



**Chester
City Council**

Newsletter

1993 No4 DECEMBER



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICE

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Dig'94... Dig'94...

If you have ever wanted to try your hand at digging into the past without getting cold, wet and muddy then now is your chance!

The Archaeological Service is currently planning a major interactive display at the Grosvenor Museum for the beginning of 1994. Aimed primarily at children and school parties the display will also be of interest to families and adults. You can discover how we dig sites, how we know how old things are and how we interpret the results. Activities will include :

- 'excavating' the remains of a Saxon hut
- planning and interpreting its remains

- examining and drawing real archaeological finds
- piecing together an animal skeleton

Information and work sheets will be available to guide the visitor through the various activities.

We shall be in the front gallery of the Museum from February 5th to April 17th.

Gill Dunn



Reconstruction of Saxon houses found during excavations in Lower Bridge Street (drawn by Peter Alebon).

Shotwick Castle: Anatomy of a Reconstruction Painting

Special Feature

Many people are used to seeing paintings or drawings of ancient monuments as they may have looked in their heyday. But how do we know what they looked like? Peter Carrington has recently been in charge of getting a picture of Shotwick Castle painted. Here he describes some of the difficulties - and some of the tricks!

This painting has been sponsored by Cheshire County Council as part of their 'Cheshire Celebration' programme. Essential additional funding came from Adrian Tindall, County Archaeologist, who also readily provided information from the Sites and Monuments Record.

The Archaeological Service has been commissioning reconstruction paintings for many years. We now have twenty of them, but with the exception of the one described here, they all show sites in the centre of Chester. One of our current objectives is to highlight the archaeology of the rural areas of Chester District, and medieval motte-and-bailey castles form an important part of this.



How to get there

The national grid reference of the site is SJ 349704. It can be reached by footpath from Saughall village, leaving Sea Hill Road about 100 m south-west of the Greyhound Inn. Please observe the Country Code! Shotwick Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It has been given this legal protection because of its importance. Please do not damage it: you will be destroying a valuable part of our inheritance and may be liable to prosecution.

Introduction

One of the features of the medieval archaeology of Chester District is the series of early motte-and-bailey castles guarding the frontier with Wales - Aldford, Castleton, Dodleston, Malpas, Oldcastle, Pulford, Shotwick and, of course, Chester itself. Most of these were built by minor lords and were soon abandoned. However, Shotwick was held by the earls of Chester and so was taken over by the Crown in 1237 after the death of the last earl.

The History of the Castle

Shotwick Castle lies about 4 miles north-west of Chester and controlled an important ford across the Dee estuary. It was used by Henry II in 1156 and 1165 and by Edward I in 1278 in the course of campaigns against the Welsh. Its importance declined after peace with Wales was declared in 1281. From then on custody of the castle was a mark of royal favour rather than a post of military importance. Its last royal visitor was the Black Prince in 1353.

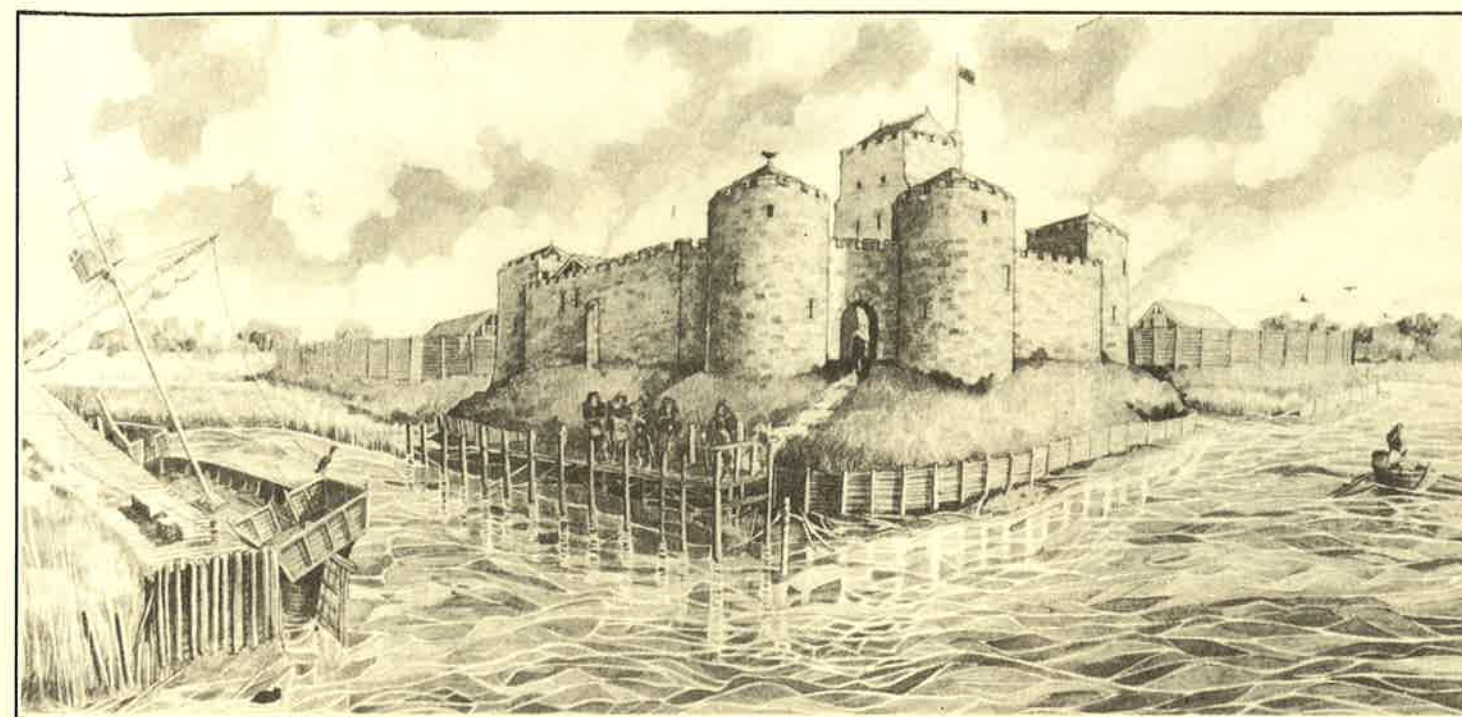
At first Shotwick was probably just built of earth and timber, like other early castles. Between 1240 and 1242 various buildings were repaired, palisades (around the bailey?) were re-erected and a bridge (between the motte and the bailey?) rebuilt at the king's expense. At some time the structures on the motte were rebuilt in stone, and the 1240's seem the most likely time for this work. By 1621 the castle was in ruins. The last stonework was supposedly removed in 1756 to revet Blacon Point against the tide.

