

CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Frodsham

Archaeological Assessment



2003

CHESHIRE HISTORIC TOWNS SURVEY

Frodsham

Archaeological Assessment

2003

Environmental Planning
Cheshire County Council
Backford Hall
Backford
Chester
CH1 6PZ

These reports are the copyright of Cheshire County Council and English Heritage. We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Frodsham and District Local History Group, Winsford Local History Society, Andrew Fielding, Lion Salt Works Project Director and Dr Chris Lewis, University of Liverpool, in the preparation of these reports. The archive is held by the Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record.

The Ordnance Survey mapping within this document is provided by Cheshire County Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey, in order to fulfil its public function to make available Council held public domain information. The mapping is intended to illustrate the spatial changes that have occurred during the historical development of Cheshire towns. Persons viewing this mapping should contact Ordnance Survey copyright for advice where they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping/map data for their own use. The OS web site can be found at www.ordsvy.gov.uk

FRODSHAM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Mike Shaw & Jo Clark

1 SUMMARY

Frodsham has a long and varied history. It was a major estate centre in the early medieval period and in the 13th century a Borough was created by the Earl of Chester, making it perhaps the best example of a planned medieval town in Cheshire. However, its subsequent growth was limited, with only a small amount of industrial development in the post medieval period.

1.1 Topography and Geology

Frodsham lies in north Cheshire c 12m AOD, close to the River Mersey, which until 1974 formed the boundary between Cheshire and Lancashire. It stands at the foot of the sandstone hills of the Mid-Cheshire Ridge; the marshes of the Mersey estuary are to the north and west, and the valley of the River Weaver lies to the east. Overton Hill, which overlooks the town, rises to a height of 150m AOD.

A fault line runs north-south through the town and the area of the town to the west of Church Street sits on Keuper Sandstone, while that to the east lies on Waterstones. Immediately to the north are alluvial deposits of the Mersey estuary (British Geological Survey, 1980). The Waterstones are free-draining, while Keuper Sandstone is hard and cemented. Hence water passes through the Waterstones, emerging as springs at the boundary with the Keuper Sandstone. For example, there are a number of such springs at Overton.

The area of marsh to the north comprises humic alluvial gleys, which until recent drainage was mainly used as poor quality permanent pasture. On the Cheshire Plain are stagnogley soils, which are ideal for grassland and a major factor in the development of the Cheshire dairy farming industry; while on the Mid-Cheshire Ridge are brown earths and brown soils, which are generally fertile soils suitable as either arable or grassland (Furness 1978).

Settlement largely lies along the A56, Chester to Warrington road. The town has recently been bypassed by the creation of the M56 motorway.

1.2 Administrative Unit

The Borough of Frodsham lay within Frodsham Parish and Eddisbury Hundred (Dunn, 1987, 14). At Domesday (1086) it lay within Ruloe Hundred, which was later amalgamated with Rushton Hundred to form Eddisbury Hundred (Dodgson, 1971, 160).

Frodsham was an ecclesiastical parish. It covered a large area, comprising the townships of Alvanley, Frodsham, Frodsham Lordship, Helsby, Kingsley, Manley, Newton by Frodsham and Norley (Dunn, 1987, 27).

Today Frodsham is a Civil Parish within the Borough of Vale Royal.

1.3 Place Name

Frodsham is referred to at Domesday (1086) as *Frotesham*, meaning Frod's village or estate (Dodgson, 1971, 222). The place name Frodsham originally referred to both the town and the surrounding area. However, after the town was made a Borough in the 13th century, the part of the manor which the earl retained was referred to as the Lordship of Frodsham (ibid).

2 SOURCES

2.1 Historical

There are a number of secondary sources available for the study of Frodsham, including a 19th-century town history (Beamont 1881) and a number of shorter articles on the town and manor (Booth and Dodd 1978; Dodd 1969, 1987). There is also a recent thesis, which examines the landscape and ecology of the area (Clarke 1990), and a short report on the archaeology of the town (Thompson 1980).

The County Record Office (CRO) holds a good collection of documents relating to Frodsham, particularly the Cholmondley of Cholmondley Collection (CRO DCH\F), which includes deeds from the 13th century onwards. However, time has only allowed for a rapid scan of these documents. The CRO lists 235 records that are held elsewhere, amongst which are the Sneyd of Keele Hall manuscripts (now in Keele University Library), which includes deeds of 14th and 15th century date.

2.2 Cartographic

Frodsham is depicted on the county maps of Saxton (1577) and Speed (1610). The street pattern is shown on Ogilby's road map (1675) and Burdett's map of Cheshire (1777). Frodsham also occurs on a detailed map of the Rocksavage demesne of 1778 but only those properties belonging to the estate are shown. The earliest detailed maps to show the whole town are the tithe maps of Frodsham and Frodsham lordship (1844) and the Ordnance Survey (OS) First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1873-4.

2.3 Archaeological

Before the present survey there were 36 sites recorded in the town in the County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR), twenty of which are listed buildings, and these are identified on Figure 1. Where sites or finds have been identified from the CSMR, the relevant reference is provided throughout this assessment. The present assessment has generated ten new records.

Very little archaeological work has been carried out in Frodsham. In 1984 an investigation to the rear of burgage plots on the north side of Main Street revealed a build up of 800mm of garden soil but no medieval features (CSMR 984/0/17).

A watching brief was carried out at Main Street chapel by the Greater Manchester Archaeological Contracts Unit in 1995. The development of this site provided the opportunity for the front and middle section of a burgage plot to be investigated. However, no archaeological features dating to before the 19th century were recovered (GMAC 1995, 9).

A watching brief was carried out by Gifford and Partners in 1999 at Saltworks Farm to the south of the former salt works on the banks of the River Weaver. This work revealed just two archaeological features – a post medieval boundary ditch and a brick wall of probable 19th century date.

3 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

3.1 Prehistoric

The Frodsham area can be demonstrated to have been of importance throughout the prehistoric period. Finds of worked flint attest to Mesolithic and Neolithic activity (eg CSMR 1022, 1023) on the higher ground, and two Neolithic flint scrapers have been found in Frodsham (CSMR 964), while from the Bronze Age there are a number of chance finds of high-status implements found in the town, such as a stone axe hammer (CSMR 968) and two looped and socketed spearheads (CSMR 1013) found in the Frodsham marshes when the Manchester Ship Canal was under construction. There are Iron Age hillforts at Woodhouses (CSMR 970/1; SAM 25694), 2km south of the town, and Helsby (CSMR 1007/1; SAM 25689), 4km to the south-west, and a promontory fort at Bradley (CSMR 971/1; SAM 25693), 2km to the south-east.

