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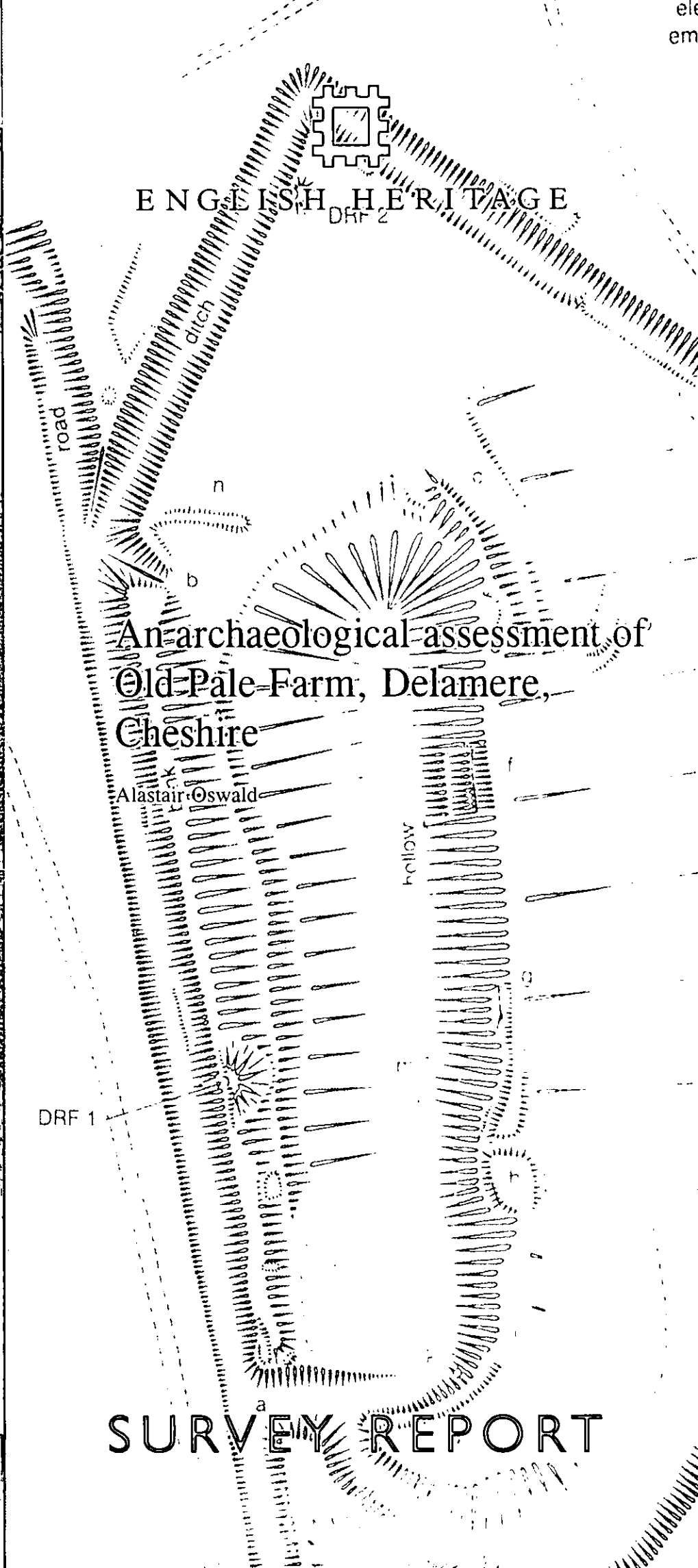
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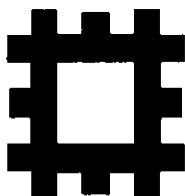
An archaeological assessment of
Old Pale Farm, Delamere,
Cheshire

Alastair Oswald

DRF 1

SURVEY REPORT





**OLD PALE FARM, DELAMERE
VALE ROYAL
CHESHIRE**

**NMR Nos: 71146, 71342
NGR: SJ 548 696
RSM: 25692
SMR No: 866 -868 & 837**

Surveyed May 2000
Surveyed by A. Oswald
Report by A. Oswald
Drawings by A. Oswald

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York Office: 37 Tanner Row, York YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901 Fax: 01904 601998
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1. INTRODUCTION

In mid-May 2000, English Heritage carried out a desk-top assessment and field survey of part of the farmland of Old Pale Farm in Cheshire. The land covers approximately 137ha (338.5 acres) lying c.1km north-west of the village of Delamere, in the parish of the same name, in the Vale Royal district of the county. The farmhouse itself, which was excluded from the field survey, is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ 551 694, while the farmland is centred at SJ 548 696. The investigation was requested and funded by The Environment Partnership, acting on behalf of the Forestry Commission's Land Regeneration Unit. It was intended to evaluate as far as possible from existing records and basic field observation the nature, extent, condition and importance of any archaeological remains surviving on the land, prior to the possible expansion of Delamere Forest. Details of the methodology employed and the sources consulted are included in Section 7 and Appendix 2.

The only monument of national importance recorded by the investigation is the Iron Age hillfort known as Castle Ditch, on Eddisbury Hill, which saw several phases of significant re-use in later periods. The hillfort, only part of which lies within the bounds of the land under consideration, is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (RSM: 25692), and is recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record for Cheshire (SMR: 866 to 868 and 837) and the National Monuments Record (NMR: 71146, 71267 and 71157). A number of other certain and possible archaeological remains, all of lesser archaeological worth, were identified by the English Heritage investigation.

2. GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND LAND-USE

The farmland of Old Pale Farm spans a plateau-like ridge of Triassic Keuper Sandstone that rises locally to between 150m and 175m above Ordnance Datum. The ridge, which runs from south-east to north-west, has a steep northern escarpment with a generally more gentle dip slope to the south; both scarps are punctuated by steep-sided dry valleys or coombs. The sandstone outcrops in numerous places along the crests of the ridge and has been the object of several quarries of moderate size, probably for use as building material. The overlying soil is a light sandy till of glacial origin, which contains gravels and occasional boulders of various non-local stones. In places, deposits of almost pure red sand are visible, and these deposits too have evidently been subject to extraction.

Documentary evidence indicates that much of the area was wooded from at least the Norman conquest, and that from the early 14th century it formed part of the Royal Forest of Delamere (see Section 4). However, the medieval meaning of 'forest' implies a function (primarily hunting) and legal status more than a straightforward description of the vegetation, and the documents indicate that gradual clearance of the woodland for agriculture was continuous from the early 12th century onwards. By the early 19th century, contemporary descriptions indicate that large parts of the 'Forest' were essentially open heathland. A parliamentary Act of Enclosure in 1812 marked the beginning of more intensive arable agriculture and the planting of new trees for commercial timber production, but scattered tracts of mixed deciduous woodland have survived to the present day.

At the time of the English Heritage survey, the farmland of Old Pale Farm comprised four fields under arable cultivation (totalling 34.5ha, or c.25% of the total area) and approximately sixteen fields under pasture, some being set aside for grazing and others for the production of hay (Figure 1). However, it is evident from the aerial photographic evidence and observation on the ground that only small portions of the fields currently down to pasture have escaped ploughing at some point in the relatively recent past. These portions generally lie on the steeper slopes, where modern farm machinery has been less easy to apply. The steeper slopes offer easiest access to the sandstone beds, and have in places been quarried for stone at various points in the past, which has in some instances made the surface even more difficult for cultivation. Consequently, these two forms of land-use have severely restricted the potential for the survival of earthworks or other upstanding archaeological remains, other than those directly resulting from the quarrying and post-medieval cultivation.

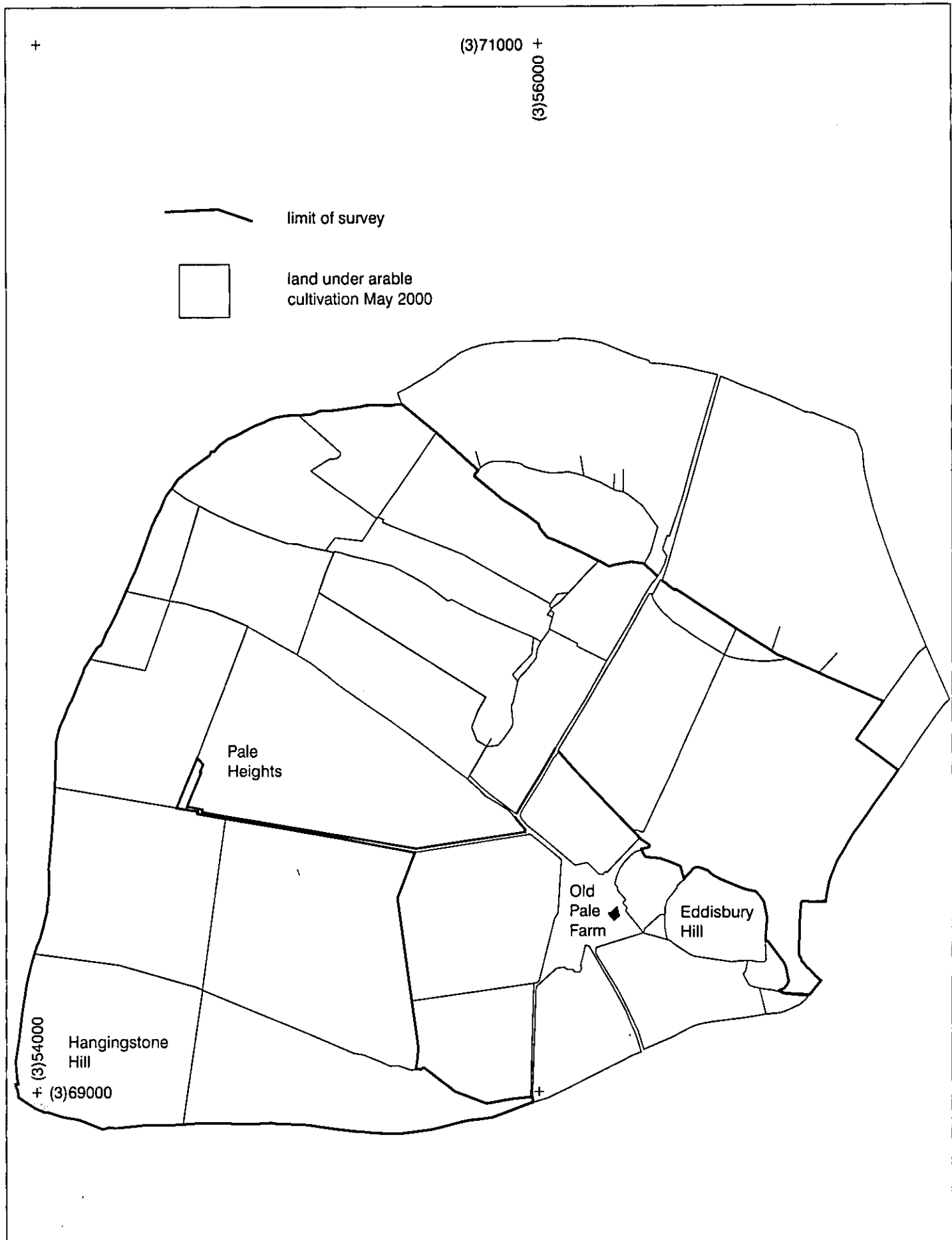


Figure 1. Land-use at the time of the field survey (scale 1:10,000).

