Manors, Moats and Monasteries

Archaeology in Cheshire

a young person’s guide
People have lived in Cheshire for thousands of years, leaving behind thousands of objects.

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Stone Age
Before metal was discovered, people made tools out of stone. They needed tools to build shelters and hunt for food.

Bronze Age
When metal was discovered people could make better tools.

Iron Age
People lived in roundhouses and kept sheep, cows and pigs. They even had jewellery in the shape of animals!

The Romans
The Roman Army invaded Britain in 43AD and built roads and forts. This helmet must have been lost by a soldier.

The Saxons & Vikings
After the Romans left, the Anglo-Saxons invaded, settled and lived in peace. In Cheshire they made stone crosses with beautiful carvings.

Medieval Cheshire
In 1066 the Normans invaded Britain. They built castles in Cheshire to make sure they kept control.

The Tudors
Later, rich Tudors turned these plain timber houses into much grander homes with lots of decoration on the outside.

The Victorians
Silk thread from China and Italy was made into cloth in Macclesfield and Congleton. Everyone worked in the mills, even children.

Every object tells a story...

- **Stone Age axe head**
- **Bronze Age axe head**
- **Iron Age bull’s head**
- **Roman Helmet from Northwich**
- **G51, G72, G82, G83, G79, G72, G3, G75, G68, G89, G72, G3, G79, G76, G89, G72, G71, G3, G76, G81, G3, G38, G75, G72, G86, G75, G76, G85, G72, G3, G73, G8...**
- **G51, G72, G82, G83, G79, G72, G3, G75, G68, G89, G72, G71, G3, G76, G81, G3, G69, G72, G75, G76, G81, G71, G3, G87, G75, G82, G88, G86, G68, G81, G71, G86, G3, G82, G73, G3, G82, G69, G77, G72, G70, G87, G86, G171**

- **Saxon crosses, Sandbach**
- **Little Moreton Hall**
- **Woven silk**
- **Beeston Castle**
What is archaeology?

Archaeology is about finding out how people lived in the past, through the things they have left behind.

What Do Archaeologists Do?
They look for clues (evidence) that show where people lived and what their homes were like. They also want to know what food people used to eat and what things they made.

What Survives?
When people have lived in a place, they leave behind clues that show what they have been doing.

Buildings, or objects like pottery, coins and jewellery can give information about how people lived. You can tell what people ate by looking at bones, shells and seeds in rubbish dumps. Some things last better than others. Cloth, wood and leather can rot away and metal can go rusty. Stone, pottery and brick are difficult to destroy.

Looking for Evidence
Sometimes you can still see the places and buildings where people used to live. These buildings can be hundreds of years old. They have been looked after and repaired.

Sometimes the stone and brick from old buildings was used for new buildings. Recycling is not a new idea!

Buildings will fall down if they are not looked after. The place where people used to live will be buried under the soil.

A new house is being built so nobody wants to live in the old one. It is falling down.

The old house has disappeared but you can still see the place where it used to be.
Archaeologists find buried sites in lots of different ways.

**Documents**
Books, maps and old papers can sometimes show if people once lived in a place.

**Field Walking**
After a farmer has ploughed a field, archaeologists sometimes walk over it to look for objects that the plough has brought to the surface.

**Aerial Photography**
Archaeologists sometimes take photographs from a plane, of crops growing in fields. Buried sites show up as different coloured patterns in the fields.

**Excavation**
Sometimes archaeologists dig away the soil that covers a buried site. They call this an excavation or “dig”.

Archaeologists only dig in the ground if they think a place might have some important archaeology buried.

**Recording the Evidence**
Archaeologists make notes about what they find. They also make drawings and take photographs. After the “dig”, a report is written to show what has been found.
Living in Iron Age Cheshire – 2500 years ago

During the Iron Age people lived in the countryside. In Cheshire there were no towns or cities. Everyone had to find their own food so people had their own farms.