This activity is presumably related to the location of Frodsham at the junction of three environments, which would have offered different resources: the hills of the Mid-Cheshire Ridge, the flat lands of the Cheshire Plain and the marshes of the Mersey estuary. In addition, high-status finds suggest that there was a trade route along the Mersey valley, with perhaps an ancient fording point of the river, leading to Hale on the opposite bank of the river (Crosby 1996, 36).

3.2 Roman

There is surprisingly little evidence of Roman activity in the area. The major monument for this period is the Roman road from Chester to Wilderspool (CSMR 2417). The line of this road in the Frodsham area cannot be precisely traced but is thought to diverge from the line of the present Chester Road to run along the higher ground, perhaps along the line of the present Howey Lane. Roman finds are limited to two coins found at the junction of High Street and Chapel Lane (CSMR 972).

3.3 Early Medieval

It is during this period that Frodsham can be identified as a site of major importance. The Domesday Survey (1086) records that it belonged to the Earl of Mercia before

the Norman Conquest, and it is one of a small number of settlements in Cheshire recorded as having a priest and a church.

(43) *The same earl [Hugh] holds Frotesham [Frodsham]. (Earl interlined) Edwin held it. There [are] 3 hides that pay geld. The land is for 9 ploughs. In demesne are 2 [ploughs] and 1 serf, and 8 villeins and 3 bordars with 2 ploughs.*

There a priest and a church have 1 virgate of land, and a winter mill there, and 2½ fisheries and 3 acres of meadow, and wood ½ league long and ½ league wide and 2 hays there, and in Wich [Northwich?] ½ salthouse serving the hall (aula). The third penny of the pleas of this hundred belonged to this manor T.R.E. It was then worth £8, now £4. It was waste.

(Harris and Thacker, 1987, 346)

The available evidence points to Frodsham having originated as the administrative centre of a large royal estate (Higham 1993, 152-3). The estate centre is unlikely to have been in the area of the later town but was potentially located at Overton in the vicinity of the parish church of St Lawrence, and Higham suggests 'there is every reason to think this is an ancient mother-church'. A carved grave cover of pre-Conquest date indicates that the church was of high status (ibid).

Frodsham's value at the Norman Conquest (£8) identifies it as one of the most valuable manors in Cheshire. In Roelau Hundred only Weaverham, from where the salt industry at Northwich was administered, was worth a comparable amount (£10), while nearby manors such as Helsby and Kingsley were worth considerably less (12s and 30s respectively).

Frodsham must have suffered in the devastation of Cheshire after the crushing of the rebellion of 1069-70, for it is described as having been waste. However, its value of £4 in 1086 suggests that it was well on its way to recovery by this time.

3.4 Medieval

3.4.1 The Manor

Frodsham remained in the hands of the Earls of Chester until the last earl died in 1237, after which date it reverted to the crown along with the earldom. Thereafter it remained in royal hands throughout the medieval period, apart from a short time from 1278-1283 when it was granted to David, brother of Llewelyn, Prince of Wales. Subsequently it became the custom to grant the earldom, and Frodsham with it, to the king's eldest son. The town was administered by a bailiff based at the manor house in Frodsham (Ormerod 1882, 47-50).

3.4.2 Settlement

3.4.2.1 The Borough

Frodsham was granted a Borough charter by Ranulph de Blundeville, the sixth earl of Chester, between 1209 and 1228 (Dodgson 1971, 227; Letters 2002). The

burgesses were granted a burgage in the town, an acre of land in the town fields, and were free of toll throughout the earl's territories. However, the burgesses were only granted limited rights. For example, there is no mention of the right to hold a town assembly and bread still had to be baked in the lord's ovens, and corn ground at the lord's mills.

An extent of the manor of 1283 reveals that there were 110 burgages in Frodsham and their value is given as £5 10s, suggesting that each burgess paid a rent of 12d. There is also mention of a 'House of the Burgesses' in 1315 (Dodd 1987, 14), which perhaps acted as a meeting place for unofficial assemblies.

3.4.2.2 Manor House

Although the castle is often said to be of Norman date there is no mention of a castle until the mid-13th century, and even then it is more commonly referred to as a manor house. No trace remains on the ground of a motte, and there are no other indications of an early castle. Accounts of the 13th to 14th centuries refer to a manor house comprising a hall with kitchen and stables attached. It is recorded that there was a palisade around the west side of the manor and there were gardens, water-mills and fishponds (Dodd 1987, 13). There is also mention of a tower in the 14th century (Stewart-Brown, 1910, 252) but this need not have been a major defensive feature and it is likely that the complex was more of a fortified manor house than a true castle.

The manor house burnt down in 1654 and there is an engraving of the ruins of 1727 by the Buck brothers, which shows a long hall with rounded windows but few other details. The ruins were cleared away and Park Place, a Georgian mansion, was built around 1750. This was bought by Joseph Stubs, a wealthy industrialist, in 1851, who oversaw the large-scale renovation and extension of the house and the laying out of extensive woods and gardens. In 1861 the estate was purchased by Edward Abbott Wright, an Oldham mill owner whose family remained in residence for many years (Frodsham and District Local History Group, 1995). The mansion and its grounds were bequeathed to Runcorn Rural District Council in 1933. The house is now used as council offices and the grounds as a public park known as Castle Park.

3.4.3 Economy

Ralph de Blundeville, who granted Frodsham its Borough Charter was also responsible for the creation of the planned town of Macclesfield. In 1237 the manor of Macclesfield was worth £67 compared to Frodsham's valuation of £126. Data for Cheshire towns is rare because in the medieval period the shire was exempt from national taxation, having its own taxation system, the Mize, and in the Cheshire Mize of 1405 Macclesfield paid the sum of 36s 3d and Frodsham paid 36s (Booth 1985). These are surprisingly small sums, which may reflect the decline apparently experienced by Frodsham and Macclesfield. However, it may also indicate that royal manors received a beneficial tax assessment.

We can anticipate that much of Frodsham's income was still derived from agriculture; as the burgesses were all given land in the town's fields. There were rights of meadowing on the marshland of the Mersey estuary and pasture on the hills above

the town (Dodd 1987, 30). Nevertheless, there is evidence of other activities, and medieval deeds record the following crafts: mercer (cloth merchant), blacksmith, butcher, basket-maker, skinner, dyer and carpenter (ibid, 28-9).

There is no mention of a market or fair being granted by charter, so we can assume that those which are recorded were unofficial or prescriptive. During his brief tenure of the town, David (brother of Llewelyn), obtained a licence for a Sunday market in 1278 (Dodd 1987, 13; Letters 2002)), and by 1350-1 the bailiff's accounts record sums for the tolls of the fair at the feast of St Lawrence and 'from divers markets' (Stewart-Brown 1910, 189-190).

