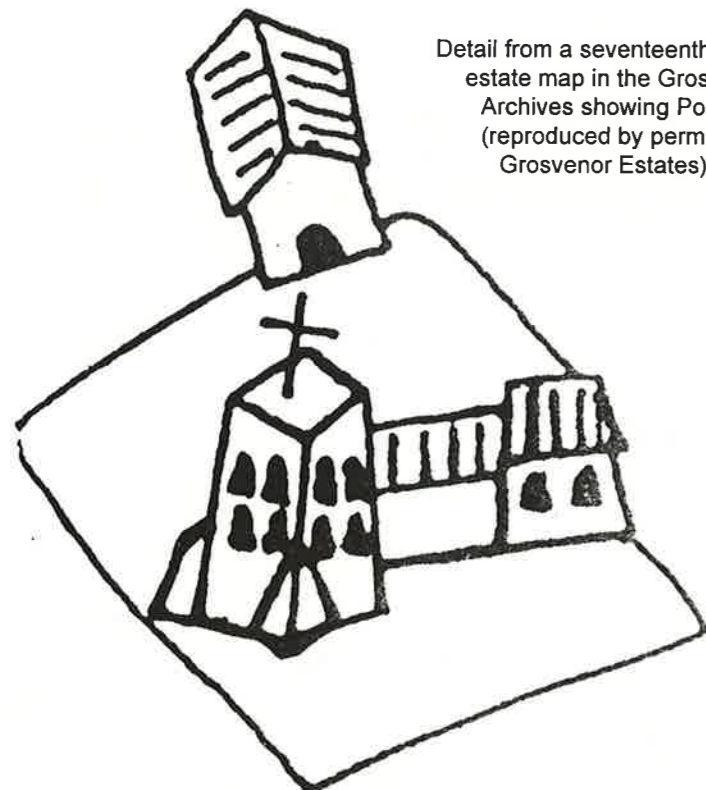


## Poulton Abbey

As reported in the Winter 1995 Newsletter, excavations at Poulton are shedding light on the history of the abbey and producing a number of surprises!

### Publication News



Detail from a seventeenth-century estate map in the Grosvenor Archives showing Poulton Abbey (reproduced by permission of Grosvenor Estates)

Now you can read all about these surprises in *The Archaeology of an Ecclesiastical Landscape*, the report of the first season's survey and excavation at Poulton.

The local history and environment of Poulton, the artefacts and environmental remains from the excavation and the archaeology and history of the region, including the mesolithic period and Roman rural settlements, are all covered in the report.

The Poulton project, a collaboration between the University of Liverpool and Chester Archaeology, is the first detailed investigation of a multi-period landscape in the hinterland of Chester. The report will be of value not only for those interested in local history and archaeology, but also because the discussions introduce areas of research in the Dee-Mersey region which until now have received little attention.

*The Archaeology of an Ecclesiastical Landscape* by Mike Emery, David Gibbins and Keith Matthews is available from the Grosvenor Museum and local bookshops price £9.95. If ordering by post from the Museum please add £1 for postage and packing.

This year's excavations also proved to be very successful and we will be keeping you up to date with the discoveries in future issues of the Newsletter.

### Display News

Information panels outlining the results of excavations at Poulton can now be seen at the Heritage Centre until February 23rd. The Centre is open Monday - Saturday 11am-5pm and Sundays 12 noon-5pm.

### Education

#### Tudor Chester

The latest in a series of teachers' resource packs has recently been published and is intended as an introduction to Tudor Chester. It includes support material for National Curriculum requirements for classroom-based work and activities, providing evidence of everyday life in Tudor Chester. There is even a script for a thematic assembly, taken from one of Chester's Mystery Plays, so that you can start the day with Noah's Flood!

*Tudor Chester* complements three other packs published by Chester Education - *Roman Chester*, *Civil War Chester* and *Victorian Chester*. They cost £4.00 each (£5.00 incl p&p) and are available from Chester Education, Grosvenor Museum, 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester, CH1 2DD. Enquiries: ☎ (01244) 402017.