1. Woollen clothes like this were made at home. They could be dyed different colours using plants and berries.

2. Wheat, barley and oats were stored in large pits in the ground, until it was needed.

3. The grain was ground between two large round stones, called a hand quern.

4. Sheep did not have thick wool coats. They were similar to Soay sheep, which live on islands in Scotland.

5. Tools were made from iron. Iron is a very strong metal and makes good tools.

6. People lived in round houses, which they built themselves. The walls were made by weaving thin branches around the wooden stakes.

7. The wooden walls were covered in daub to keep the wind and rain out. It was a smelly job. Daub was made out of mud, straw and animal dung!

8. The roof was made out of bundles of straw. There was no chimney. Smoke escaped through tiny gaps between the straw.

Can you find...

- Some cows? They were very different to the ones you see today. They were skinny and much smaller.
- A dog? They were used for hunting and also helped to protect the farm animals.
A buried site from Roman times has been found in Nantwich. The clues show that people were making salt here.
Living in Roman Cheshire – 2000 years ago

A buried site from Roman times has been found in Nantwich. The clues show that people were making salt here.

1. The salty water (brine) came from springs in the ground and was stored in big pits. The inside of the pit was covered in clay to stop the brine soaking away.

2. The end of this pit has collapsed. A new wall is being made out of wood.

3. The brine was boiled in lead pans to make salt. When the water turned to steam, the salt crystals were left behind.

4. The Roman army built roads so it was easier to travel. The roads were very straight. The army had forts at Northwich, Middlewich and Chester.

5. This road is being repaired. The roads were made out of rock, pebbles, sand and clay. Ditches carried away the water when it rained.

6. Roman law said people must be buried outside the towns and forts. People would visit the graves to make offerings of food and drink.

Explore the illustration on the previous page

Can you find...

• A bronze saucepan? Ones like this were used to cook with.

• A pottery bowl? This one was made in France. It would have cost a lot of money.

Can you find...

• A quern stone? This stone was used to grind grain into flour.
If you were rich in Tudor times, you would have had a house like this.

1. The house was made of timber cut from the woods.

2. The walls were made of wattle (thin branches woven around wooden stakes). They were covered in daub and plaster. Mud, straw and animal dung were used to make daub.

3. The chimney was made out of brick or stone so it didn’t catch fire.

4. There is a moat around the house to protect the house and animals.

5. The roads were narrow and bumpy. Most people walked or rode horses. Travelling by cart was very uncomfortable and slow.

6. It was difficult to keep food for a long time without fridges or freezers. Fishponds were a good way of having a fresh supply of food.

7. Poor people worked in the fields. The fields were divided into narrow strips. Each strip was ploughed by someone different. The farmers had to rent the land from the rich lords.

8. Watermills were used to grind corn into flour. Everyone had to pay to have their corn ground. There were punishments for those who tried to grind it at home.

Can you find...
- A church?
- A kitchen garden where vegetables and herbs were grown?
- The barns where animals were kept?
There are lots of museums, castles and old houses to visit in Cheshire. They show some of the objects that have been found by archaeologists. Opening times vary. Please check before making a visit.

**Congleton Museum**  
Market Square, Congleton, CW12 1ET. Tel: 01260 276360  
www.congletonmuseum.co.uk  
*Admission Charge*

**The Grosvenor Museum**  
27 Grosvenor Street, Chester, CH1 2DD. Tel: 01244 402008  
www.grosvenormuseum.co.uk

**Nantwich Museum**  
Pillory Street, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 5BQ. Tel: 01270 627104  
www.nantwichmuseum.org.uk

**Norton Priory Museum & Gardens**  
Tudor Road, Manor Park, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1SX. Tel: 01928 569895  
www.nortonpriory.org  
*Admission Charge*

**The Salt Museum**  
162 London Road, Northwich, CW9 8AB. Tel: 01606 41331  
www.saltmuseum.org.uk  
*Admission Charge*

**Warrington Museum & Art Gallery**  
Bold Street, Warrington, WA1 1JG. Tel: 01925 442392  
www.warrington.gov.uk/museum

For more museums near you visit  
www.24hrmuseum.org.uk

www.cheshire.gov.uk/archaeology