At the east end of the town is the Bridge of Frodsham, which gave name to a family c 1216-72 (the reign of Henry III), that are supposed to have descended paternally from the Frodeshams. It is not known when the bridge was built. Before the Weaver was made navigable the part below Frodsham Bridge was crowded with vessels which unloaded there, and it assumed the appearance of a petty port. This, Ormerod suggests, was probably the port mentioned in the extent of 1283, where lords of Frodsham received a toll amounting to £10 per year (Ormerod 1882, 53).

There is evidence of a decline in the value of the manor of Frodsham from the 13th century onwards. It was worth £126 in 1237 but only £81 in 1280 and £76 by 1346-7. This decline has been attributed partly to mismanagement but also to the town's geographical situation, constrained as it was between the hills and the marshes of the Mersey estuary, with a shortage of arable land (Booth and Dodd 1978, 36-7).

This decline was exacerbated after the Black Death when approximately one third of the town's population is thought to have died, and after this time much of the demesne land was given over to pasture (Booth and Dodd 1978, 42).

3.4.3.1 Mills

The Domesday survey records a *winter mill* at Frodsham and by 1283 there were three mills in Frodsham, valued at £12 (Beamont 1881, 42). Burdett (1777) depicts two watermills to the west of Frodsham, on a stream running north into Frodsham Marsh. Also, the building of a windmill is recorded in the 14th century (Dodd 1969, 332). Its location is not given but a windmill is shown to the east of the town on the Ogilby road map of 1675. Two watermills located in Castle Park were pulled down when the railway was constructed (Ormerod 1882, 53).

3.4.4 Religion

The Borough was served by the church of St Lawrence in Overton. The present church (CSMR 988/1) contains work from the late 12th century and remodelling of the 14th century. However, it was restored in 1880-2, at which time much of the original work was lost (Richards 1973, 157-160).

There was a leper house located in Frodsham by 1237-8, the site of which is not known (Stewart-Brown 1938, 34).

3.4.5 The Surrounding Area

In the surrounding area there are a number of small hamlets, such as Netherton, Woodhouse, Mickledale and Bradley, all of which were in existence by the mid-14th century (Dodgson 1971, 228-230). Medieval sites include Godscroft Mill, 2km south-west (CSMR 982/1); Bradley Upper and Lower Mills (CSMR 992/1 and 992/2), 1km south-east; and Sutton Hall, a 15th-century timber framed mansion house, Listed Grade I and 2km north-east.

3.5 Post Medieval

3.5.1 The Manor

The Savages of Clifton took an increasingly close interest in Frodsham from the 15th century onwards, and held the manor from the late 16th century. In the 18th century the manor passed by marriage into the hands of the Cholmondley family (Ormerod 1882, 50).

3.5.2 Settlement

The market and fair presumably flourished in the medieval period for William Smith, writing at the end of the 16th century states that Frodsham 'was also of late years, by Sir John Savage, made a market town'. He also describes the town as but one long street, with a castle of stone at the west end thereof' (Ormerod 1882, 138). A court house was built in the 16th century (Thompson 1980, 5). The town continued to founder and in the mid-19th century the market was described as inconsiderable because of its contiguity to Warrington' (Bagshaw 1850, 609-613).

Frodsham Grammar School (CSMR 988/2/0) was founded between 1664 and 1688. The school originally stood in the south-west corner of the churchyard of St Lawrence at Overton but it became dilapidated and a new school was built nearby in 1824. After 1870 it became the Frodsham Endowed School for Boys and in 1892 the old building was demolished and replaced by a new building on the same site which still survives. A National School was built in 1835 on the east side of Church Street (Bagshaw 1850, 619).

3.5.3 Economy

Agriculture continued to dominate the economy of the town. Nevertheless non-agricultural craftsmen were present and in 1722 mention is made of a weaver, a tanner, a miller, a carpenter, a shoemaker, a collarmaker, a joiner, a blacksmith, three tailors and others (Dodd 1969, 334). In 1850 (Bagshaw 1850, 612-3) the chief occupations in the town were seven boot and shoemakers, two chemists, twelve grocers, three drapers, four milliners and dressmakers, thirteen shopkeepers, two surgeons, seven tailors, and two watch and clock makers.

The town's location on a major route also gave it importance as a coaching staging post. There were 18 inns in Frodsham in 1630, which is by far the largest number in Eddisbury Hundred (MacGregor 1992, 38). However, the town attracted little in the way of industry although there was a cotton factory on Ship Street (Thompson 1980, 4), a shipyard was established by Frodsham Bridge during the Napoleonic Wars

(CSMR 977/1; Thompson 1980, 7), and a rock salt refinery was in operation immediately to the north east by 1694, identified as 'disused' on the OS First Edition Map of (1873-4).

From the 17th century, the Savage family pursued a vigorous policy of enclosure beginning with marsh and upland, and the burgesses found their customary rights eroded (Dodd 1969, 332). Parts of the open fields did survive to a late date however, and unusually for Cheshire towns, were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1784 (Sylvester 1958, 28; Dodd 1969, 335).

Frodsham was an important area for cheesemaking up to the 1850s, using milk from herds grazing the Frodsham and Helsby marshes. After this date, however, the cows were kept solely for milk (Crosby 1996, 90).

3.5.4 Religion

The church of St Lawrence, which continues in use to the present day, was heavily restored in 1883 (Department of the Environment 1986). The church of St Dunstan was built within the town at the west end of Main Street before 1873 and served as temporary accommodation while St Lawrence's church was being restored. It is now an Evangelical Chapel.

The First Edition OS map (1873-4) shows four Methodist chapels located in the town in 1873: a Primitive Methodist Chapel on the Chester Road, a Free Methodist Chapel to the north of the High Street, a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at the east end of the High Street, with a further Methodist Chapel, now disused, close by. In addition there was a Primitive Methodist Chapel by Frodsham bridge.

3.5.5 Population

Frodsham's population in 1664 has been estimated as 340 using data from the Hearth Tax (MacGregor 1992). For 1801-1971 population data for Frodsham township is available from the census returns printed in the Victoria County History (Harris 1979, 202-240), and for 1981 and 1991 census data has been reproduced under Class Licence Number C01W0000125 with the permission of the Controller of the HMSO.

1801	1250	1891	3333
1811	1349	1901	2728
1821	1556	1911	3049
1831	1746	1921	3025
1841	1806	1931	3140
1851	2179	1951	5245
1861	1869	1961	5661
1871	2095	1971	8581
1881	2489	1981	8966
1891	3333	1991	8903

3.5.6 Transport and Communications

Salt exports had for centuries been a staple feature of the Weaver shipping trade due to the necessity to tranship at Frodsham Quay from the canal flat boats to more seaworthy craft. Also, Furness iron ore travelled to forges at Vale Royal and copper ore was shipped up the river to smelters, and brass and copper manufactures were shipped down via Frodsham. With the decline of forges, smelting and refining this trade died and was replaced by imports of bulky materials including coal, lime, bricks, slate and farm produce (Dodd, 1987, 92). The main road was improved by the establishment of a turnpike trust for the Chester to Warrington road from 1786 (Harrison 1886), and as part of the improvements the course of High Street was altered significantly between 1826 and 1833, with a new road cut to the north of the old route.