#### Work Experience

Chester's Cultural Services are popular choices for budding historians, archaeologists, geographers, museum professionals, artists, teachers, architects, geophysicists ..... the list goes on! The range of work is very broad in a variety of busy public services. There is a high demand for placements so we do ask that you get in touch with us early. For an informal talk contact Janet Smith, ☎ (01244) 402019.

*The Past Uncovered* is produced by the City Council's Archaeological Service to keep you in touch with discoveries in Chester District. It appears four times a year, in March, June, September and December. Copies are free from the Grosvenor Museum, Heritage Centre, City Record Office and tourist information centres. If you have any comments or queries, or would like to contribute, please contact Gillian Dunn at 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester CH1 2DD. Tel (01244) 402023.

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# The Past Uncovered

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FREE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF

## City wall re-discovered

The refurbishment of 12 St John Street brings a section of the Roman fortress wall into the light again almost 90 years after it was discovered

### Fieldwork

REDEVELOPMENT of this site (formerly Masons printworks), now means that more of Chester's Roman fortress wall, first uncovered in 1908 will be on view to the public.

The base of the Roman wall in this area lies in front of the later City Walls instead of forming the lowest courses of them as occurs to the north. This year's work re-discovered three or four courses of typical Roman wall with a projecting ground course, a chamfered plinth and the start of the ashlar face above. The lowest courses are in good condition but the upper ones are more disturbed. Behind the face there is rubble infill and the grey clay of the turf rampart.

This addition to the exposed Roman walls will remain on view either from a distance from the top of the walls or close up from the terrace at the rear of the new pub.

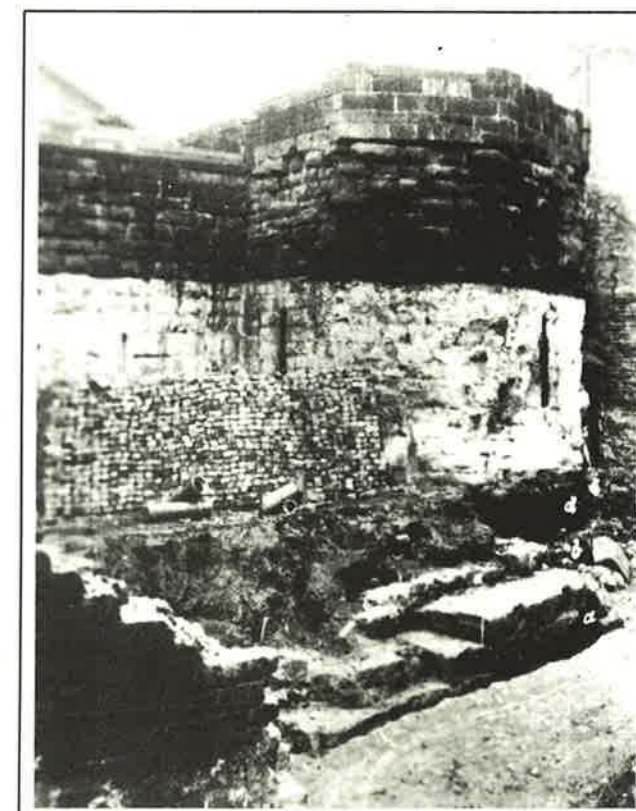
This section of the fortress wall, together with the clay rampart behind and ditch in front, was first excavated by Professor Robert Newstead in 1908. It was traced for more than 56 feet, with its southern portion curving towards the Newgate and forming part of the south-east corner of the fortress. Following this, part of the wall remained visible within an access trench beneath the building, but the rest was reburied and lay underneath the yard.

In 1930 almost the whole of the remaining sweep of the corner was traced and the tower excavated. Further work in the 1950s set out to examine the relationship between the wall and the rampart. More of the

Section of Roman Wall as revealed in 1908

- a. ashlar work
- b. rubble
- d. footings of Wolf Tower

Wall of cottage in foreground



southern defences were uncovered a little to the west in the 1960s when the Pepper Street facade of the Grosvenor Precinct was being constructed.

