



Cheshire Archaeology News

ISSUE 4 SPRING 1997

A group of Roman pottery vessels under excavation at Kinderton, Middlewich. Photo: Earthworks Archaeological Services

Roman Middlewich

A watching brief during residential development at **Kinderton**, has uncovered further evidence of Roman settlement. A number of linear slots were revealed, aligned NW-SE and cut into the underlying sand, probably representing the outlines of timber buildings up to 20m long. One of the slots contained three complete Roman pots, including a fine intact Gaulish Samian cup, probably dating to the 2nd or 3rd century AD. In the same area was a small rectangular hearth, and the site also produced a fragment of a lead salt pan. The features seem to represent industrial activity, probably of a military nature.

Further to the west lay a series of ditches aligned north-south, the largest and earliest of which was over 30m long, 3m wide and up to 2m deep, with a V-shaped profile and almost certainly defensive in character. It contains waterlogged deposits including some fragments of a leather shoe. Work on the site is continuing.

The site lies to the east of the King Street Roman road and the centre of Roman *Salinae*, and only a few hundred metres from the Roman fort found at **Harbutt's Field** in 1993. A watching brief at Harbutt's Field continued during ground preparation works for reseeded of the area adjacent to the scheduled ancient monument, though this did not reveal any further Roman features.

The site of a possible second Roman fort at **Lewin Street** was evaluated in advance of its sale for residential development. It lies at the junction of three postulated Roman roads, and was identified as a possible fort during development in 1989. However five trial trenches failed to locate any evidence to suggest Roman activity on the site, which may suggest that the features observed in 1989 were geological rather than archaeological in origin.

Cheshire County Council



Other news

Excavations on the line of the new by-pass at **Church Moss, Davenham**, reported in the last *Cheshire Archaeology News*, have now been completed. Whilst no direct evidence of human activity was recovered, the site produced an important continuous sequence of peat deposits from the end of the last Ice Age to the Mesolithic period (c10,000-6,500BC). These are now being examined by specialists at Lancaster and York Universities, who will be using the evidence of pollen, beetles, plant remains and radiocarbon dating to reconstruct the landscape and environment of Cheshire in the early post-glacial period.

Another project reported in our last newsletter, **Old Abbey Farm, Risley**, was runner-up in the award for the best sponsorship of an archaeological project at the 1996 British Archaeological Awards. The project was sponsored by UK Waste Management Ltd and carried out by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit under the guidance of Cheshire County Council. It involved the recording, controlled demolition and excavation of a moated farmstead in advance of landfill development, but what made it unique was its use of two entirely separate teams to carry out the above and below ground recording. The conclusions of each team were then compared and, to the relief of all concerned, found to be in close agreement. The project was featured on BBC TV's *Countryfile* programme.

A major new research project, **The Alderley Edge Landscape Project**, has begun in Cheshire. A partnership between Manchester Museum, The National Trust, Leverhulme Trust, Cheshire County Council and many local groups, the two-year project aims to examine the impact of early mining on the landscape and environment of Alderley Edge. It involves specialists in archaeology, social history, zoology, botany, geology, geophysics, landscape management and information technology, and will lead to a major publication and exhibition in 1998. If you would like to get involved, contact Dr John Prag at Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, tel 0161 275 2665.

A new **Treasure Act** is being introduced. It will apply to objects over 300 years old and containing at least 10% gold or silver, and to most coin hoards. It will also apply to any objects found in association with them and to any object which would have qualified as treasure under the old legislation. The new Act includes a system of rewards and penalties for reporting or withholding finds. The Department of National Heritage has also issued a draft Code of Practice, setting out how, where and when finds should be reported.



⊕ Archaeology Day 1996: Chairman John Whittle shows the Hargrave and Huxley Historical Group's prizewinning display to Mick Aston of TV's *Time Team* and County Archaeologist Adrian Tindall. Photo: Cheshire Museums Service

Cheshire Archaeology Day 1996 was such a success it sold out within seven days! Archaeology Day 1997 is on Saturday 12 April at the usual venue, Northwich Memorial Hall. The guest speaker will be Dr Roger White, speaking on the Wroxeter Hinterland Project. There will also be the usual display competition for local groups - *Our Local Heritage*. Tickets are £5 each (£3.50 concessions), from Stephen Penney at Cheshire Museums Service, 162 London Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 8AB.