The Chester to Warrington railway, which opened in 1850, ran parallel to Main Street through the rear of the tenements that lie to the south of the street.

3.5.7 The Surrounding Landscape (Figure 1)

Within the surrounding area there are a number of 17th century farmhouses, including Lower Rileybank (CSMR 981/1) 1.5km south-west of Frodsham and Listed Grade II, and Manor House (CSMR 963/1/0) 2km south and Listed Grade II*. There are also two rows of four 19th century boundary stones 2km east of Frodsham, which formerly indicated the layout of a water meadow (CSMR 994/0/1; 994/0/2).

4 PLAN COMPONENTS

The town has been divided into 20 components (prefixed by **COM**). These have been tentatively sub-divided by period, although there is need for further work to define the extent and date of these components more closely.

The origins, nature, form and development of the town are all still incompletely understood. A broad outline of its development can, however, be attempted, which can be tested and refined as further work is carried out.

Although the Frodsham area was of importance from early in the prehistoric period there is little evidence of settlement at Frodsham itself until the early medieval period. The plan components therefore commence with the approximate identification of the potential early medieval estate centre and church at Overton. Post medieval Frodsham has been identified from the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1873.

EARLY MEDIEVAL c 450 - 1066 (Figure 2)

COM 1 - Estate Centre?/Church?

MEDIEVAL 1066-1540 (Figure 2)

COM 2 - ?Market Place, Overton

COM 3 - Tenements, east of School Lane, Overton

COM 4 - Tenements south of Pinmill Brow, Overton,

COM 5 - Manor House/Castle?

- COM 6** - Market Place
- COM 7** - Burgages, north of Main Street
- COM 8** - Burgages, north of High Street
- COM 9** - Burgages, north of Ship Street
- COM 10** - Burgages, south of Main Street
- COM 11** - Burgages, south of High Street
- COM 12** - Burgages, west of Church Street
- COM 13** - Tenements, east of Church Street
- COM 14** - Frodsham Bridge
- COM 15** - Tenements at The Quay, Newtown

POST MEDIEVAL c 1874 (Figure 2)

- COM 16** - Settlement at Frodsham
- COM 17** - Settlement at Newtown
- COM 18** - Settlement at Overton
- COM 19** - Cheshire Junction Railway

MODERN c 2000 (Figure 2)

- COM 20** - Settlement

4.1 Early Medieval (Figure 2)

Frodsham was a major estate centre of the Earls of Mercia in the early medieval period. Although its exact area cannot be determined the estate centre was probably located at Overton and no doubt included a hall and ancillary buildings as well as a church, which probably originated as a chapel and perhaps doubled as a seigneurial chapel and a minster church for the surrounding area. The discovery of a carved grave cover of pre-Conquest date suggests that the church may also have been a burial ground for those of high status (Harris & Thacker 1987, 289). As an administrative and ecclesiastical centre it would perhaps have attracted ancillary settlement and incipient marketing as dues and produce were brought to the estate centre.

The estate centre, including the site of the early medieval church is partially identified as **COM 1**. However, it must be emphasised that the estate centre, while including the church no doubt included a variety of other buildings and occupied a much larger area than has been depicted. Potentially, the medieval plan components **COMs 2-4**, may have also been part of the estate.

4.2 Medieval (Figure 2)

The form and location of medieval settlement may not have differed significantly from that of the early medieval settlement, with the estate centre and church (**COM 1**), ancillary settlement (**COMs 3 and 4**) and possible triangular market place, which may have also been laid out before the Norman Conquest (**COM 2**).

At some time during the medieval period the estate centre shifted from Overton to the manor house/castle (**COM 5**), and this may have occurred in the early 13th

century with the foundation of the 'new town' and perhaps the construction of a bridge over the River Weaver. Such a major reorganisation of the landscape could perhaps only be undertaken by a magnate as powerful as Ranulph of Blundeville. He was one of the leading barons in the country at the time. He also demonstrated a willingness to undertake major building projects elsewhere in the county with his construction of Beeston castle from 1220 onwards, and a recognition of the benefits of urban development with his granting of a charter to Macclesfield around the same time.

The scale of the town was ambitious, with 110 burgages by 1283, paying a sum of £5 10s in rent. Additionally the town was a considerable port, the tolls from which were valued at the sum of £10. There was presumably a quay for these ships by Frodsham Bridge (**COM 14**). This area is named 'Newtown' on 20th century maps, which is a name often given to new 13th century settlements.

The town's subsequent development was limited however, and it may never have achieved the prosperity for which its founder had hoped. There was already a decline by the end of the 13th century, which might be the result of less seigneurial interest following the transfer of the earldom to the Crown after 1237, or perhaps more simply that Blundeville's plans for the town were over-ambitious.

The Black Death and related disasters of the mid-14th century must have sounded a death knell to Frodsham's already fading hopes of becoming a major town. Estimates vary as to how many people died but it seems likely that, as elsewhere in the country, around one third of the population would have been lost. There may have been some expansion of settlement with the laying out of small properties along the east side of Church Street (**COM 13**) but this is likely to be lower status, perhaps even squatter, occupation, and the main areas of settlement probably saw a contraction with burgage plots being amalgamated or given over to gardens.

Prior to the establishment of the planned town there may have been slight growth at Overton in the area immediately west of the market (**COM 3**) and east of the market (**COM 4**). **COM 4** may have been used as a green, as two plots within it are referred to as 'green garden' and 'green croft' on the Frodsham Lordship tithe award of 1844. It can be anticipated, however, that this area would gradually be given over to settlement, especially on the eastern side by the market area (**COM 2**) and on the north by the church (**COM 1**). Frodsham Grammar School was moved to this area in 1824.

After the creation of the new town and the construction of the manor house/castle, the focus of the settlement shifted from Overton, which may have caused a reduction in population density and the extent of settlement in the vicinity of the church (**COM 1**). The present church (CSMR 988/1) contains work from the late 12th century but was largely remodelled in the 14th century, then restored in 1880-2, at which time much original work was lost (Richards 1947, 157-160). Frodsham Grammar School (CSMR 988/2/0) originally stood in the south-west corner of the churchyard but was moved to a new site in 1824.