What did the castle look like?

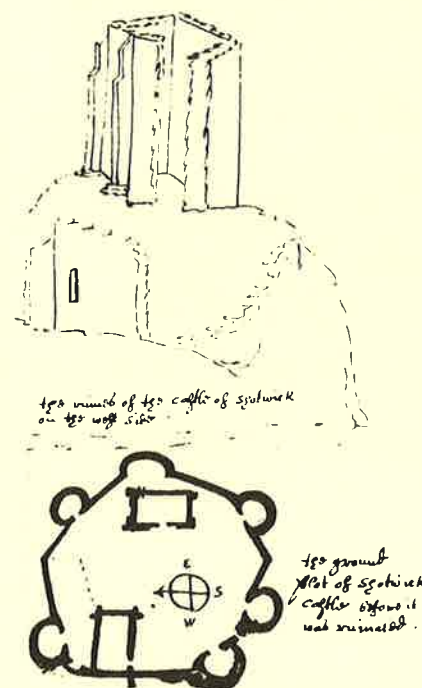
Only the earthworks of the castle can be seen today. The motte stands on the old bank of the estuary and the mound of the bailey lies to the north-east. Neither rises much above the level of the surrounding land, from which they are separated by large ditches. The ditch on the western side of the motte is particularly wide and may have served as a dock.

Apart from a contour plan of the earthworks in the Sites and Monuments Record, there is little other detailed information on which to base a reconstruction. Excavations were carried out in 1876 by the Saughall schoolmaster Mr Williams but were never published in detail. All we really know from them is that the foundations of the castle still survive. A note in the 1789 edition of Camden's *Britannia* (an antiquarian work first published in the late sixteenth century) reads: 'The castle was a pentagon of fifty one feet on each side. The watch tower five story high. An exact drawing of it is preserved in the British Museum [Harl] MS No 2079' (vol 2, p 424). The drawing referred to is probably the 'Ground Plot of Shotwick Castle' by the late seventeenth-century Chester antiquary Randle Holme.

This only shows the stone buildings on the motte; those in the bailey may only ever have been constructed of timber, which would soon have decayed and vanished. A problem with this drawing is that it does not show any communication between the motte and the bailey. We wondered, therefore, whether the orientation was 180 degrees out, and the gateway shown on the drawing actually faced the bailey rather than



Shotwick Castle as it might have looked in the late thirteenth century; Tim Morgan's reconstruction



Late 17th-century drawing of Shotwick Castle by Randle Holme

Peter Carrington is Post-Excavation Officer with the City Council Archaeological Service

Tim Morgan is a freelance archaeological illustrator and lives at Llandyrnog in Clwyd. He has carried out commissions for the Archaeological Service for a number of years, as well as working for other organisations such as English Heritage and Cadw.

the sea. However, a letter from Peter Broster (a Chester printer, Alderman and Mayor) about 1810, referring to the removal of the last of the stone from the castle in 1756, says: 'All the fragments that at that time remained were the lower parts of the two round towers at the entrance of the castle from the shore'. It may be that the gateway to the bailey was only a small one whose remains Randle Holme did not recognise among the ruins.