Out of the Mire is an exhibition exploring the archaeology of Cheshire's meres and peat bogs. As well as looking at earlier discoveries like Lindow Man and the Oak Mere logboat, the exhibition highlights the recent work of the North West Wetlands Survey. This Cheshire Museums Service exhibition can be seen at the Salt Museum, Northwich until 23 March 1997 (closed Mondays), and future venues will include Nantwich Museum, West Park Museum Macclesfield, and Risley Moss Nature Reserve. For further details contact the Salt Museum, tel 01606 41331.

The Wetlands of Cheshire (by Mark Leah, Colin Wells, Catrina Appleby and Elizabeth Huckerby) is the latest publication in the Lancaster Imprints series. It contains the results of archaeological fieldwork, palaeoenvironmental survey and documentary research into Cheshire's meres and mosses, carried out by the North West Wetlands Survey from 1993 to 1996. It is priced at £25, but is available until 12 April 1997 at the special price of £20, from Oxbow Books, Park End Place, Oxford OX1 1HN.

Further information

Cheshire Archaeology News is sent free of charge to all those on our mailing list. If you would like to add your own or a friend's name to the mailing list, or have any comments or items for inclusion in the newsletter, please contact:

Adrian Tindall, Principal Conservation Officer (Archaeology)
Cheshire County Council, Environmental Planning, Commerce House, Hunter Street, Chester CH1 2QP
Phone: Chester (01244) 603160

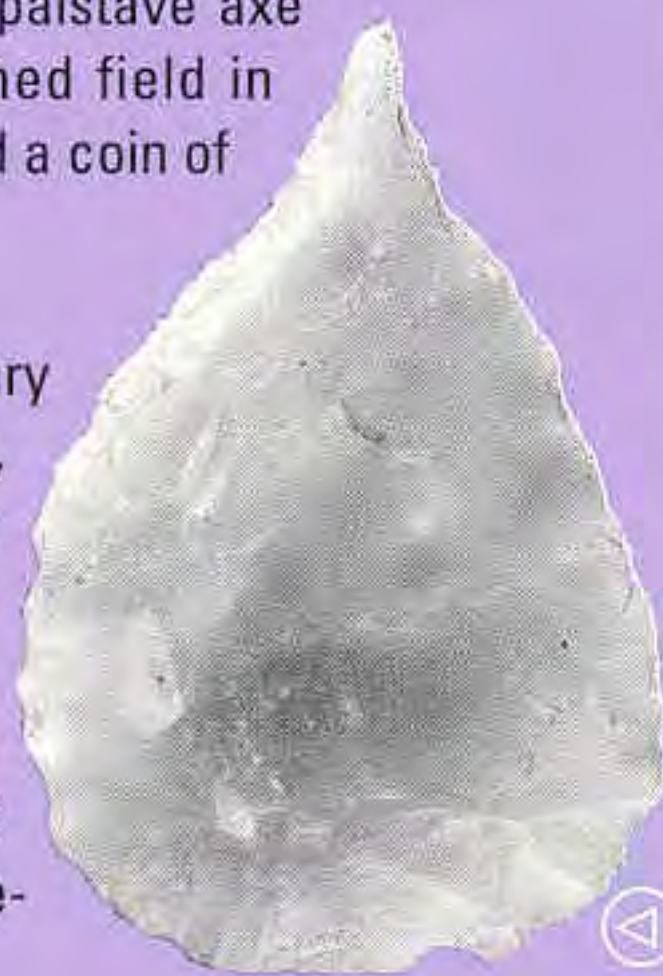
In brief

Archaeological evaluations have been carried out in advance of development at Gadbrook Park, **Rudheath** (revealing evidence of a possible Roman roadside ditch), The Old Hall **Nether Alderley**, Churchyardside **Wrenbury**, and the former General Wolfe public house in Church Street, **Warrington**. Evaluations have also been carried out before planned development in three of Cheshire's walled gardens: **Norton Priory**, **Lyme Park** and **Bostock Hall**, near Winsford - the latter in association with a survey of a group of 19th century buildings in the adjacent park, including a pheasantry and aviary.