COM 5 outlines the approximate extent of the medieval manor house or castle, which is thought to have its originated in the 13th century. The fortified manor house

is documented as having a palisade to the west, along with gardens, water mills and fishponds. A tower is documented in the 14th century. The location and extent of the manor house and its associated grounds has been approximately identified but would benefit from further analysis. It was burnt down in 1654, the ruins cleared away to make way for Park Place, a Georgian mansion built in 1750. In the mid-19th century the mansion house was renovated and extensive woods and gardens laid out.

COMs 7-10 identify the likely location and extent of the 'new town', with a number of boundaries running at right angles to the Main Street/High Street that probably demarcate former burgage plots. Main Street was given sufficient width to act as a market street (**COM 6**) and the main road was diverted to pass through the Borough. However, the true extent of the Borough is unknown and its identification should be treated as an approximation against which future evidence should be tested.

Tenements to the north of Main Street from the west end of the town to Ship Street are identified as **COM 7**. Here the properties are of long, narrow 'burgage type', around 150m in length and show signs of having been deliberately laid out, although later division and amalgamation has perhaps masked the original tenement widths.

COM 8 identifies properties to the north of High Street, and the east and south of Ship Street. Properties here are still narrow but their length is constrained by Ship Street, which appears to be a later insertion, allowing access to **COM 9**, which appears originally to have been part of **COM 8**.

COM 10 identifies tenements to the south of Main Street, east of Castle Park and west of Church Street. Tenements here are of long, narrow 'burgage type'.

COM 11 identifies properties to the south of Main Street and east of Church Street, which are of long, narrow burgage type, up to 80m in length. This area, known as 'The Rock', is higher than the surrounding plan components and it has been suggested as an early settlement area, perhaps pre-dating the establishment of a Borough.

COM 12 identifies tenements to the west of Church Street, which on 19th century maps are noticeably wider than those on Main Street, but the presence of a back lane argues for a deliberately planned component. Mention of properties on Church Street in 13th century deeds suggests that this area formed part of the original Borough.

COM 13 identifies properties to the east of Church Street, which are shorter than those to the west and may not be part of the original planned Borough.

A bridge over the River Weaver (**COM 14**) is referred to from the 14th century, although there is likely to have been a crossing here from a much earlier date. In the late 16th century William Smith describes the bridge as being of brick, while William Webb, writing in the early 17th century, records that it was rebuilt in stone (Ormerod 1882, 53). The present bridge was built around 1850 (Department of the Environment 1986).

COM 15 identifies settlement in the vicinity of Frodsham Bridge, which is attested from the 13th century and reflected in the Frodsham surname *de Ponte* (Beamont 1881, 49). The exact site of this settlement is not known but later maps would suggest that the earliest settled area was north of the road, immediately by the bridge. There was probably also some form of quay but its nature and exact location is unknown. This area also became known as Newtown, which has persisted as a place name, and is indicative of new medieval settlement.

4.3 Post Medieval (Figure 2)

Given Frodsham's failure to attract significant industrial activity, the post medieval period is not characterised by large scale expansion. However, there does appear to have been an attempt to improve the town's prosperity with the re-foundation of the market in the 16th century but any population expansion arising from this and similar developments is likely to have been absorbed within the existing settlement until at least the 19th century.

By the later post medieval period, as identified from the OS First Edition 6": 1 mile map of 1873, expansion had occurred at the west end of town around Marsh Lane, at the east end of town along the High Street, in the vicinity of Frodsham Bridge and in the area of Overton. At this time there were still three distinct areas of settlement: Frodsham (**COM 16**), Newtown (**COM 17**) and Overton (**COM 18**).

Expansion occurring within **COM 16** includes the Marsh Lane area, which was undeveloped at the time of Burdett (1777) but had been settled by the time of the tithe map of 1844. By 1873 terraced houses however had been constructed to the north and south of Marsh Lane and a Primitive Methodist Chapel to the south of Chester Road. The area to the east of the medieval town on the High Street also appears to have been unsettled in 1777 but was settled by the time of the tithe map of 1844. The area to the south of High Street was badly affected by the construction of the railway around 1850, which cut through many of the properties. A disused Wesleyan Methodist Chapel is shown on the OS First edition map (1873) to the south of High Street and immediately east of Fluin Lane (the bottom end of which is called Chapel Lane). It had presumably been recently replaced by the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel to the south of High Street and west of Fluin Lane, which still survives.

Expansion occurring within **COM 17** includes the area to the north of Frodsham Bridge, which is identified as *The Quay* on the map of 1778 (Rocksavage Demesne). This was presumably the site of the docks and perhaps also of the Napoleonic shipyard. A *Salt Works* is marked in this area on the 1778 map, doubtless the Rock salt refinery known from 1694. It survives to be shown on the 1844 tithe map but by 1873 is marked as disused. A *Bone Works* is identified in this area on the 1873 map. To the south of Frodsham Bridge a few buildings are depicted on the 1844 tithe map, having undergone further development by the time of the OS 1873 map, including a Primitive Methodist Chapel.

Development at the southern end of Church Street and in the vicinity of Overton is shown on the 1844 and 1873 maps, largely comprising Victorian villas (**COM 18**).

4.4 Modern c 2000 (Figure 2)

The extent of modern settlement at Frodsham is depicted as **COM 20**. Recently growth has been encouraged by Frodsham's role as a dormitory town for the conurbations of Warrington, Merseyside and Manchester. This growth has been largely to the east towards Frodsham Bridge and to the south, in-filling the area between Frodsham and Overton. The marshes to the north and the hills to the west have largely prevented settlement from spreading in these directions, which emphasises the constraints with which the town has always had to contend.

5 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

5.1 Above-Ground Remains

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Frodsham, although the nearby hillforts of Helsby (SAM 25689) and Woodhouses (SAM 25694) and the promontory fort at Bradley (SAM 25693) are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The historic cores of Frodsham and Overton are both included in designated Conservation Areas.

Frodsham largely retains its medieval street layout, apart from a minor re-routing of the High Street, which occurred in the 19th century. There are 58 listed buildings in Frodsham. The church of St Lawrence is Grade I, The Old Vicarage on Vicarage Lane is listed Grade II* and the remainder are Grade II. The majority of buildings are located along Main Street, which retains a good and varied stock of cottages, houses and inns of 17th to 19th century date. There are no parks and gardens included on the register in the Frodsham area.

5.2 Below-Ground Remains

Just two archaeological interventions are known to have been carried out in Frodsham. In 1984 an investigation to the rear of burgage plots on the north side of Main Street revealed a build up of 800mm of garden soil but no medieval features, and a watching brief carried out at Main Street Chapel by the Greater Manchester Archaeological Contracts Unit in 1995 failed to reveal archaeological features dating to before the 19th century. However, this does not imply that this is the state of the archaeological resource in the rest of the town.