### Simon Ward

The excavation and display of the wall have been funded and supported by the Greenalls Group plc through their archaeological consultants, Gifford and Partners.

### St Mary-on-the-Hill

A watching-brief at St Mary's church during work to reinforce the floor has shown that subsidence is not a new problem.

In 1994 when a section of the nave floor was strengthened, graves and oak posts were revealed. This year's work took place in the north aisle, where virtually the whole area was to be repaired. Two burials were discovered at the eastern end of the aisle, one in a decorative lead coffin, the other in a brick-lined vault with a lead

coffin and brass coffin-plate. Both seem to date from around 1800.

More oak posts were revealed, laid in a regular grid pattern across the aisle and aligned with those previously discovered. They extended from floor level down to an unknown depth and were firmly embedded in the ground. This confirmed the impression we had already gained that the deposit under the floor had been thoroughly disturbed at some point in the past in order to insert oak piles to strengthen the floor.

Only at the extreme northern edge of the trench were the earlier deposits intact, allowing a section to be drawn. However, it was not possible to discover at what date the various soil layers had formed, or how.

Keith Matthews

### More Roman granaries at Hunter Street?

Possible remains of more Roman granaries have come to light during a watching brief at 6 Hunter Street.

The site lies in the rear part (*retentura*) of the fortress, barely forty metres east of the line of the western wall (the eastern side of the Inner Ring Road). Previous excavations in this part of the city have revealed Roman barracks to the north and south-west and a large enclosure to the south, while excavations just to the west, in 1982, revealed what appeared to be part of a granary, standing in a narrow east-west plot.

During the watching brief, several evenly spaced Roman walls were found barely a metre below the present ground surface. Their arrangement and form suggests the presence of two buildings, or one large structure with an internal road or surface. The three walls were aligned north-south, and the southern limit of one of them was marked by the insertion of large, splayed-out, sandstone blocks. Granaries had buttresses to help counter the pressure of stacked grain against the walls, and it seems highly likely that these large blocks relate to yet another of these buildings.

Another stretch of wall was also revealed, aligned upon an east-west axis, close to the pavement of Hunter Street. This wall may well prove to be more of the building

found in 1982.

Roman finds from the site include fragments of roof tile and sherds of pottery, including locally-made bowls, jars and flagons. Imported vessels include samian ware from France and olive-oil amphorae from southern Spain. The finds are notable for the almost complete absence of any post-Roman material, apart from twentieth-century intrusions. Hunter Street itself was only constructed at the very end of the nineteenth-century. It seems to have

### Museum News

## An important Roman brick comes to the Grosvenor Museum

THE legionary tile works at Holt, some eight miles south of Chester, was excavated before the First World War by Thomas Acton. Since that time the site has been increasingly eroded by agriculture, but thanks to the enthusiasm of local people, important finds are still turning up.

In 1992 the artist Helen Anderson came upon such a find - a thin brick which had been used as a notepad before it was fired. There are six lines of writing, in at least five different hands. Because the brick is broken the sense is not altogether clear, but the first word is SUMTUARIA ('expenses'). The other lines include 'Junius, 4 denarii'. It looks as if a Roman officer was keeping a record of the petty cash!

The brick has been studied by Roger Tomlin of Oxford and is published in *Britannia* volume 26 (1995). Mrs Anderson has kindly loaned the brick to the Grosvenor Museum, and it is now on display in the Newstead Gallery.

### Newstead's finds return!

Professor Robert Newstead was truly 'Mr Roman Chester' from the end of the 19th century until his death in 1947.

Yet some of the things which

remained largely open ground, possibly undeveloped since the late Roman occupation.

Mike Emery

The project was commissioned by Gifford & Partners (archaeological consultants), on behalf of Scottish Widows, who generously funded the work.