Watching briefs identified surviving medieval deposits, some of them waterlogged, at Cocoa Yard and Welsh Row, **Nantwich**. Other work has included a desk-based assessment of a proposed development area at Forge Fields, **Sandbach**, a watching brief during development on the site of the moated manor house of Bruche Hall, **Warrington**, and a rapid survey of Oulton Mill, **Little Budworth**.

Significant finds reported to the County Sites and Monuments Record during the past year have included a fine Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead from **Cuddington** and an Early Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged arrowhead from **Alsager**. Bronze age metalwork has included a single unlooped palstave axe found at **Shavington**, and fragments from at least three others from a ploughed field in **Brereton**. Several Roman finds were discovered, most notably a trumpet brooch and a coin of Trajan, minted in Rome in AD 116, found near **Wybunbury**.

Projects grant-aided by the County Council included excavations at the 17th century **Oakhanger Hall, Alsager**, and the Roman settlement at **Lousher's Lane, Wilderspool**. At Wilderspool these revealed a sequence of features from the late 1st to the 4th centuries AD, including ditches, metalled surfaces, a hearth, a copper-working furnace, and a native-type round house. Other projects included repair works to the ramparts of the Iron Age hillfort at **Maiden Castle, Bickerton**, a palaeoenvironmental study of prehistoric pine woodland at **Lindow Moss**, and surveys of the presumed medieval moated site at **Reaseheath** and the small motte-and-bailey castles at **Pulford** and **Aldford**.



Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead from Cuddington. Photo: Cheshire Museums Service

Middle Bronze Age palstave axe from Shavington. Photo: Cheshire Museums Service



Acknowledgements

The projects described in this newsletter were sponsored by Bett Homes (Northern) Ltd, Biggins Sargent Partnership, Bower Edleston Architects, Brothertons Architects, Cheshire County Council, English Heritage, Rod Hackney Architect, The Leverhulme Trust, Linden Homes, PJ Livesey Developments Ltd, Maunders Homes (North West) Ltd, The National Trust, Norton Priory Museum Trust, Pencare Properties Ltd, the Seddon Group Ltd, the Tweed Nuttall Partnership, Westbury Homes (Holdings) Ltd and William Morrison Plc.



Bronze dupondius of Trajan from Wybunbury. Photo: Cheshire Museums Service



Roman bronze trumpet brooch from Wybunbury

Photo:
Cheshire
Museums
Service

They were carried out by Earthworks Archaeological Services, Gifford and Partners Ltd, Geophysical Surveys of Bradford, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, Manchester Metropolitan University, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, University College Chester, the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, the University of Manchester Palaeoecological Research Unit, W D Cocroft and S R Reynolds.

A Roman Road near Warrington

At **Pewterspear Green, near Appleton**, archaeological excavation in advance of residential development has uncovered a stretch of the King Street Roman road. This ran from Middlewich northwards to cross the Mersey at Wilderspool, and from there to the Roman settlement at Wigan.

During the 19th century, local antiquarians observed King Street in various places, few of which were precisely located. More recent work has taken place at a number of sites in the vicinity of Pewterspear Green, although no controlled excavation on such a scale has previously been carried out.

Initial trial trenching had confirmed the alignment of the road indicated by the Ordnance Survey, and identified well-preserved remains below a shallow depth of topsoil along the eastern edge of the proposed development site.

The excavation examined and recorded a 90m stretch of the road. It proved to consist of three layers - a base layer of pebbles, a make-up layer of sand, and surface metalling of sandstone blocks, surviving in patches. This type of construction is similar to sections previously observed to the south of the site, but differed from some to the north, where the base layer is of large sandstone blocks and the surface of compacted gravel. This difference may be the result of a fork in the road, at or near Pewterspear Green, recorded in medieval documents.