In the higher parts of the town, for example to the east of the High Street, buildings are apparently built directly onto bedrock and there may not be a build-up of deposits in these areas. However, only further archaeological work will be able to determine this. The extent of the damage caused to medieval archaeological deposits by the re-routing and cutting of the High Street will have to be assessed. The Overton area is now largely built-up but below-ground deposits may again survive. The manor house/castle area is now Castle Park. There has been extensive landscaping here but again only further work can establish the extent of survival of archaeological features.

6 PRIORITIES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

6.1 General

The study of Frodsham forms part of a national research priority to examine the origins and development of medieval small towns and rural markets (English Heritage 1997, 49).

Work at Frodsham would fit into a number of these national priorities, particularly the following processes of change:

- PC6 Late Saxon to medieval
- PC7 Transition from medieval to post medieval traditions (c1300-1700AD)

6.2 Early Medieval

- Establish the location and extent of the early medieval estate centre at Overton
- Establish the foundation of the early medieval church

6.2 Medieval

- Establish the nature and extent of settlement at Overton
- Examine whether there was a medieval market place at Overton
- Establish the date of foundation of the medieval church, examine phases of expansion and contraction
- Establish the date, location and extent of the manor house/castle site and its ancillary features (outbuildings, mills, fishponds, water courses etc) and date its foundation and phases of use
- Examine whether there was settlement in the area of 'The Rock' pre-dating the foundation of the Borough in the early 13th century
- Establish the nature and extent of 'the Borough'
- Establish the precise location of settlement areas and date their phases of expansion and contraction
- Establish the nature and extent of buildings on settlement plots
- Examine evidence of medieval trade and industry
- Establish the location of the medieval port on the River Weaver and examine the date, nature and extent of activities

6.4 Post Medieval

- Examine settlement areas and date phases of expansion
- Examine evidence of post medieval trade and industry
- Examine the impact of the Manchester Ship Canal and the Cheshire Junction Railway upon domestic and industrial development
- Examine the development of Park Place and associated features including formal and landscaped gardens
- Establish the location of the quay and shipyards at Frodsham bridge and establish the date, nature and extent of activities

7 SOURCES

7.1 Bibliography

Bagshaw, S, 1850 *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County Palatine of Chester*

Beaumont, W, 1881 *An Account of the Ancient Town of Frodsham*

Booth, P H W, 1985 *Cheshire Mize Book 1405*, unpublished transcript

Booth, P H W and Dodd J P 1978 'The Manor and Fields of Frodsham, 1315-74', in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 128, 27-57

Cheshire County Council, Libraries and Archives, 1994 *Township Pack no 46 Frodsham*

Chester Archaeological Service, 1993 *Saltworks Farm Frodsham, Desk Based Assessment, September 1993* Unpublished report

Clarke, S, 1990 *The Landscape of Frodsham* Unpublished dissertation

Crosby, A, 1996 *A History of Cheshire* Phillimore

CSMR, County Sites and Monuments Record, Environmental Planning, Cheshire County Council

Department of the Environment, 1986 *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest: District of Vale Royal Cheshire*

Dodd, J P, 1969 'A Survey of Frodsham', *Cheshire Round* 10, 329-336

Dodd, J P, 1987 *A History of Frodsham and Helsby* Privately published

Dodgson, J McN, 1971 *The Place-Names of Cheshire: Part III. The Place-Names of Nantwich Hundred and Eddisbury Hundred*, Cambridge University Press

Dunn, F I, 1987 *The Ancient Parishes, Townships and Chapelries of Cheshire*

Frodsham and District Local History Group, 1995 *The Archive Photograph Series: Frodsham and Helsby*

Furness, R R, 1978 *Soils of Cheshire* Soil Survey Bulletin No.6

Gifford and Partners, 1999 *Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at Saltworks Farm Development Phases 2 and 3, Frodsham, Cheshire* Unpublished report

Greater Manchester Archaeological Contracts, 1995 *Main Street Chapel, Frodsham An Archaeological Watching Brief* Unpublished report

Harris, B E, (ed), 1979 *The Victoria History of the County of Chester: Vol II* Oxford University Press

Harris, B E and Thacker, A T (eds), 1987 *The Victoria History of the County of Chester: Vol I* Oxford University Press

Harrison, W 1886 'The Development of the Turnpike System in Lancashire and Cheshire', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 4, 80-92

Higham, N J, 1993 *The Origins of Cheshire* Manchester University Press

Letters, S, 2002 *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516*

MacGregor, A J, (ed) 1992 *The Alehouses and Alehouse Keepers of Cheshire 1629-1828*

Ormerod, G, 1882 *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester*, 3 vols, 2nd edition, edited by Thomas Helsby

RCHME, 1997 *Excavation Index Records*

Richards, R, 1973 *Old Cheshire Churches* Revised edition

Stewart-Brown, R, (ed) 1910 'Accounts of the Chamberlains and other Officers of the County of Chester', *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 59

Stewart-Brown, R, (ed) 1925 'Calendar of County Court, City Court and Eyre Rolls of Chester, 1259-97, with an Inquest of Military Service, 1288', Chetham Society, 2nd series, 84

Stewart-Brown, R, and Mills, M H, (eds) 1938 'Cheshire in the Pipe Rolls, 1158-1301', *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 92

Sylvester, D, and Nulty, G (eds) 1958 *The Historical Atlas of Cheshire* Cheshire Community Council

Thompson, P, 1980 *Frodsham: The Archaeological Potential of a Town* Cheshire County Council

7.2 Maps

(CRO – Cheshire Record Office)

British Geological Survey, 1980 1:50000 map – Sheet 97: Runcorn, solid and drift editions

Burdett, P P, 1777, *A Survey of the County Palatine of Chester* (The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Occasional Series Volume 1 1974)

Ogilby, 1675 Road Map (CRO PM 10/6)

Ordnance Survey First Edition 6"; 1mile map surveyed 1873-4

Rocksavage Demesne Lands, 1778 (CRO DCH/H/516)

Saxton, C , 1577 *Cestriae Comitatus* CRO PM12/10

Speed, J, 1662, *The County Palatine of Chester with the Most Ancient Citie Described* (reprint of the 1610 original) (CRO PM1/11)

Tithe Award, Frodsham Township, 1844 (map: CRO EDT 162/2: apportionment CRO EDT 162/1)

Tithe Award, Frodsham Lordship, 1844 (map: CRO EDT 163/2: apportionment CRO EDT 163/1)

8 ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Frodsham and the Surrounding Area