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3. HISTORY OF RESEARCH (see Figure 2)

3.1 Documentary research

There has been intensive research into the relatively plentiful documentary evidence relating to the medieval and later development and exploitation of the Royal Forest of Delamere, and the administrative centre known as 'The Chamber in the Forest' that was located within the bounds of Castle Ditch hillfort. Building on the work of the 19th-century historian G Ormerod (1882), HJ Hewitt (1929) compiled a scholarly account of Cheshire in the medieval period, which traced the development of the Forest in some detail. R Stewart-Brown (1939) argued on the basis of certain 17th-century documents that The Chamber in the Forest had certainly been located within the Castle Ditch hillfort. BMC Husain (1955) concentrated on the documentary evidence for the Forest in the late medieval period. Attention subsequently focused on the process of reclamation by which the Forest was transformed into its present state (Simpson 1967; Kain and Holt 1983, 23). Lastly, the Victoria County History (Harris 1979) and the Delamere Local History Group (Latham (ed) 1991) have published further studies which deal with the entire span of the Forest's use. Taken together, these works represent an exhaustive documentary investigation, which renders further work on most primary sources virtually unnecessary.

3.2 Field survey

The earliest archaeological field investigation of the modern era can be said to be the excellent large scale vignette (at 4 chains to 1 inch) of the earthworks of Castle Ditch hillfort (CRO: OS 176, 60 SW C3; see Appendix 3.4). This was undertaken by the Ordnance Survey in 1839, at the time of the 2-inch scale mapping of the County, and was left off the eventual publication of the mapping at 1-inch scale (Ordnance Survey 1840; BL: Maps 176, 60 SW C3; see Appendix 3.5). The survey of the hillfort carried out in 1874 for the First Edition 25-inch mapping differed little from the earlier plan except in terms of the conventions employed for the depiction of the earthworks (Ordnance Survey 1875; see Appendix 3.6). These accurate and perceptive early analyses of the field remains were hardly improved upon by most of the later depictions (Ormerod 1882, plan facing p106; Ordnance Survey 1898; Varley 1950, fig 3; Longley 1987, fig 21). However, the thorough re-examination and survey of the earthworks at 1:1000 scale by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England in 1987 corrected a number of the misleading aspects of the earlier depictions (RCHME 1987; Cocroft *et al.* 1989). This detailed field investigation of the monument and its immediate environs leave little room for improvement.

In 1998, the RCHME recorded the communications towers on the summit of Pale Heights (which are excluded from the area under investigation) as part of a national project undertaken to record the structures and installations of the Cold War period (NMR: 1106311). In terms of the wider area under consideration, the English Heritage fieldwork was the first intensive fieldwork intended specifically to identify archaeological field remains. However, field observations have been undertaken by the Ordnance Survey and the RCHME to inform map revisions from 1874 onwards (Ordnance Survey 1875; 1898; NMR: OS record cards for SJ 56 NW, NE & SJ 57 SW, SE). Although the environs of the hillfort and the sites of stray finds (see Section 3.5) have been visited, no

other earthworks thought to be of archaeological importance have been identified by this earlier work.

3.3 Aerial photography

The earliest known aerial photograph of part of the area under investigation is an oblique image of Castle Ditch hillfort taken in or before 1936 by or for WJ Varley (1937, plate opposite p54). The location of the original photograph is no longer known.

Black and white vertical aerial photographs produced by twelve non-specialist sorties, covering the whole of the area under consideration, and four sets of oblique photographs taken specifically for archaeological purposes, covering the hillfort and its environs, are held in English Heritage's National Monuments Record (see Appendix 2). The earliest vertical photographs were taken on 10 August and 26 to 27 August 1945 (RAF 1945a; b; c), but these are not particularly informative, except in terms of the agricultural regime at that time. However, a series taken in low light conditions on 17 January 1947 (RAF 1947) reveal various slight earthworks very clearly. Photographs taken since the Second World War indicate that almost all the farmland has been under arable cultivation at some point (RAF 1947; 1951a; b; 1953; Ordnance Survey 1960; 1968; 1983).

Of the four specialist oblique series, the photographs taken by JK St. Joseph for the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography are poor (CUCAP 1951). Those taken on 31 January 1987 by NJ Higham (Higham 1987) are much clearer, showing a series of slight earthworks to the north-east of the hillfort, which were interpreted by the photographer as possible prehistoric cultivation terraces or field boundaries (Rhys Williams 1997, 16). However, the English Heritage field investigation suggests that the earthworks are much more likely to be of post-medieval origin (see Section 5). The series taken in 1989 by Liverpool Museum add little to what had previously been recorded (LMU 1989a; b). For completeness, it should be recorded that two other aerial photographs have been published individually, the first taken at some point before 1987 and the second in August 1981 (Longley 1987, plate 10; Rhys Williams 1997, fig 13); neither shows anything of significance.

3.4 Excavation

In the summer of 1936, WJ Varley carried out the first of three seasons of excavation on Castle Ditch hillfort (Varley 1937; 1950; Varley *et al.* 1940, 65). The publication of his work left much to be desired, even by the standards of the time, and a number of his findings have been challenged subsequently (Cotton 1954, 61-2; Forde-Johnstone 1962, 40-2; Challis and Harding 1975, 44-5; Kenyon unpublished 1984, chapter 1, 50ff; Longley 1987, 110-1; Cocroft *et al.* 1989). However, his general conclusions as to the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age origin of the monument have been widely accepted. Varley's excavation remains the only investigation of the sub-surface remains to have been carried

out within the area under consideration and throws little light on how the surrounding area may have been used in prehistory.

3.5 Stray finds of artifacts

According to WT Watkin (1886, 300-1), the antiquarian Dr Foote-Gower had in his collection a number of coins and urns of Roman date, found on Eddisbury Hill at an unknown date.

In 1851, quarrying in 'Sandhole Field' encountered a Bronze Age cremation urn in a stone-lined pit ('cist') on the southern slope of the plateau 'in a hollow mid-way between two converging ridges' (Anon 1851-2, 99-100; NMR: 71345). The description indicates that it is almost certainly at SJ 5476 6901, in a field known locally as 'Near Sandhole', as suggested by an Ordnance Survey field investigation in 1964 (NMR: OS record card for SJ 56 NW 16). In 1950, Varley reported the discovery of a number of later Neolithic or early Bronze Age cremation urns during quarrying in 1850 (Varley 1950, 52; Longley 1987, 51; NMR: 71185). The location was given vaguely as '...in the sand pit on the east side of the hill', yet no quarries appear to have existed in the immediate vicinity of the eastern side of the hill. In fact, Varley frequently mistook north for east (for example, see Varley 1937, plate opposite p 54), so the location is likely to have been in the quarry centred at SJ 5532 6950, that is, on the north side of the hill. However, given the long delay in the reporting of these finds, it is not impossible that the urns are connected with those discovered in 1851, which might be described as being below and east of Pale Heights. Three sherds of one of the urns, of later Neolithic 'grooved ware' type, are held in Warrington Museum (catalogue number: RA 28-30).

In 1896, a hoard of five Neolithic polished stone axes was discovered 'at the foot of the hill': that is, Eddisbury Hill (Roeder 1907, 115; NMR: 71184). None of these axes, which presumably represent a ritual deposit, can now be traced. The location given clearly does not indicate whether or not the discovery was within the farmland under consideration, but the Ordnance Survey Second Edition 25-inch map, surveyed in the 1897, suggests that the only major quarry in active use at that date was the one some 400m to the east of the hill (Ordnance Survey 1898).

A flint scraper found at Eddisbury (possibly in the hillfort) prior to 1979 is held in the Grosvenor Museum (Cheshire SMR: 4/AR 013 2; NMR: 71270).

In about 1979, a later Neolithic ground and perforated stone macehead, of disc form, was found on the surface after ploughing (Robinson 1980-1; NMR: 71692). The location given, at SJ 549 701, lies just within the north-eastern boundary of the area under consideration. The macehead is now held by the Grosvenor Museum (catalogue number: 78.1.GM).

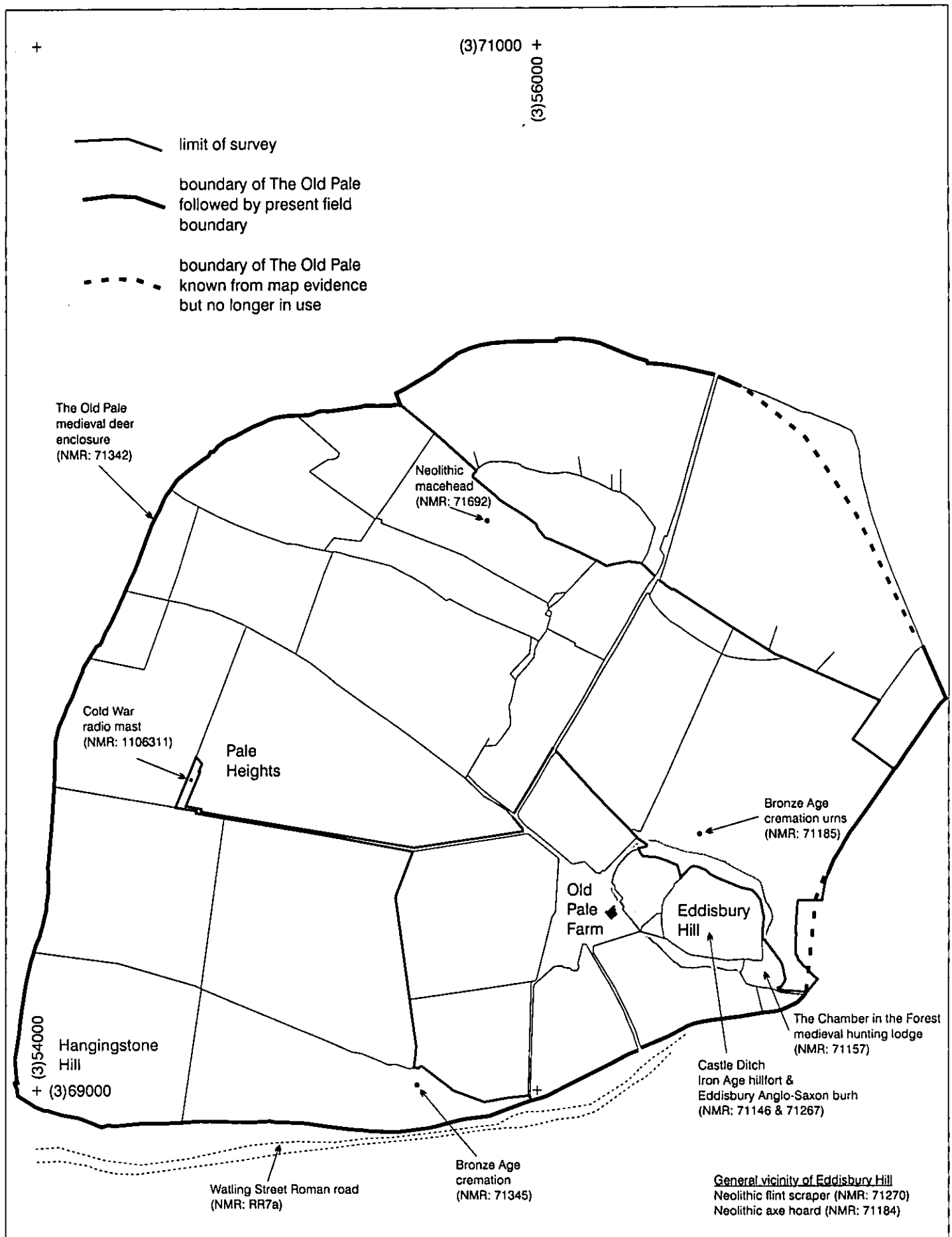


Figure 2. Locations of sites and monuments recorded prior to the English Heritage investigation (scale 1:10,000).