One of the red deer antlers from Gatewarth, Warrington. Photo: University of Manchester Palaeoecological Research Unit

A section of King Street Roman road under excavation at Pewterspear Green, Warrington. Photo: Earthworks Archaeological Services

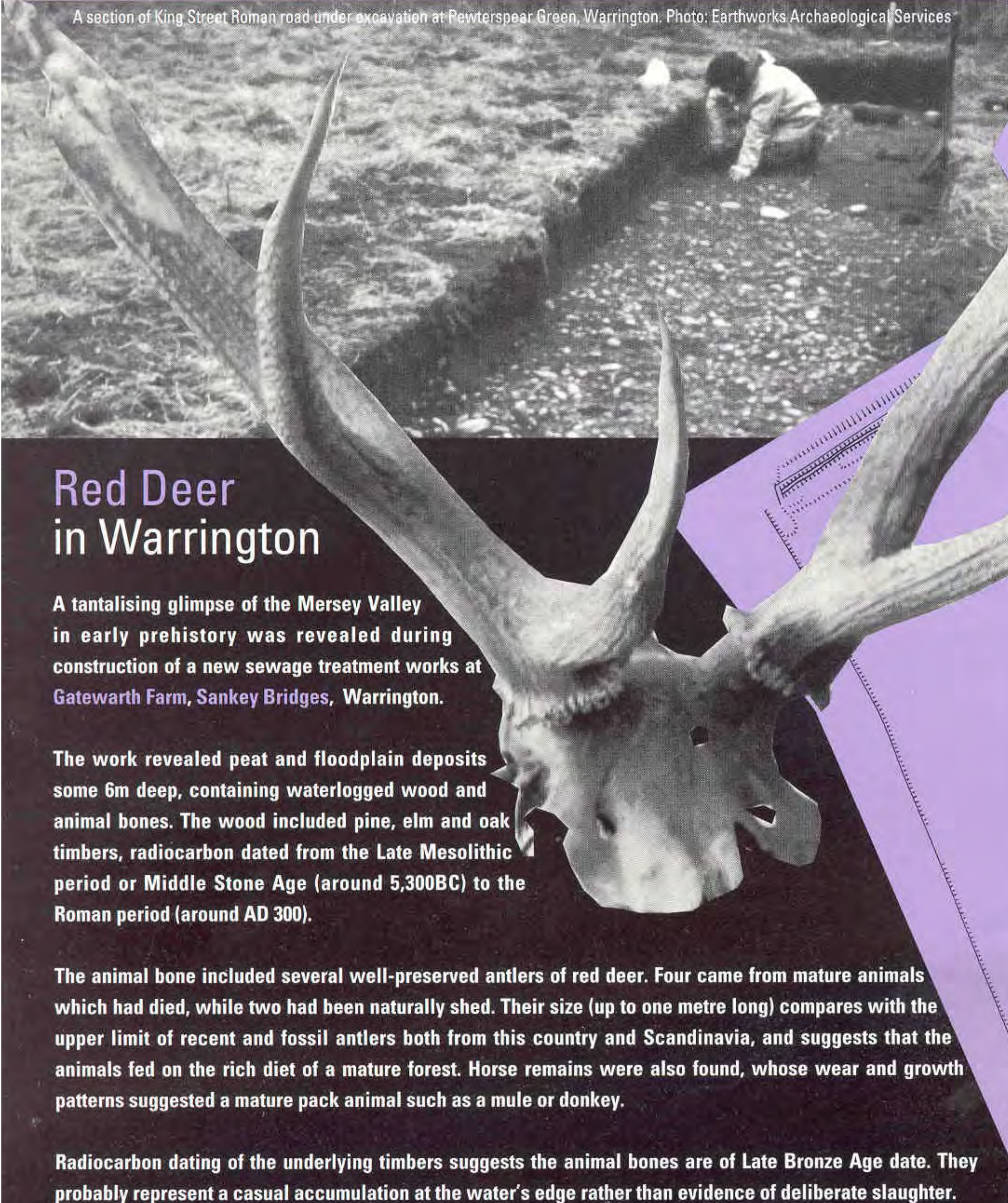
Red Deer in Warrington

A tantalising glimpse of the Mersey Valley in early prehistory was revealed during construction of a new sewage treatment works at **Gatewarth Farm, Sankey Bridges, Warrington**.

The work revealed peat and floodplain deposits some 6m deep, containing waterlogged wood and animal bones. The wood included pine, elm and oak timbers, radiocarbon dated from the Late Mesolithic period or Middle Stone Age (around 5,300BC) to the Roman period (around AD 300).