Figure 2: The Development of Frodsham



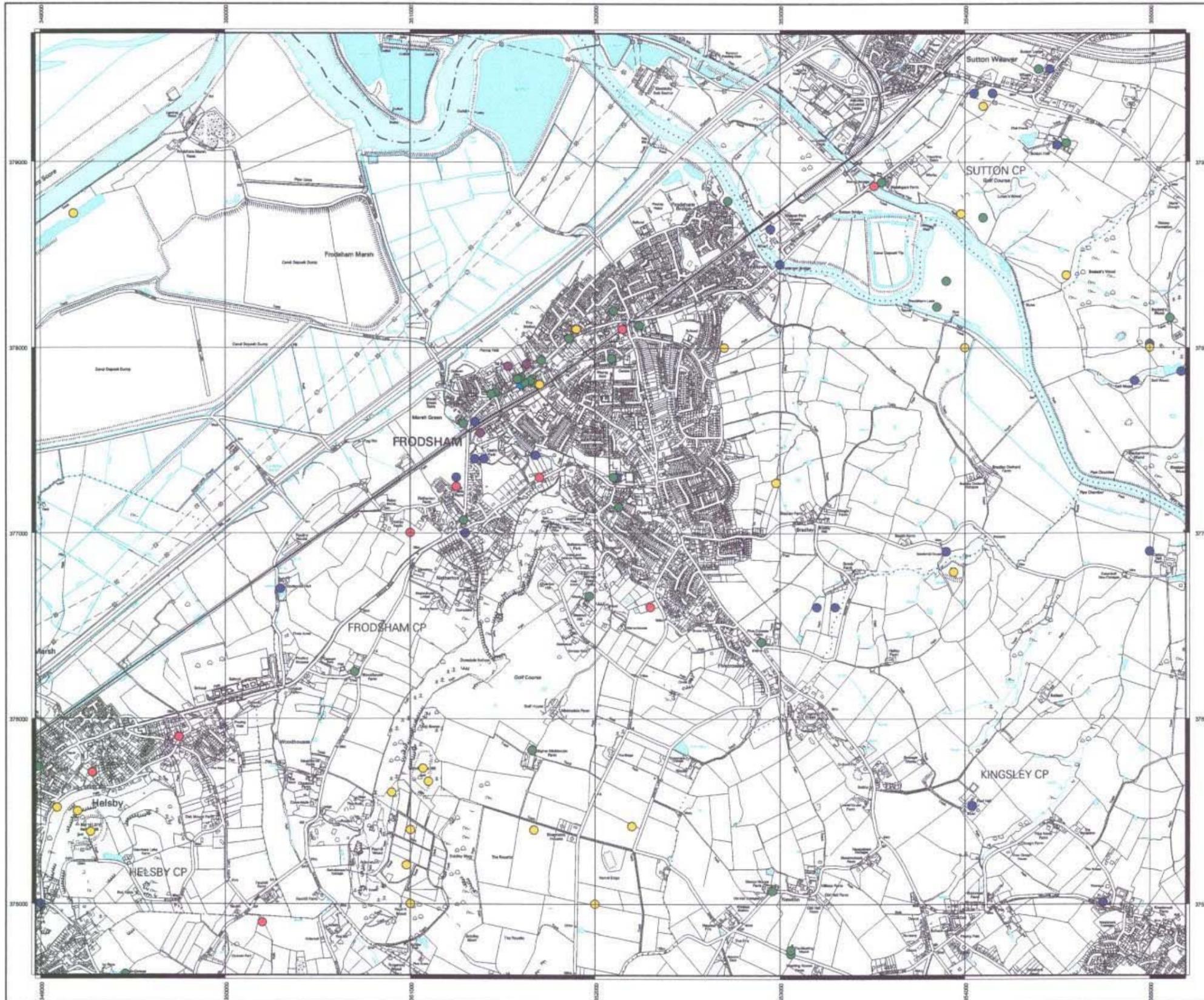
Figure 1
Frodsham and the
Surrounding Area

Sites and Monuments

- Prehistoric
- Romano-British
- Early Medieval
- Medieval
- Post Medieval
- Modern

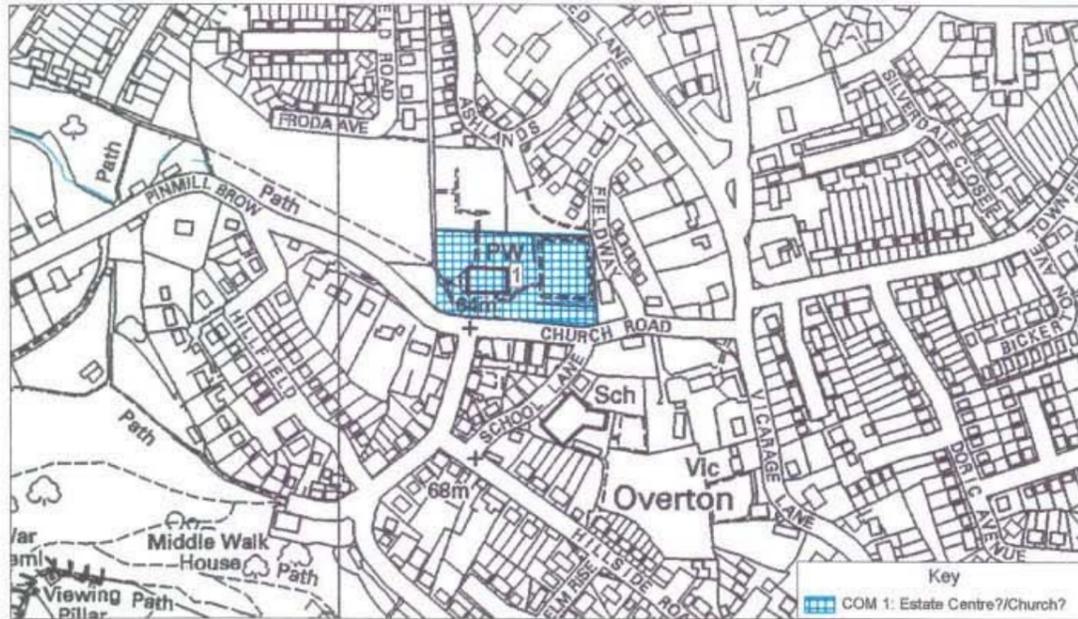
1:20000

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of Her Majesty's Stationer © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Cheshire County Council, Environmental Planning LA076503, 2002