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4. HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Victoria County History suggests that there may have been a late Neolithic (c.2500 BC to 2000 BC) focus on Eddisbury Hill (Longley 1987, 41-2). However, at present there is no strong evidence to support this claim, which is based partly upon the uncertain location of the cremation urns discovered by chance in 1851 (see Section 3.5). While the stone macehead discovered c.1979 is indeed likely to be of later Neolithic date, the polished stone axes discovered in 1896, which can no longer be traced, and scraper found before 1979 may well be earlier Neolithic (c.3500 BC). Varley's excavations of the Iron Age hillfort gave no hint of any earlier monument or settlement centre. On balance, the scant evidence for land-use in the Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age appears more consistent with the kind of scattered, small-scale activity that is typical across most of the landscape at that period.

Varley's excavations demonstrated that by the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age (c.1000 BC to 750 BC), a settlement enclosed by a timber palisade had developed on Eddisbury Hill. The area of the settlement and the size and form of the defences were evidently enlarged in several phases, but there has been considerable doubt as to whether Varley's original interpretation of the sequence is correct (Cotton 1954, 61-2; Forde-Johnston 1962, 37-42; Longley 1987, 110-11; Cocroft *et al.* 1989). The excavations recovered little evidence for Roman occupation, but suggested that the ramparts had been slighted in the 1st century AD (Anon 1939; Varley 1950, 57). Subsequent Dark Age Anglo-Saxon occupation was attested. A hut found overlying one of the silted ditches was dated to 6th to 8th centuries AD on the form a clay loomweight, but an Iron Age date has subsequently been proposed for this (Kenyon unpublished 1984, chapter 1, 50ff).

It has been suggested implicitly by most historians (for example, Lysons 1810, 799) that Castle Ditch hillfort is the site of the defensive *burh* at Eddisbury founded by Queen Aethelflaeda in AD 914, despite a lack of firm documentary evidence. This assumption has been cautiously accepted by recent and more thorough studies (Bu'lock 1972; Thacker 1987; Higham 1988). The *burh* was one of a chain of defences constructed by Aethelflaeda and her brother to guard Mercia against Vikings attacking from the Irish Sea (Higham 1988). The origin of the name Eddisbury, which is used for the first time in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles for that year (Whitelock *et al.* 1961, 62-3), is uncertain, but the 'bury' element would seem to refer to a pre-existing enclosure or fortification, presumably the hillfort. Both excavation and field survey have recorded evidence for the reconstruction of the prehistoric ramparts (Varley 1950; RCHME 1987, 4). However, this episode of re-use may have been short-lived, and the settlement was perhaps superseded by the *burh* built at Runcorn in 915 AD (Bu'lock 1972, 61).

There is no firm documentary evidence for the existence of woodland in the area prior to 1066. However, the entry in Domesday states that Eddisbury '...was and is waste', without mention of any population, priests or churches, which would seem to imply that the land may have been largely forested (Darby and Maxwell (eds) 1962, 381-2; Latham (ed) 1991, 20). By 1086, the Earl of Chester had already increased the area of what was later called Delamere Forest (Harris 1979, 167-72). The name *foresta de la mara*, meaning 'forest of the mere' (that is, lake), first appears in 1153-60 (Dodgson 1970, 8-9). The forest was usually

referred to in conjunction with the adjoining Forest of Mondrum, and these two seem to have covered the whole area between the rivers Gowy and Weaver, and to have extended as far south as Nantwich (Husain 1955). With the assumption of the Earldom of Cheshire by the Crown in the early 14th century, the land became a royal hunting forest. However, as noted in Section 2, the medieval term 'forest' implies a principal function (hunting) and a legal status, rather than a straightforward description of the vegetation. Land-use within the forest, including the exploitation of the trees themselves, was tightly regulated by complex laws and idiosyncratic rights granted to individuals and communities. 'Assarting' – the clearance of the woodland for agriculture – began as early as the 12th century and was intensive during the 13th and 14th centuries, particularly under the rights of Vale Royal Abbey (Harris 1979, 172). Accounts for the Abbey (Brownbill (ed) 1914) also indicate that c.1278 sandstone for the construction of the abbey buildings was quarried in the vicinity of Eddisbury Hill (Hewitt 1929, 66-7; Colvin and Brown 1963, 250). Despite the diversity and occasional intensity of exploitation within the forest, some tracts of woodland were evidently retained for the deer, and the existence of wolves and wild boar is recorded as late as the earlier 14th century (Harris 1979, 172).

Although it was claimed in 1353 that the office of Forester could be traced back to the time of Earl Ranulph I (died 1129), the earliest contemporary evidence for the administration of land-use in the forest comes from the time of Earl Hugh II (died 1181) (Harris 1979, 172). At that time, a re-organisation of the pattern of 'hundreds' led to the establishment of Eddisbury as the administrative centre for a hundred of the same name.

In 1237, the Chief Forester John Done was directed to make an enclosure, subsequently called 'The Old Pale', which was intended for the protection of 'vert [that is, grazing pasture] and venison'. The line of the boundary of the enclosure has survived intact to the present day and corresponds with the limit of the farmland under investigation, except on the north-east. The Chief Forester's Lodge appears to have lain within The Old Pale, probably on the site of the present Old Pale Farm (Stewart-Brown 1939, 81).

In 1337 Edward the Black Prince authorised the construction of a new chamber (that is, a hunting lodge with accommodation) to accompany the administrative buildings, which was eventually built c.1354. Depositions taken in 1652 to establish the exact site of the Chamber (CRO: DAR/H/16) concurred that it had lain 'upon the hill' – that is, within Castle Ditch hillfort (Stewart-Brown 1939). Varley's excavations seemed to confirm this, revealing the foundations of what may have been a two-storey building of 14th century date at the eastern end of the interior at SJ 5544 6922 (Varley 1950, 34-48 and fig12; NMR: OS record card for SJ 56 NE 2). Two other buildings had been built in the 16th to 17th centuries and had continued in domestic use until the early 18th century. The precise location of the Chamber had evidently been forgotten by the mid-17th century, and by 1700 Dr Charles Leigh commented that there was '...nothing but rubbish' on the site (Latham (ed) 1991, 43). Despite this, the locale continued to be known as 'The Chamber in the Forest' until the mid-19th century (see for example Burdett 1777; Ordnance Survey 1840). The name 'Merrick's Hill', which is applied to the same area today, was first used in the late 17th century, probably referring to Thomas Merrick of Eddisbury, who died before 1683 (Latham (ed) 1991, 43).

Gradual clearance of the woodland by the communities around and within the forest progressively reduced its extent throughout the late medieval and early post-medieval period (Harris 1979, 172). James I (reigned 1603-25) was the last monarch to hunt in the forest (Brown 1883, 167), and the remaining deer were killed off during the Civil War and not replaced (Harris 1979, 171). At the time of the Commonwealth, agriculture seems still to have been retarded by the complex laws governing land-use in the former royal forest. A document of 1652 (CRO: DAR/H/16) states that 'No lands were usually ploughed or sown except the Castle Croft upon the top of the hill' (that is, the interior of the hillfort). A map of 1687 (PRO: MR 640) depicts the boundary of the Old Pale and marks the position of 'The Chamber or Headberry House'. By the late 18th century, the Forest of Delamere, like most other royal forests, was a forest in name only, although Burdett's map surveyed in the mid 1770s suggests that the immediate environs of The Old Pale were perhaps more heavily wooded than elsewhere (Burdett 1777; see Appendix 3.1). Descriptions written in the early 1800s referred to Delamere Forest as '...a district which now produces nothing but heath, affording a scanty subsistence to a few sheep and rabbits' (Holland 1808, 201) and '...a large dreary tract of wasteland' (Lysons 1810, 406-7).

The lack of timber became an issue for concern between the 1780s and 1800s, as George III sought to address the shortage of mature oaks needed for the construction and repair of the ships of the Royal Navy (Simpson 1967, 274-9). A map of 1806 shows the diminished extent of the Forest (PRO: MPE 649/1), but a more detailed map of 1813 indicates that a swathe of the escarpment north of Pale Heights remained wooded at that date (PRO: MR 515). A parliamentary 'Act for Inclosing the Forest of Delamere in the County of Cheshire' received royal assent on 9 June 1812 (PRO: Act 52, Geo III c.cxxxvi; CRO: DDW/3765/174/2). This legislation sought both to preserve the right of the Crown to grow timber within the area of the Forest and to facilitate the improvement of the remaining 'wasteland' for arable agriculture, by extinguishing rights of common and tithes (Kain and Holt 1983, 23). For this reason, the area under investigation was extra-parochial and no tithe map was subsequently made. In the event, there were so many public claims on the Forest land that the final enclosure award was not made until January 1820 (Simpson 1967, 277). The Crown was allotted 4096 acres (1657.7ha.) of which 249 acres (100.8ha.) was either sold off or allotted to the Church. In the remaining 3847 acres (1556.9ha), the planting of oaks, scots pine and beech was immediately embarked upon. However, The Old Pale, as an ancient Crown enclosure, was not included in the award; the tenant, Earl Chomondley, was required to improve the land and bring it to a state of full cultivation (Simpson 1967, 278). Maps of 1813 and 1817 suggest that rapid progress was made (PRO: MR 515; MPE 654; see Appendix 3.2). A series of other maps relating to the enclosure period, dating to between 1813 and 1819, portray only the perimeter of The Old Pale and are therefore unhelpful in depicting the field boundaries within it (CRO: QDE 1/23; see Appendix 3.3). From these beginnings in the early 19th century, arable agriculture has dominated land-use in the area under consideration.

5. DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS (see Figure 3)

Castle Ditch hillfort

NGR: SJ 5534 6933; NMR: 71146; SMR: 866-868

The earthwork remains of Castle Ditch have been described in detail elsewhere (RCHME 1987; Cocroft *et al.* 1989). To summarise, the hillfort is the largest and most developed of the eight examples known in Cheshire, comprising a defensive enclosure of *c.*3.5ha, bounded by double earthen ramparts which generally follow the contours of the summit of Eddisbury Hill. The developmental sequence of the defences is not perfectly understood, but the two ramparts almost certainly represent more than one constructional phase. Though these earthworks have been damaged by quarrying in places, long stretches on the north-west and north-east survive relatively well. The interior of the hillfort has been ploughed since at least the mid-17th century (see Section 4), and consequently there are no prehistoric earthworks surviving there. The results of excavations undertaken in the 1930s, which confirmed the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age origins of the hillfort and added considerably to the documentary evidence for its lengthy sequence of re-use, have also been published (Varley 1937; 1950), and have been summarised in Section 4.

The monument as a whole is protected as Scheduled Ancient Monument (RSM number: 25692; English Heritage 1995). On the north-eastern and south-eastern sides of the hillfort, fairly well preserved stretches of the ramparts lie within the area under consideration. On the north-east, slight remnants of an outermost 'counterscarp' bank mark the limit of the scheduled area; on the south-east two field boundary banks, which may be of medieval or earlier origin (see below), are included.

Early cultivation remains

NGR: SJ 555 693; NMR 1314301; SMR -

The field survey undertaken by RCHME in 1987 recorded a slight bank extending straight down the steep slope at the south-eastern end of the hillfort to intersect at right angles with a second bank running alongside a hollowed trackway that follows the foot of the scarp. The former bank corresponds to a field boundary, which is shown on a map of 1817 (PRO: MPE 654) and later mapping by the Ordnance Survey (1875; 1898), but not on a map of 1813 (PRO: MR 515). Despite this, the boundary may be of medieval or even earlier origin, for while the relationship of the bank to the hillfort cannot be ascertained by surface survey, its relationship to the trackway at the foot of the slope would suggest these two to be contemporary. The trackway seems to have given access to the site of The Chamber in the Forest, so a medieval origin for both the trackway and the field boundary can be reasonably inferred. Both the field boundary bank and the hollowed trackway fall within the scheduled area around the hillfort, and are therefore protected as part of Scheduled Ancient Monument 25692 (English Heritage 1995).

NJ Higham, on the basis of slight earthworks visible on his own aerial photographs (Higham 1987), has suggested the existence of possible prehistoric cultivation terraces on the slope to the north of the hillfort (Rhys Williams 1997, 16). However, re-examination of the photographs in question and careful observation on the ground by English Heritage indicate that the earthworks, centred at SJ 5540 6945 are almost certainly the remains of ridges created by steam ploughing in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. The aerial photograph of 1936 or earlier published by Varley (1937, plate opposite p54) clearly shows the full extent of the steam ploughing ridges. The small remnant identified by Higham presumably escaped levelling by later ploughing because it occupies the narrow and relatively inaccessible ledge between the rampart of the hillfort and the steep natural scarp to the north. The surviving ridges resulting from the steam ploughing are of no archaeological worth in themselves, but may indicate that the area in which they have been preserved has escaped the worst ravages of modern ploughing, and consequently that any sub-surface archaeological features may also be less severely truncated.

At SJ 556 696, field observation identified a single broad, degraded scarp extending along the slope to the north of the hillfort, which does not correspond to any field boundary known from historic maps. A large boulder on the line of the earthwork has evidently been shifted into its current position and shows signs of having been burned, presumably in order to break the rock and clear the field for agriculture. On the basis of its form, the earthwork might be interpreted a prehistoric cultivation terrace, but it is isolated and cannot be said to be part of a 'field system' as such. It seems more likely that the earthwork represents a build-up of ploughsoil (or lynchet) during the post-medieval period, probably as a result of the avoidance of the large boulder by the plough.

The Old Pale

NGR: SJ 547 694; NMR: 71342; SMR: 837/1/1-2

The curving boundary of the enclosure constructed in 1237 for the protection of deer in the hunting forest was replicated by the post-medieval field boundaries of Old Pale Farm and can therefore still be identified today. Most of the southern and western sides of the area under investigation correspond precisely to the line of the medieval pale. This form of barrier, which was conventionally used for enclosing hunting parks, usually comprised a high timber palisade, sometimes with an associated bank and ditch. Depositions of 1652 appear to refer to the inspection of The Old Pale 'wall' (Stewart-Brown 1939, 81). However, the document (DAR/H/16) is unclear on this point and the record cannot be taken at face value in any case, given that the inspection was itself evidently an attempt to locate the position of The Chamber in the Forest through field survey.

No trace of a boundary earthwork or wall was noted during the field investigation. However, the survival of sub-surface remains is quite possible, since the field boundaries are likely to have suffered less from agricultural activities.

Watling Street Roman road

NGR: SJ 538 688 – 552 690; NMR: RR 7a; SMR: various

The course of the Roman road known as Watling Street, which leads eastwards from Chester, runs close to the southern boundary of the area under investigation. Short lengths of the road survive as vestigial earthworks in woodland to the south-west of the farmland, but it has been heavily ploughed in the fields to the south and can mostly only be traced as a cropmark visible on aerial photographs. There is no indication that the boundary of The Old Pale ever followed the line of the Roman road, or that there were any buildings or other features associated with the road which might have extended into the area under investigation. Nevertheless, it is possible that features surviving below ground alongside the road have gone unrecognised.

Quarries

NGR: SJ 554 695; NMR: 1314288; SMR: -

A large number of quarries and extraction pits were noted during the field investigation, almost all of which were depicted on a map of 1813 (PRO: MR 515) and accurately mapped by the Ordnance Survey in 1874 (Ordnance Survey 1875). Some of the larger examples are cut into the steep natural scarps that define the edges of the sandstone plateau. Other shallower pits on the lower slopes and the level plain that comprise the northern part of the farmland may have been dug to extract sand deposits. In some cases, the hollows have been converted into ponds for livestock. By its nature, quarrying is generally difficult to date with precision, since it may be both piecemeal and prolonged over many years or centuries. Some quarries are not portrayed on a map of 1806 (PRO: MPE 649/1) and therefore presumably originated after that date: extraction was certainly taking place in the 1850s (Roeder 1907), and the later 19th century (Ordnance Survey 1875; 1898). However, a few of the quarries may have originated in the medieval period or even earlier; documentary evidence indicates that c.1278 sandstone for the construction of the buildings of Vale Royal Abbey was quarried in the vicinity of Eddisbury Hill (Hewitt 1929, 66-7). The quarry at SJ 5416 6988 is demonstrably of relatively early origin since it predates the growth of an oak at least c.150 years old, although it is not shown on the map of 1813 (PRO: MR 515). This quarry also retains good earthwork evidence for spoil dumps and access trackways.

Dam

NGR: 5475 6900; NMR: 1314419; SMR -

A spring issues from a rock face on the northern side of a steep sided dry valley that cuts into the southern scarp of the plateau. The natural water source is augmented by the outflow from a ditch that marks the field boundary running to the north, whose sides are reveted by carefully constructed drystone walling. This is probably a 19th-century drain, since it does not appear on maps of 1813 and 1817 (PRO: MR 515; MPE 654), but it is possible that the unusual use of drystone walling along the sides of the ditch indicates an earlier origin. The water flows into the valley above the line of a low, degraded bank some 20m long

and up to 0.3m high that crosses the mouth of the valley, making the ground fairly boggy. The ground at the base of the rock face immediately south of the spring has been dug out and embanked in fairly recent times to form a small pond for watering livestock. The larger earthwork evidently performed a similar purpose at an earlier date, for a pond is shown on the map of 1813. The course of a channel carrying the outflow from the boggy area seems to indicate that the bank was still a substantial earthwork in 1874, but it had evidently been levelled by 1897 (Ordnance Survey 1875; 1898). It is possible that the dam may have been intended to create a pool for the watering of the deer within The Old Pale enclosure; earthworks of comparable size and form are found in several royal hunting parks of the late medieval period.

In passing, it should be noted that the floor of the dry valley is also the location of the discovery in 1851 of a Bronze Age urn containing a cremation (see Section 3.5). No obvious evidence for quarrying was found in the vicinity, and it is possible that it was the construction of the pond at the base of the rock face that led to the find. The Ordnance Survey 1-inch map and Fuller's map of 1817 name the dry valley Organs Dale (Ordnance Survey 1840; CRO: DTM 94), apparently meaning 'penny royal' (Dodgson 1981, 297), the significance of which is uncertain.

Hangingstone Hill

NGR: 541 691; NMR - ; SMR -

The name of the hill almost certainly refers to a steep rock outcrop (one exists nearby), rather than a place of any historical importance (Dodgson 1981, 215).

Post-medieval field boundaries and cultivation remains

Maps of 1813 and 1817 (PRO: MR 515; MPE 654) and the Ordnance Survey First Edition (Ordnance Survey 1875), depict field boundaries which attest to the development of arable cultivation in the wake of the Parliamentary Act of enclosure passed in 1812. Since the maps held in the Public Record Office dating to 1687 and 1806 have not been examined, it is not possible to state categorically that the land divisions are without exception of 19th-century origin. Nevertheless, there are none that stand out as bring of potentially early date from the available evidence, either from the map depictions or inspection on the ground. Most of the field boundaries are formed by hawthorn hedges, or in some cases relict hedges, which appear to have last been 'laid' approximately fifty years prior to the survey and planted in the 19th century. There are exceptions to this: the ditch revetted with a drystone wall that feeds the possible dam described above, and an embanked hedge revetted with a drystone wall that runs along the western edge of the trackway that leads into Old Pale Farm from the north.

Traces of straight, narrow ridge-and-furrow cultivation typical of agriculture of the post-medieval period is evident to varying degrees on almost all the available aerial photographs, extending across virtually the whole of the area under investigation. The fragmentary remains of ridges created by steam ploughing immediately to the north of the hillfort have already been described. Similar earthworks survive much better in the field centred at SJ 551 699. Elsewhere, the ridges have generally been entirely levelled by more recent ploughing.