The Painting

We visited the site with our artist Tim Morgan, who took some photographs and made some sketches for his own use. The only part of the castle where we know even a little about the superstructure is the motte. We therefore agreed on a viewpoint from the estuary, so that the bailey would be largely concealed. It also gave an opportunity to show the supposed dock. Tim then produced some trial watercolour views for approval. These allowed us to refine the viewpoint. We brought it down to the deck level of a ship approaching the dock, thus making the motte look more impressive. As the exact orientation of the castle is unknown, we took the liberty of rotating it so that the gateway was clearly visible. We have assumed that the castle would have been built

of red Cheshire sandstone, although it is not impossible for stone to have been ferried across from the Welsh side of the estuary. We have also assumed that the defences of the bailey and the buildings inside it remained in timber, although this is by no means certain. The architectural details are largely Tim's own work, based on observation of other castles: the keep, for example, is based on the Agricola Tower in Chester Castle.

Future Research

A painting such as this hopefully brings a poorly preserved site alive, but it makes us all too aware of how little we know and stimulates further investigation. At Shotwick, for example, a resistivity survey should confirm the basic accuracy, or otherwise, of Randle Holme's plan and tell us something about the bailey. This is an opportunity we hope to be able to pursue in the coming year.

Further Reading

General

R Allen Brown, *English castles*, ed 2. London: Batsford, 1976

Shotwick

R Stewart-Brown, *The royal manor and park of Shotwick*. *Trans Hist Soc Lancashire and Cheshire* 64, 1912, 82-142

Staff Profile

Keith Matthews

Field Officer



Keith Matthews, a native of Letchworth, Hertfordshire always wanted to be an archaeologist. Despite the best efforts of family, friends and teachers to dissuade him, he graduated from Lancaster University in 1980 with a degree in archaeology. For the next five years he saw sense and worked as anything but an archaeologist, eventually becoming a professional disc-jockey.

In 1985 he began work for the North Hertfordshire Museums archaeological service, and stayed there for five years, eventually becoming senior supervisor. In 1990 he moved to Chester, where he now lives with his partner Stephen, a visual artist, and their dog Lister.

His archaeological interests include prehistory, human burials and theoretical archaeology. In addition to living, breathing and dreaming archaeology Keith writes poetry (some published) and is devoted to his word-processor. Other interests include music, cosmology and cooking.

Education News

Tudor and Stuart Sessions

Teachers of 'Key Stage 2 History' - we are currently piloting a Tudor and Stuart handling collection in the Grosvenor Museum's Education Service. This is an opportunity for children to handle archaeological finds and a range of replica objects which would have been typical of

Roman fort at Middlewich

News from the County

An evaluation in advance of development at King Street, Middlewich has revealed the near-complete plan of a Roman fort or camp on the northern fringe of the Roman settlement of *Salinae*, which has produced evidence of Roman saltworking and other industrial activity from the late 1st to the 4th century AD.

It has been rumoured since the 18th century that the field in question contained a Roman fort, but until now there has been no archaeological evidence of it. Geophysical survey of the field has now revealed the complete plan of a rectangular enclosure, 125 x 113m (1.5 hectares), with rounded corners, entrances in at least three of its sides, and a number of possible internal features.

Excavation confirmed the presence of the defences and internal timber buildings of a temporary Roman camp or auxiliary fort. Finds were sparse but suggest a short-lived occupation in the late 1st or early 2nd century AD.

The field to the south produced less conclusive results, the most significant being a substantial cobbled feature, perhaps the remains of a Roman road serving the fort to the north. The site represents one of only two examples in the county of a complete Roman fort surviving on an undeveloped site.

Adrian Tindall

Principal Archaeologist, Cheshire County Council.

Children's 'Saturday Club' Success

During the summer we began a series of activities for local children and young people, aimed at stimulating their interest in archaeology. Until they are sixteen, children are unable to work on archaeological sites or take part in post-excavation, so this was our opportunity to give them some 'hands-on' experience.

The four events attracted nearly sixty children starting with graveyard recording at St Mary's in June and closely followed in July by fieldwalking on the Roodee racecourse. The most popular event was the barbecue, held in October. As 'food for thought', children took home fact sheets and recipes - to try out more

delicious prehistoric and Roman dishes on their unsuspecting families.

For our final event, 'Touching the Past', children were taken through some of the processes of discovery and interpretation which archaeology involves. They were able to handle, examine and draw artefacts and bones from digs in Chester.

We shall be organising another programme of Saturday Club events for 1994. If you have any suggestions for future events please write and let us know.

Alison Jones

The *Newsletter* 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. You can find copies in your local library and community centre or buy one from the Grosvenor Museum (20p each over the counter; subscription £1.60 per year including postage). If you have any comments or questions, or would like to contribute, please contact Gillian Dunn at the Grosvenor Museum, 27 Grosvenor Street, Chester CH1 2DD. Tel (0244) 321616

everyday life - pottery and leather vessels, pewter and wooden utensils, lighting and writing equipment and costume. Connected with this collection, there will be a wood working day - a 'spoon making' activity, on Saturday 15th January 1994, in the Museum's Education Centre.

For more information and how these sessions can meet your needs please phone **Janet Rutter** or **Mike Hardman** on (0244) 321616.