0 0.5 1 Kilometres

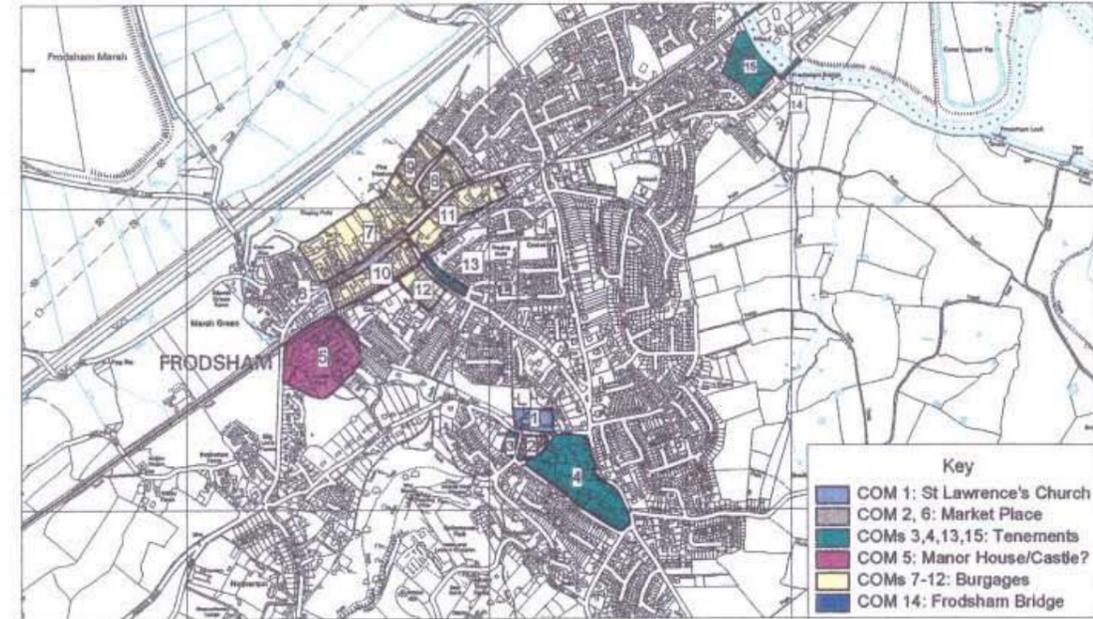
Figure 2: The Development of Frodsham



Early Medieval

0 50 100 Metres

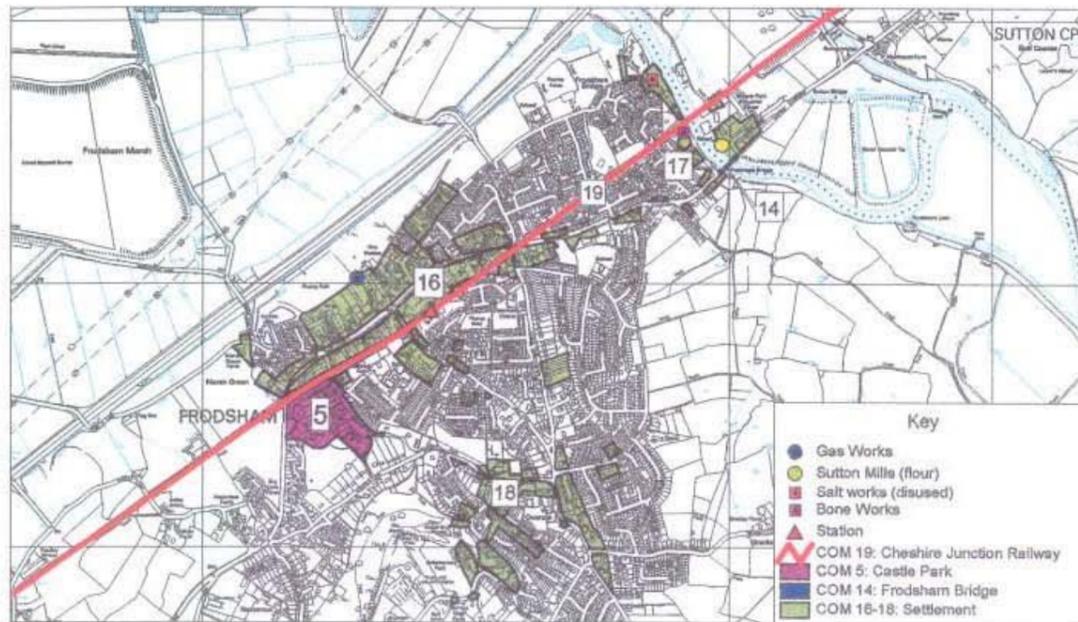
1:5000



Medieval

0 300 600 Metres

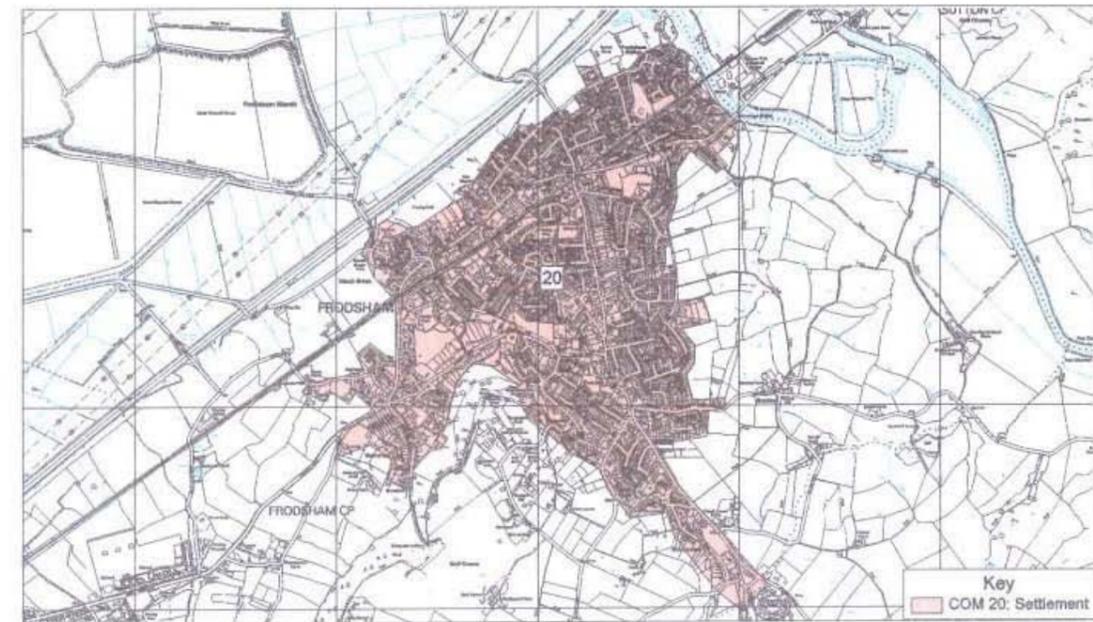
1:20000



Post Medieval c 1873-4

0 300 600 Metres

1:23000



Modern c 2000

0 300 600 Meters

1:30000

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Cheshire County Council.