Inscribed Roman brick from Holt noting the 'expenses' of three workmen

Professor Newstead got up to might cause a few raised eyebrows today. Those of us who have been privileged to visit his old home in Handbridge will never forget seeing the mountains of decorated samian pottery lying just under the surface of the modern garden. An old photograph of the Professor which we have in the museum shows him studiously looking at a piece of samian in his study, with a large window behind him. What it doesn't show is how much samian was being thrown out of the window into the garden when the Professor had finished with it!

## Paws for thought

Official military stamps such as 'LEG XX VV' of the Twentieth Legion were not the only marks to be found on the tiles of Roman roofs - animals also made a good impression!

EXCAVATIONS of large Roman sites not surprisingly unearth vast quantities of roofing tiles and bricks. Closer examination of them often reveals the presence of footprints, made by animals walking over tiles which had been laid out to dry before being fired.

The most common prints are those of cats and dogs which may have belonged to the tiler or strayed from a nearby settlement. Wild animals, too, wandered across drying tiles, and the footprints of badgers and wolves have been identified. Other examples include horse, cow, deer, chickens and goats. A brick from

Newstead, a Roman fort in Roxburghshire, has the footprints of a small mouse or shrew and claw marks where it had been scraping at a grain stuck in the wet clay. Pigs' footprints are rarely found, suggesting that they were kept in sties or woodland away from the tiler.

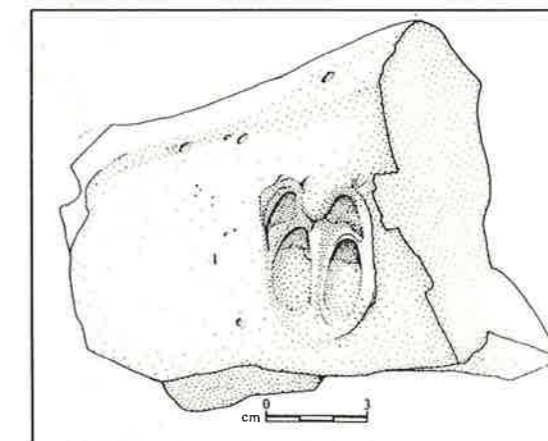
It is not only domesticated and wild animals that have left their mark. Human footprints have been found, but the impressions are usually shallow suggesting that drying tiles were avoided if possible. The impressions are either of hob-nails from the sole of a leather shoe or sometimes of bare feet; an example of the latter

was found during excavation of the City Walls in 1993.

All this suggests that the area where *tegulae* (flat roofing tiles) were laid to dry, was under cover - the impressions of raindrops on tiles are rarely found - but with open sides, allowing animals to walk freely over them. However, *imbrices*, curved roofing tiles, were probably placed on raised racks, as suggested by an example from Beauport Park in Sussex, where a dog seems to have reached up and clawed at the edge of a tile.

That tile-production was a spring-time activity is suggested by footprints of lambs and kids; examples of these have been found in Chester at the Infirmary Field excavation in 1912-17; another example from Beauport Park bath-house illustrates a sheep and lamb side by side. The footprints of stock animals could suggest that some tilers could also have been farmers.

Gillian Dunn



Hoof print of a roe deer, found on excavations in Foregate Street (drawn by C Quinn)

### News from the Archives

#### Image Bank

Chester Archives' Image Bank is arousing ever more interest - all over the country. Some 4000 images are on the Bank so far. These include items from the collections held in the Archives, in Archaeology, the Museum and the Conservation Section. By using the 'keyword' index on the Bank a list of the images for a street, area, person, subject or event can be called up. You can then view 'thumbprints' of the images to see which ones interest you.

Photo-quality prints can now be produced from the Image Bank. The prints cost £5.00 each including VAT. Quick reference prints, like a good photocopy, are available for 50p.

If anyone has old photographs of Chester which can be borrowed for 'scanning' into the Bank, staff at Chester Archives will be pleased to hear from you.

For more details of the Image Bank, or to book to use it, ☎(01244) 402110.