual celebration of the Celtic New Year. It was bought by the present owner at a house sale in Alderley Edge in 1967. The object itself is in storage, but a sketch and description indicate a 'V'-butted bronze sword, with a leaf-shaped blade and a slotted flanged hilt with four rivets. It is c630mm long overall, and of Late Bronze Age 'Wilburton' type, dating to around 1,000 BC.

Since the late 1970s, a research project on the **Early Bronze Age in East Cheshire** has been underway at the University of Keele, under the direction of David Wilson. The excavation programme, now complete, involved the total excavation of two round barrows, the partial excavation of another previously dug into in the 19th century, the examination of a cairn site, also excavated in the 19th century, and the excavation of the site of a barrow removed at some unknown date. Currently, analysis of both recently-excavated and earlier cremations is being undertaken, with a view to establishing the age and gender of the individuals, the degree and manner of burning, and the presence of fragments of animal bone or other finds.

The Roe family monument, photographed before its demolition in 1962

The Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit has made a detailed record of the fragmentary Roe Family Monument, at **Christ Church, Macclesfield**, with a view to its eventual restoration. The most prominent member of the family, Charles Roe (1715-81), was a pioneer of the Macclesfield silk industry and builder of the Button Mill at Park Green: the first water-powered silk-throwing mill in East Cheshire. Christ Church itself was built at Charles Roe's expense in 1775-6, and the family monument erected soon after his death in 1781. It was demolished in 1962, since when its remains have been stored in the church.

Noonday on the River Dee. This plain but attractive cabin is in original condition, with a full verandah and twin bay windows

The archaeological remains of the Weaver Valley salt industry around **Marston** have been recorded by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust. The work consisted of documentary research, measured survey and trial excavation of the surviving earthworks. These include the well-preserved remains of the late 19th-century Marston Hall and Pool Mines, and Adelaide and Ollershaw Lane Salt Works. It is hoped that reclamation work in the area will include conservation and interpretation of the better-preserved remains within the Community Forest.

Two unusual groups of 20th century holiday cabins have recently been studied by Michael Morris. Both groups are largely undocumented and, until now, unrecorded. The first group is a nationally-significant collection of some 66 largely unaltered inter-war cabins, along a 5km stretch of the River Dee between **Churton** and **Farndon.** These were mainly middle-class holiday homes for fishing, boating or leisure, and many are still in use. In contrast the second group, now mostly demolished, consisted of a weekend shanty settlement of several hundred huts at **Pickmere**, near Northwich. These were primarily working-class retreats, and many were permanently occupied by overspill from Manchester. A number of similar cabins elsewhere in the county were also recorded. They are of varied construction, with walls of weatherboarding or panels, and felt or tin roofs.

This is a summary of reports submitted by David Wilson, Tim Brinton and Michael Morris. The authors wish to acknowledge the financial help of Cheshire County Council, and David Wilson the help of the Norman Smith Trust, the Royal Archaeological Institute and the University of Keele. The Weaver Valley Survey was funded by the Department of the Environment. For a fuller account of the Alderley Edge shovel, see CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY 137, Spring 1994, 172-5. The shovel is held by Manchester Museum (Acc No 1991.85) and the sword by Mr B N Yarwood. Further information on both finds is held in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR 1440/0/13 and 1440/0/14). A full report on the Weaver Valley Survey is held in the County Sites and Monuments Record, and a full report on the holiday cabins will be published in M Locock (ed) : MEANINGFUL ARCHITECTURE: SOCIAL INTERPRETATION OF BUILDINGS. The archive is held in the County Sites and Monuments Record.

Produced by Environmental Planning Designed by Cheshire Museums Service

Flint axe from Oakmere, page 4

Chester Roman amphitheatre from the air, page 12

Underwater archaeology in Liverpool Bay, page 18

Cheshire County Council