The animal bone included several well-preserved antlers of red deer. Four came from mature animals which had died, while two had been naturally shed. Their size (up to one metre long) compares with the upper limit of recent and fossil antlers both from this country and Scandinavia, and suggests that the animals fed on the rich diet of a mature forest. Horse remains were also found, whose wear and growth patterns suggested a mature pack animal such as a mule or donkey.

Radiocarbon dating of the underlying timbers suggests the animal bones are of Late Bronze Age date. They probably represent a casual accumulation at the water's edge rather than evidence of deliberate slaughter.



A Roman Camp near Chester

An archaeological evaluation in advance of a new synthetic sports pitch at **Upton** Recreation Centre has identified the south-western corner of a Roman camp. The camp is one of several in the area recently discovered by aerial photography, reported in the last *Cheshire Archaeology News*.

Two trenches were excavated to examine the enclosure ditch and an area of the camp interior. The ditch had a pronounced V-shaped profile - characteristic of Roman military construction - and its lowest levels preserved organic material such as wood and charcoal. Features of likely Roman date were encountered within the camp, and these have the potential to provide information about how the interior was used.

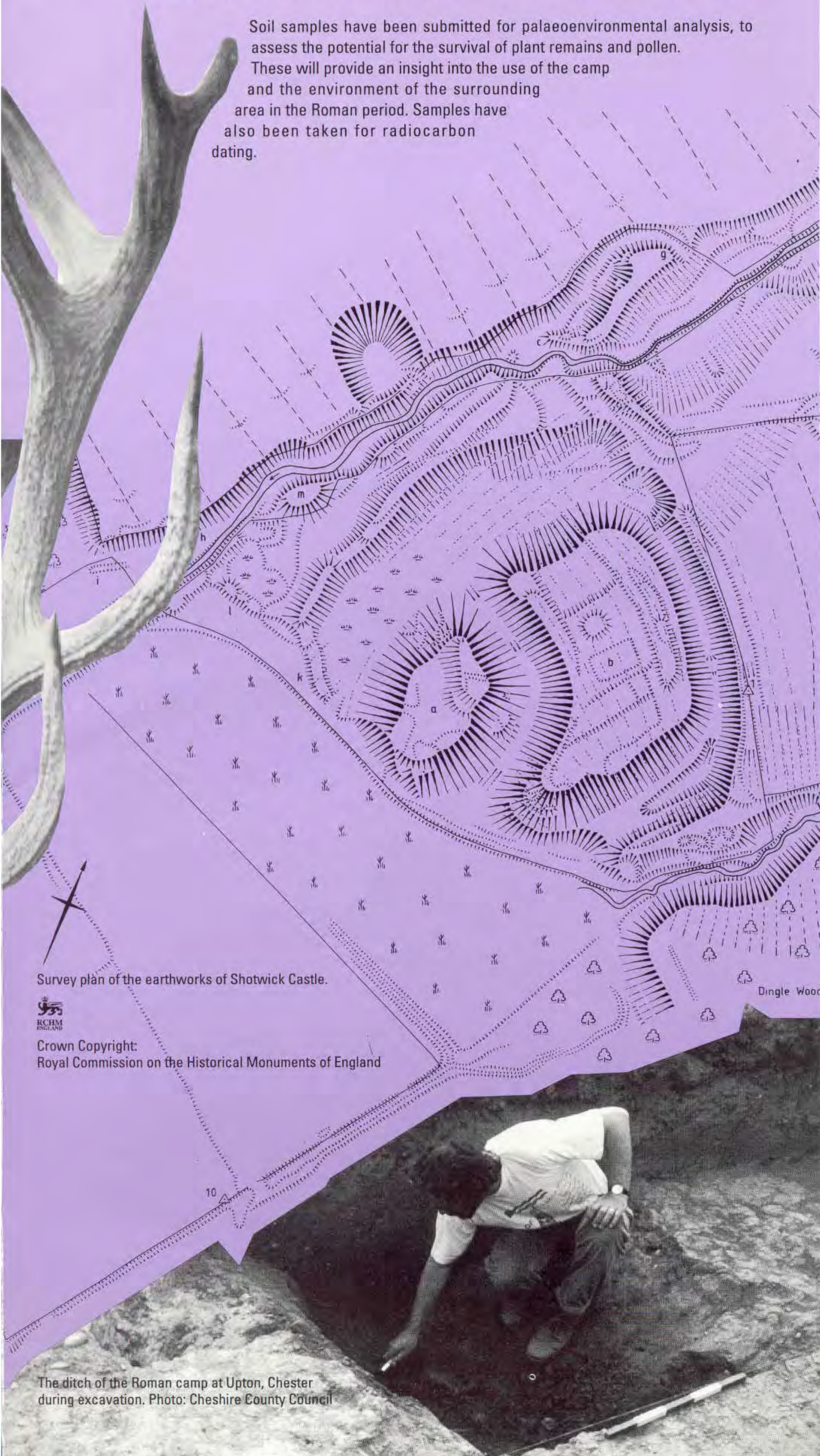
Soil samples have been submitted for palaeoenvironmental analysis, to assess the potential for the survival of plant remains and pollen. These will provide an insight into the use of the camp and the environment of the surrounding area in the Roman period. Samples have also been taken for radiocarbon dating.