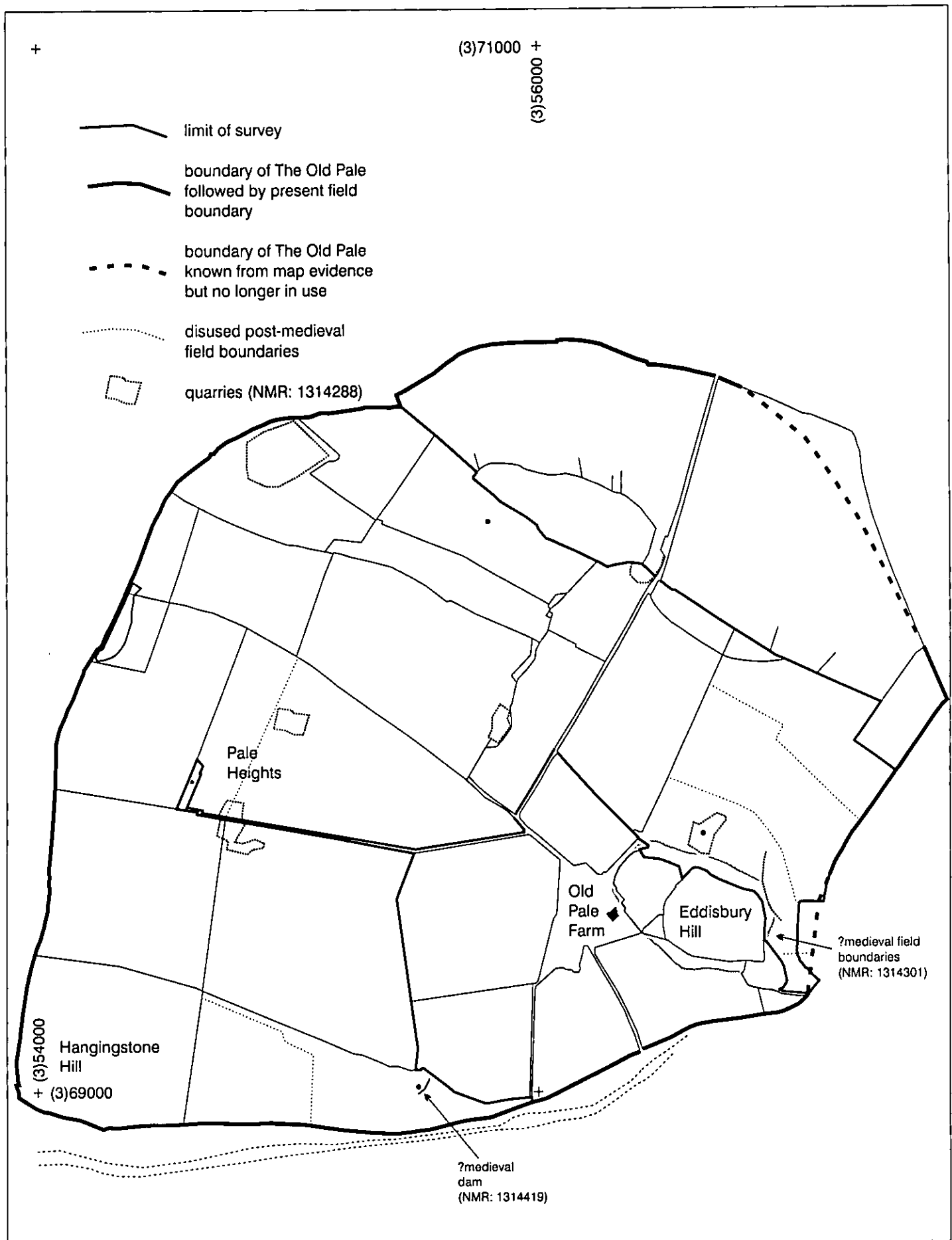


Figure 3. Locations of sites and monuments identified by the field survey (scale 1:10,000).

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1968 1:2500 scale map with the permission of The Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. TEP - The Environment Partnership, Genesis Centre, Birchwood Science Park, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 7BH. License No. AL 52685A

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS (see Figure 4)

Castle Ditch hillfort and the remains in the interior associated with its subsequent re-use are unquestionably of national importance. The whole monument, part of which lies within the area under consideration, is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Two degraded field boundary banks have been identified on the steep slope at the south-eastern end of the hillfort, which are probably of medieval date but perhaps of earlier origin (RCHME 1987; Cocroft *et al.* 1989, fig 1). Since an amendment to the scheduled area in 1995, these earthworks also lie within the protected area (English Heritage 1995). There is no firm evidence for prehistoric field systems or other activity extending beyond the ramparts. However, any features that may have existed are likely to be best preserved below the surface in a narrow strip immediately to the north-east of the ramparts, where the most recent episode of ploughing took place before 1936. In view of the proximity of this area to the hillfort and the potential for the relatively good sub-surface survival of archaeological remains, the avoidance of planting would be prudent. This might in any case coincide with aesthetic considerations, since it would preserve the panoramic views available from the hilltop.

The boundary of The Old Pale medieval enclosure coincides to a great extent with the perimeter of the farmland under consideration. The boundary is primarily of historical rather than archaeological significance, but a document of 1652 seems to indicate that a pale 'wall' still survived at that date (CRO: DAR/C/36; Stewart-Brown 1939, 81). Although the condition and extent of any surviving sub-surface remains cannot be ascertained without trial excavation, the potential for the continued physical survival of the remains of the pale should be taken into account in any planting scheme.

Although certain of the quarries and extraction pits identified may have originated in the medieval period or even earlier, the remains of the quarries cannot be said to be of great archaeological worth and should not impose any major restriction on planting. The possible exception to this is the well preserved and more informative example at SJ 5416 6988; in any case, there are already an oak and several mature hawthorns growing in the depression.

The possible dam identified near the southern boundary of the area under investigation may be the sole surviving earthwork relating directly to the medieval management of the royal hunting forest. It lies close to the site of the discovery of a Bronze Age cremation urn; such burials regularly occur in small groups. In addition, the line of Watling Street Roman road comes closest at this point. The avoidance of planting in the general vicinity is therefore probably prudent. Again, this might coincide with other considerations, since the dry valley (known as Organs Dale until the earlier 19th century) is a striking topographic feature of some aesthetic worth.

In total, the areas of archaeological sensitivity detected through desk-top analysis and thorough investigation in the field amount to a maximum of 5.5% of the area covered by the proposed expansion of the Forest Park.

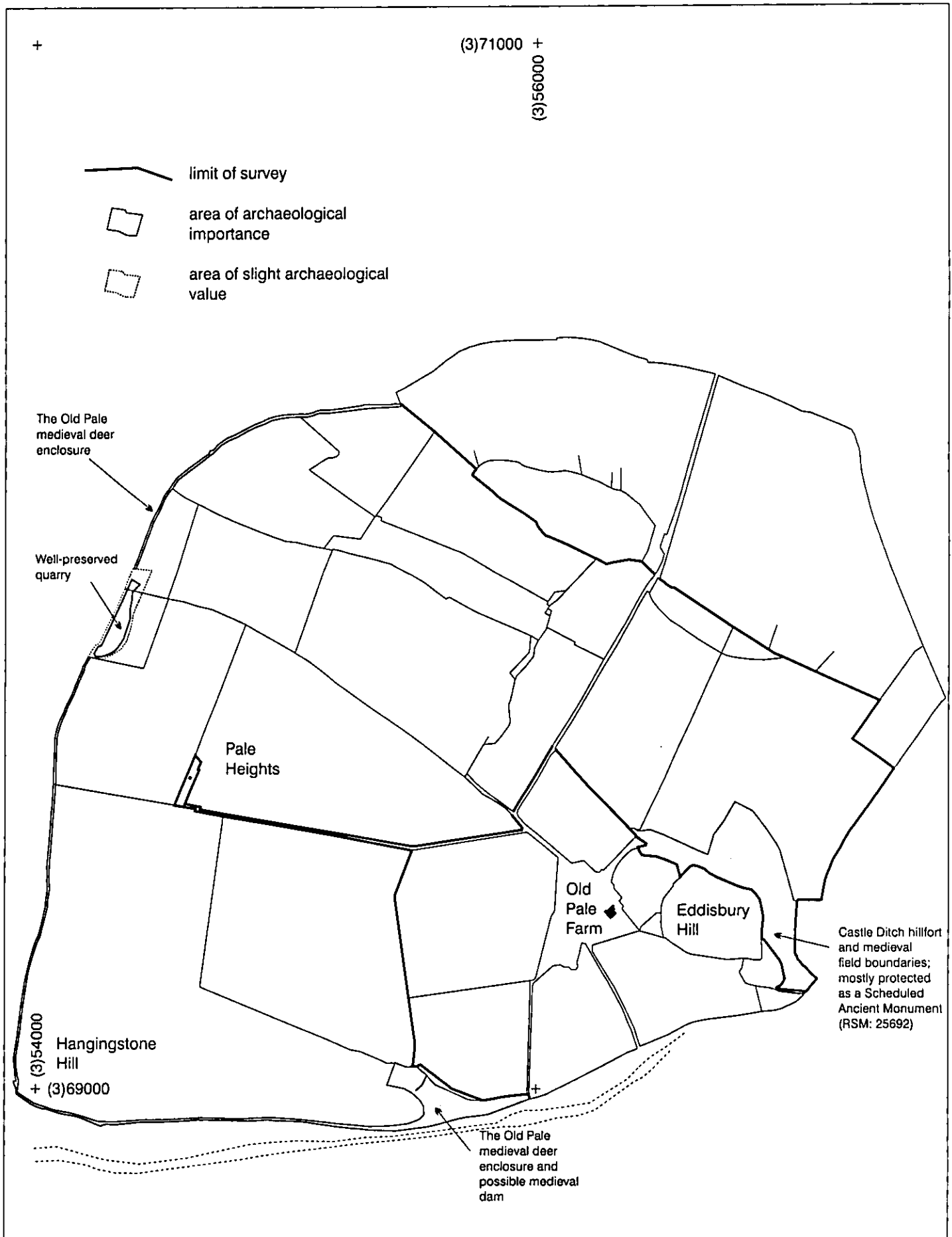


Figure 4. Areas of potential archaeological sensitivity (scale 1:10,000).