Survey plan of the earthworks of Shotwick Castle.



Crown Copyright:
Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

The ditch of the Roman camp at Upton, Chester during excavation. Photo: Cheshire County Council



New Light on Shotwick Castle

A new survey by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England has suggested a radical re-interpretation of the earthworks of **Shotwick Castle**. This small motte-and-bailey castle was probably built by the Earls of Chester in the 11th century to protect an important ford across the Dee. By the 13th century it had become a Royal castle, and was used by Edward I during the Welsh Wars in the Autumn of 1278 and again in 1284. At this time it probably had a stone keep, curtain wall and circular towers.

Although the military importance of the castle declined, the manor remained an important part of the Royal estate, and in 1327 a deer park was created. The castle continued in use as a manor house, but by the 17th century appears to have been in ruins.

The site of the castle is a **Scheduled Ancient Monument**. The well-preserved earthworks consist of an irregular motte, or mound, and an adjacent kidney-shaped bailey, or enclosure, each surrounded by a massive ditch. On top of the bailey is a series of shallow earthworks, and to the west a broad marshy depression, often interpreted as the remains of a dock for unloading ships using the Dee.

However the new survey suggests that the earthworks on top of the bailey may be the pathways, terraces and parterres (or flowerbeds) of a formal late medieval garden. Furthermore, the 'dock' may in fact be one of a series of ornamental ponds, dams and water features designed to emphasise the grandeur of the late medieval manor house. If this interpretation is correct, these features were more decorative than defensive in character, and in this respect Shotwick may have resembled such late medieval status symbols as Bodiam and Bolingbroke castles.

Shotwick Castle as it may have appeared in the 13th century. Reconstruction painting by Tim Morgan



Medieval Congleton...

An archaeological evaluation in advance of extensions at **Congleton Town Hall** has uncovered evidence of medieval settlement. The area was thought to occupy the site of Congleton's medieval Moothall, recorded from at least the 15th century.

Five trial trenches were opened, revealing deposits up to two metres deep. Although no medieval structures were located, traces of wattle and daub suggest remains of a demolished timber structure nearby. A number of finds of pottery, brick, tile, clay pipe and iron were recovered, the pottery representing the largest assemblage of medieval ceramics from the town yet discovered. The dating evidence suggests activity in this area of the town from as early as the 12th century.

Other features and deposits sealed beneath these medieval layers may represent an earlier (possibly prehistoric) phase, although no secure dating evidence was available.

...and Knutsford

A watching brief was carried out during alterations at the rear of **The Angel** public house in King Street, Knutsford, near the heart of the medieval settlement.

Much of the area was deeply cellared - removing the archaeology - but in places rich pockets of archaeological deposits survived. These contained many finds of pottery and glass, datable from the 15th to the 18th centuries, and included Cistercian ware, Midlands Purple and other earthenwares. Organic material, including leather and wood, survived well in the moist soils above the natural clay subsoil. The leatherwork suggests that shoemaking was one of the trades practised in the immediate vicinity during the late medieval period.