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1968 1:2500 scale map with the permission of The Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright. TEP - The Environment Partnership, Genesis Centre, Birchwood Science Park, Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 7BH. License No. AL 52685A

7. METHODOLOGY

The desk-top assessment and field investigation were carried out by Alastair Oswald, a Field Investigator with English Heritage's Field Survey section, based in York. The report and illustrations were prepared by Alastair Oswald and edited by Stewart Ainsworth. The desk-top research was carried out to the standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for desk-based assessment* (IFA 1999) and the field survey was carried out to Level 1 standard as defined in the Royal Commission on The Historical Monuments of England's *Recording Archaeological Field Monuments: A Descriptive Specification* (RCHME 1999). The following archive collections and other sources considered during the desk-top survey:

- Published documents, including Ordnance Survey maps and geological maps
- Unpublished material, including historic maps, views and photographs, held in the Cheshire County Record Office (CRO)
- Place-name and field-name evidence
- Data in the Cheshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- Computerised and paper records in the National Monuments Record (NMR)
- Aerial photographs in the National Monuments Record, which include copies of those held in local collections
- Oral evidence from the tenant farmer, Mr Johnson

Copies of most of the material held in the Public Record Office were examined, but some documents, including at least two maps (listed in Appendix 2) were not consulted due to time constraints. However, written and verbal descriptions suggest that examination of these would be unlikely to significantly alter the findings of the English Heritage assessment. The full references to individual sources referred to in this report are detailed in Section 9, and all the archive material consulted is categorised in Appendix 2. The fieldwork was carried out in two phases: firstly, the entire area was walked over thoroughly prior to the desk-top assessment, and secondly specific areas were re-examined in the light of the documentary and aerial photographic evidence. Archaeological remains were located in relation to the current Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale maps and reproduced using AutoCAD 14 and CorelDraw 8 software at a scale of 1:10,000 to match the Geographic Information Systems mapping (GIS) in use for the project.

Copies of the report have been deposited in English Heritage's National Monuments Record, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ (to where applications for copyright should be made), and the Sites and Monuments Record for Cheshire.

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8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1. List of sites and monuments recorded

National grid reference (NGR)	Name, date, description	National Monuments Record number (NMR)	Sites and Monuments Record number (SMR)	Scheduled Ancient Monument number (RSM)
SJ 555 693	Forest of Delamere. Medieval and later hunting forest	1314474	-	-
SJ 547 694	The Old Pale. Medieval and later deer enclosure	71342	837/1/1	-
SJ 5544 6922	The Chamber in the Forest. Medieval hunting lodge	71157	837/1/2	25692
SJ 5534 6933	Castle Ditch. Iron Age hillfort	71146	866	25692
SJ 5534 6933	Eddisbury. Anglo-Saxon burh	71267	867 and 868	25692
SJ 555 693	?medieval field boundaries	1314301	-	25692
SJ 5476 6900	?medieval dam	1314419	-	-
SJ 554 695	Quarries	1314288	-	-
SJ 5476 6901	Bronze Age cremation	71345	-	-
SJ 55 69	Neolithic axe hoard	71184	-	-
SJ 549 701	Neolithic macehead	873530	-	-
SJ 55 69	Neolithic flint scraper	71270	-	-
SJ 5532 6950	Bronze Age cremations	71185	-	-
SJ 5432 6963	Modern radio mast	1106311	-	-

APPENDIX 2. Categorical list of sources

Published sources including published maps

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Aerial Photographs

Non-specialist verticals held by the National Monuments Record (in order of date)

RAF 1945. 106G/UK/626, frames 3393-4 and 4392-4. 10 Aug 1945

RAF 1945. 106G/UK/718, frames 3006-9, 3024-8, 3063-7, 4009-11 and 4025-8. 26 Aug 1945

RAF 1945. 106G/UK/735, frames 3137-8, 4137-9 and 4159-61. 27 Aug 1945

RAF 1947. CPE/UK/1935, frames 3043-6. 17 Jan 1947

RAF 1950. 540/399, frames 5120-1. 04 Aug 1950

RAF 1950. 540/443, frames 5009-11. 05 Dec 1950

RAF 1951. 58/709, frames 4305-9. 03 Jun 1951

RAF 1951. 540/545, frames 3038-40 and 4038-41. 01 Jul 1951

RAF 1953. 58/1091, frames 80-84. 20 Apr 1953

Ordnance Survey 1960. OS/60050, frames 85-89. 22 Jun 1960

Ordnance Survey 1968. OS/68221, frames 534-9 and 548-53. 14 Jun 1968

Ordnance Survey 1983. OS/83166, frames 277-9 and 311-4. 14 Aug 1983

Specialist obliques held by the National Monuments Record (in order of date)

CUCAP 1951. CAP 8043, frames 80-82. 05 Jul 1951

Higham, NJ 1987. NJH 3500, frames 04- 24. 31Jan 1987

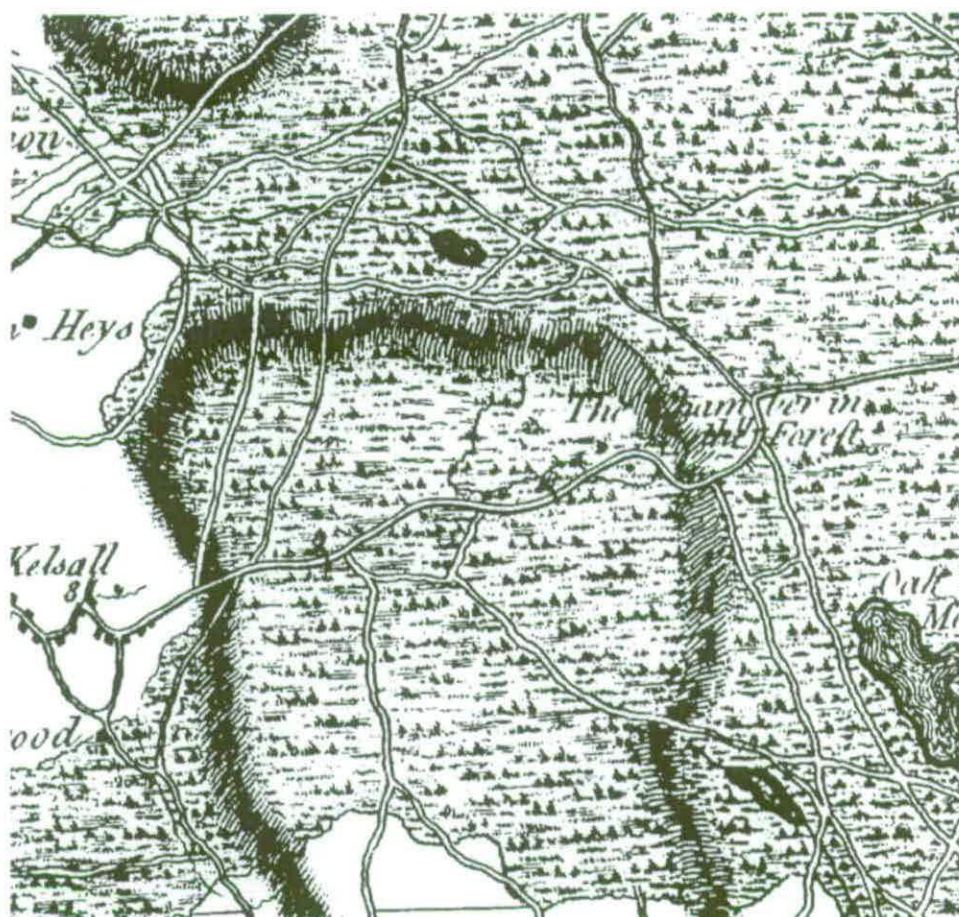
Liverpool Museum 1989. LMU 11874, frames 1146-51. 17 Jul 1989

Liverpool Museum 1989. LMU 11875, frames 1166-7. 18 Aug 1989

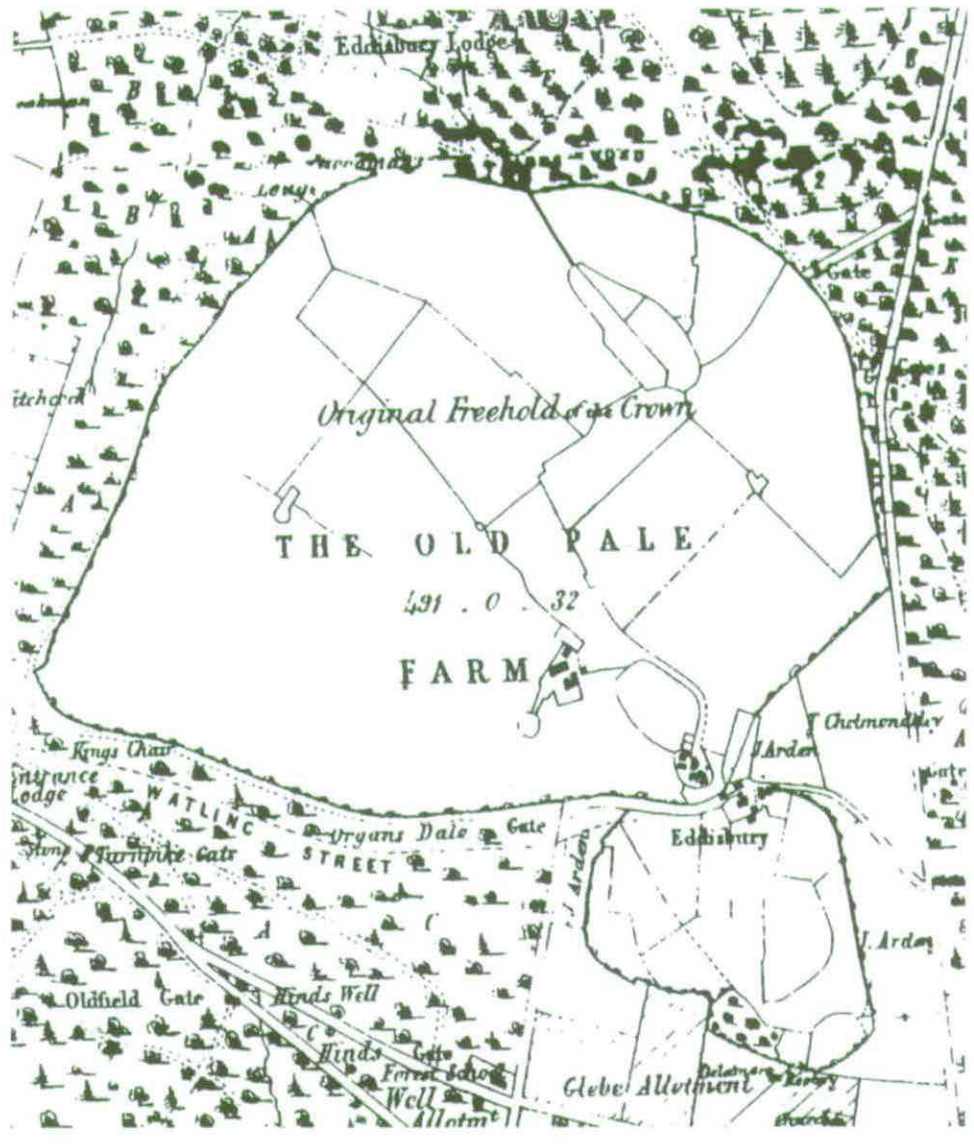
APPENDIX 3. Copies of historic maps

Copyright was not requested for those maps listed in Appendix 2 that are held in the British Library and the Public Record Office Extracts from the following maps are reproduced below:

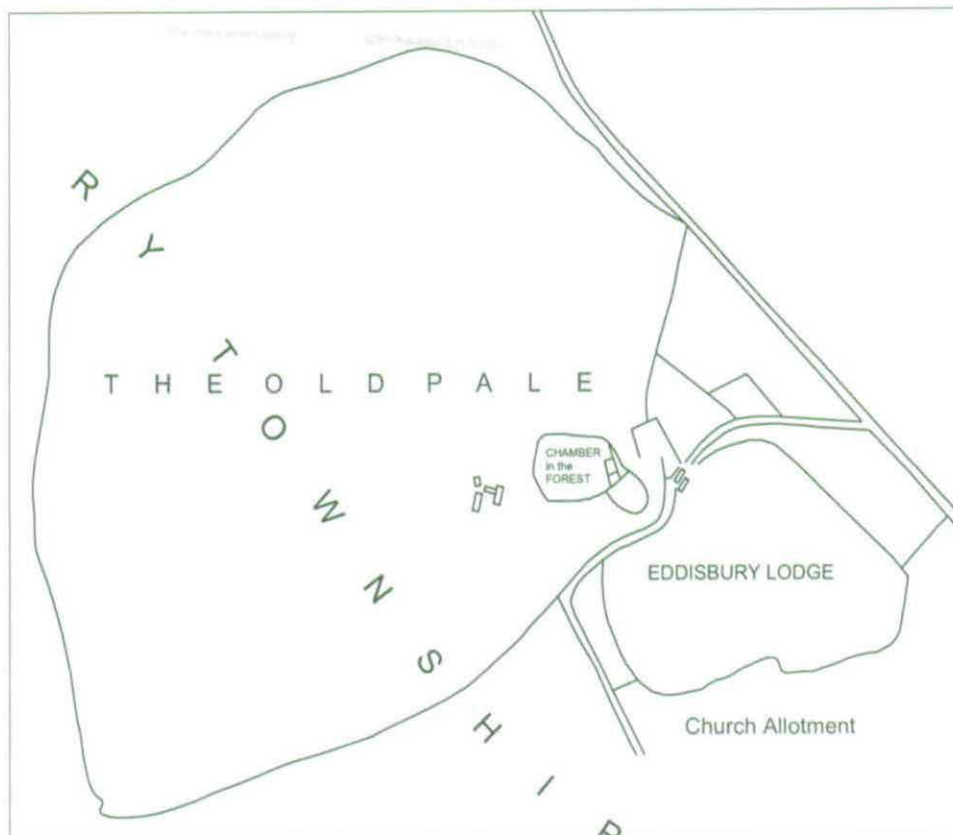
1. Burdett, PP 1777 *Survey of the County Palatine of Chester*
2. DTM 94 1817. 'Map of the Forest of Delamere in the County of Chester' by E Fuller, amended and corrected 1840 (reproduced by kind permission of Cheshire County Records Office). A version of the same plan is held in the Public Record Office (MPE 654)
3. QDE 1/23 1816-9. Inclosure maps for Delamere Forest (fair copy)
4. Ordnance Survey 1839. Copy of unpublished surveyor's draft for 2-inch map sheet 176 SW 80 C3, countersigned 30 December 1840 (reproduced by kind permission of Cheshire County Record Office). A version of the same plan is held in the British Library (Maps 176, 80 SW C3)
5. Ordnance Survey 1840 1-inch scale map sheet 176
6. Ordnance Survey 1875 First Edition 25-inch scale map sheet XL.1
7. Ordnance Survey 1898 Second Edition 25-inch scale map sheet XL.1



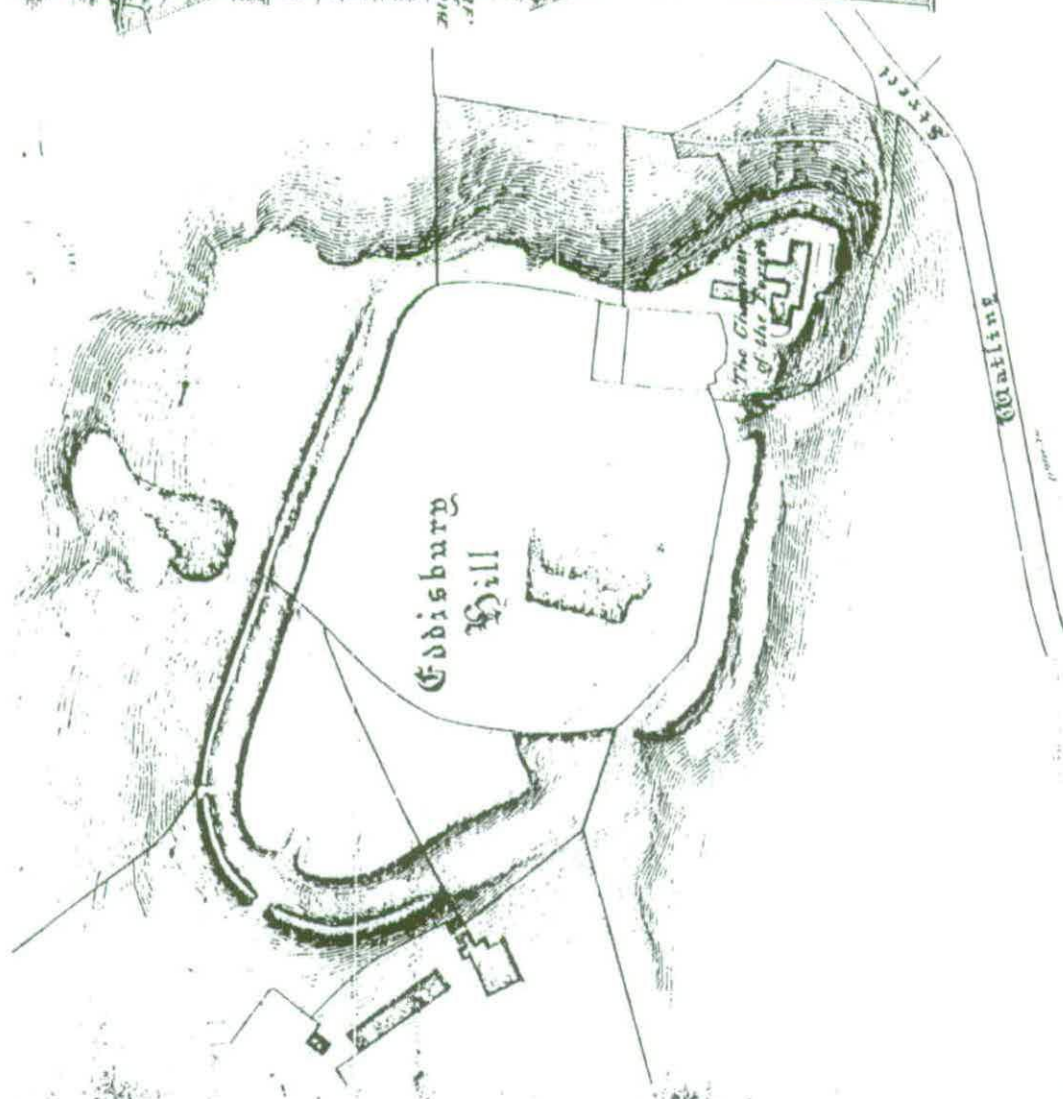
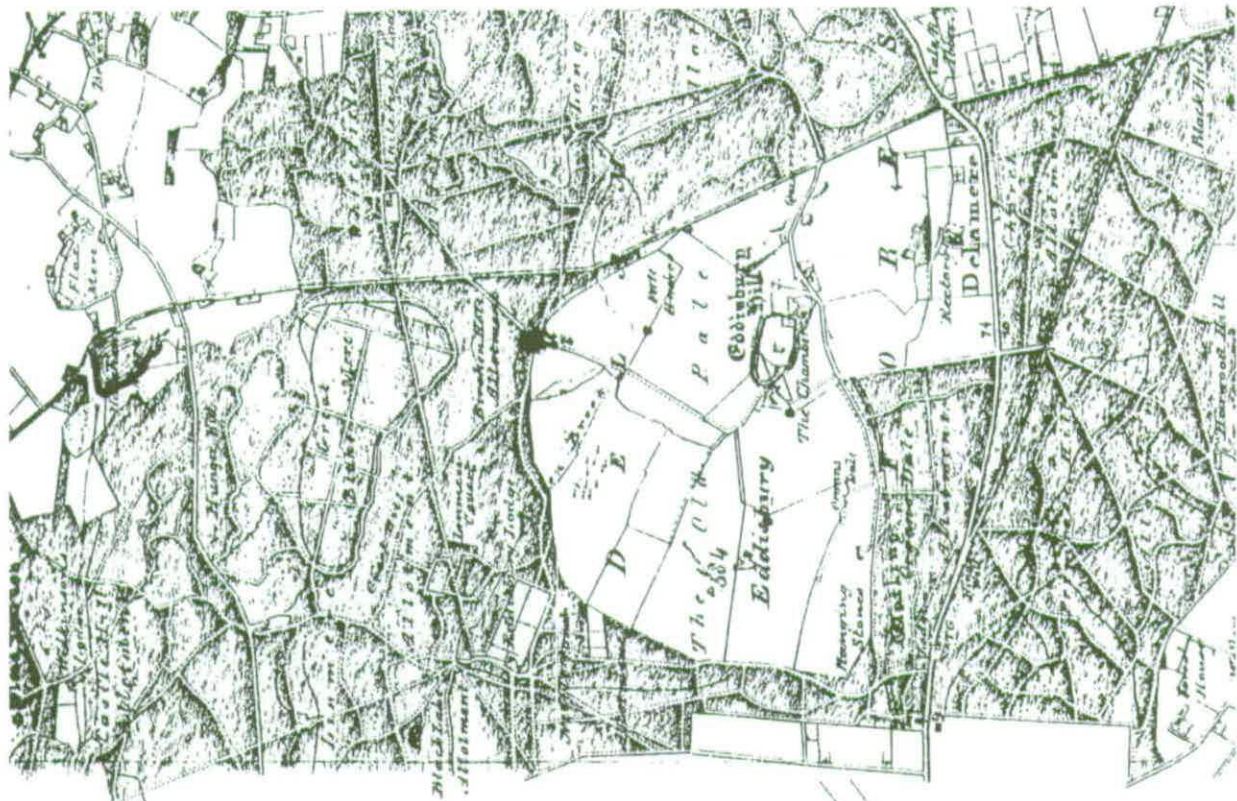
1. Burdett, PP 1777
*Survey of the County
Palatine of Chester*



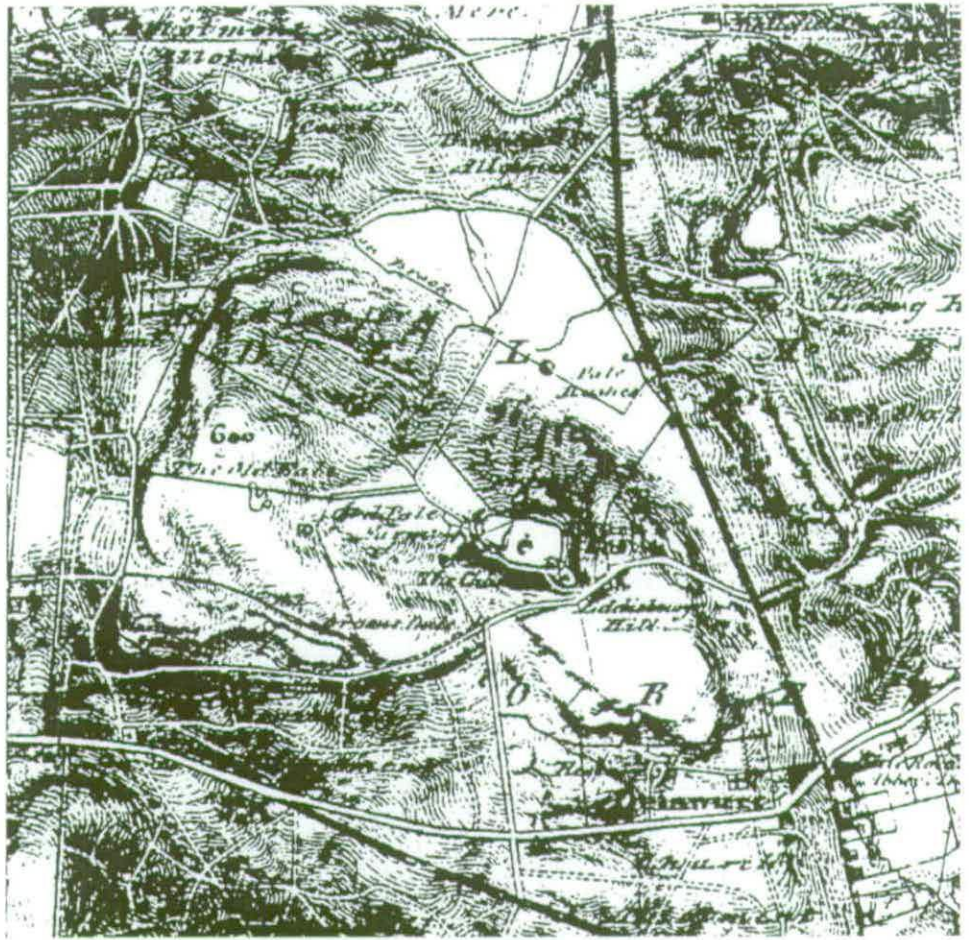
2. DTM 94 1817.
 'Map of the Forest of
 Delamere in the
 County of
 Chester' by E Fuller,
 amended and
 corrected 1840
 (reproduced by kind
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 of Cheshire County
 Record Office)



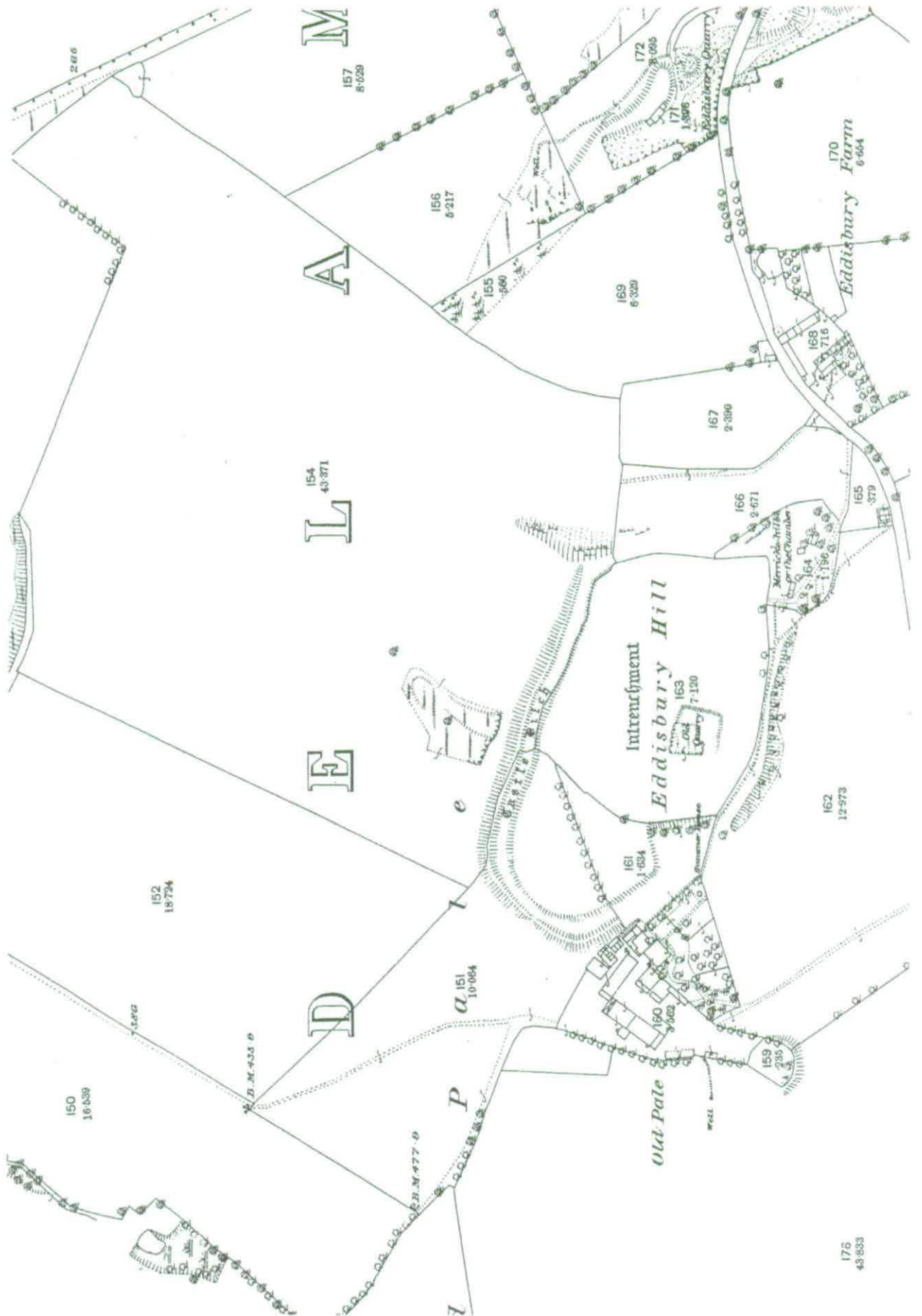
3. QDE 1/23 1816-9.
 Inclosure maps for
 Delamere Forest (fair
 copy)



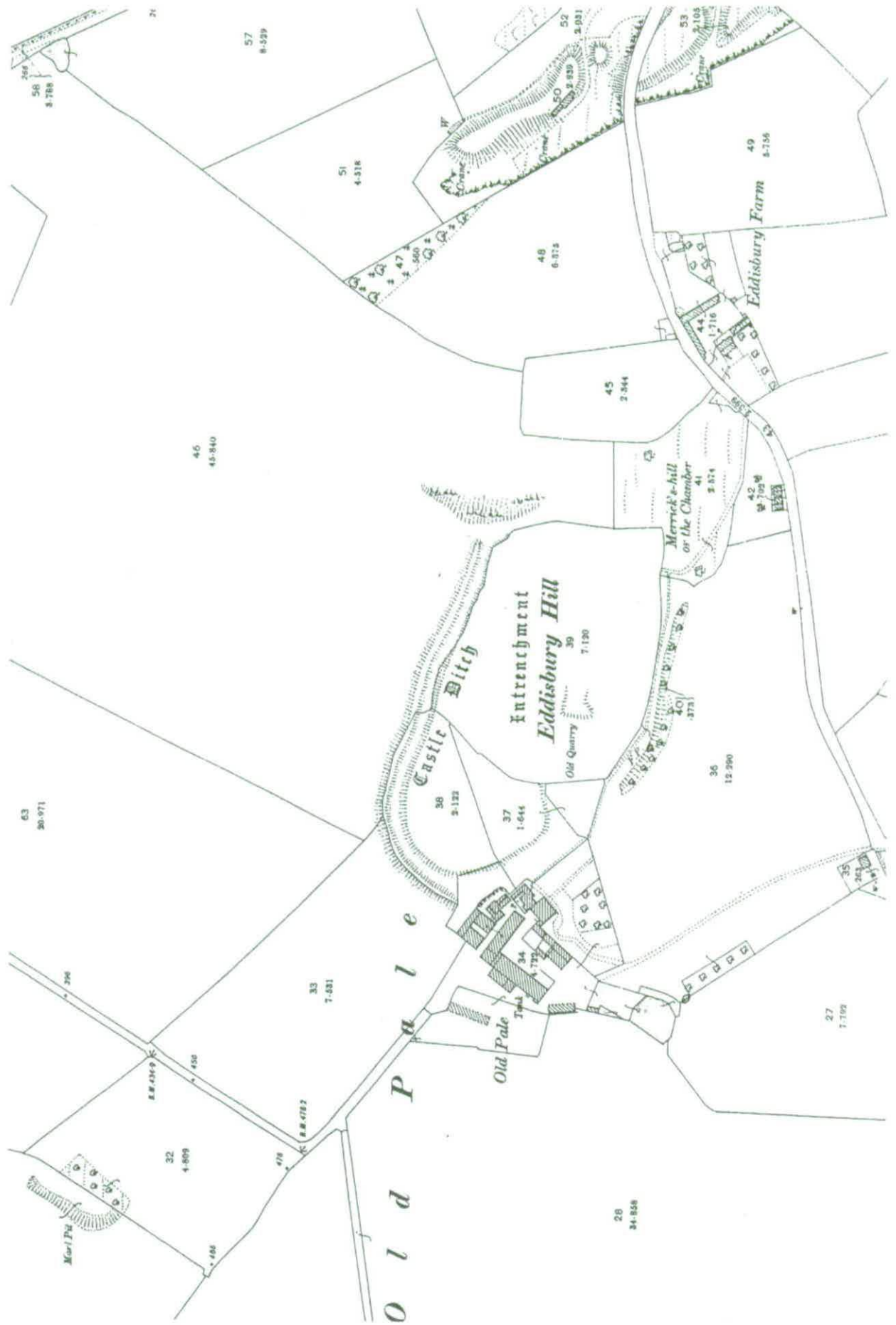
4. Ordnance Survey 1839. Copy of unpublished surveyor's draft for 2-inch map sheet 176 SW 80 C3, countersigned 30 December 1840 (reproduced by kind permission of Cheshire County Record Office)



5. Ordnance Survey 1840
1-inch scale map sheet 176



6. Ordnance Survey 1875 First Edition 25-inch scale map sheet XL.1



7. Ordnance Survey 1898 Second Edition 25-inch scale map sheet XL.1


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