

CHESTER DISCOVERED

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF AN ENGLISH CITY



Edited by
PETER CARRINGTON

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Frederick Hugh Thompson MC, MA, FSA (1923-1995),
Curator of the Grosvenor Museum June 1955-May 1962

EDITORIAL NOTE

The Society's *Journal* last appeared in 1991. Members and readers are entitled to an explanation for the lapse of so considerable a time without the appearance of a volume. The reasons are both specific and general. In the early 1990s, Alan Thacker had to cope single-handed both with the editorship of the *Journal* and, after the tragic death of Brian Harris in 1988, with the compilation of the *Victoria County History* for Cheshire. The present editor took over in autumn 1994, following Alan Thacker's appointment to the Institute of Historical Research at London University as Assistant Editor of the *Victoria County History* for the whole country. Three volumes of the *Journal* were then in the course of preparation, and it was decided to give priority to the one that appears here. In addition to these specific causes, the period has seen a considerable intensification of the workloads of all heritage professionals and the general application of new technology to publishing. Consequently, it has taken much longer to gather in all the contributions to this volume, and to prepare them for publication, than anyone hoped. Measures are now in hand to overcome these problems, and it is intended that the remaining two outstanding volumes will appear within the next year

PETER CARRINGTON

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations used in this volume follow the system laid down in BS 4148: 1985, as recommended by the Council for British Archaeology in *Signposts for archaeological publication*, edition 3, 1991, Appendix A

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FOREWORD

In Chester, as in many other places, there has long been a close relationship between archaeologists and historians. This is witnessed by the full title of this Society, the variety of articles that have appeared over many years in its *Journal*, and by the co-operation of professional agencies such as the City and County archives and archaeological services. In 1991 this relationship was put to the test when a withdrawal of funding threatened the continued preparation of the *Victoria County History*. In response, an Appeal Committee was set up under the chairmanship of John Hess, which, in the event, was very successful in raising financial support for the forthcoming volume on the history of the city of Chester. Among the various ways of raising the necessary money, the committee approved our idea of holding a series of lunch-time lectures in the Grosvenor Museum on the history of the archaeological exploration of the city.

As will become clear in the pages that follow, such exploration represents a long-established tradition based on strong local support. It has also been typified by long periods of continuity in the people involved. A series of lectures was therefore likely to be relatively easy to arrange and to attract popular interest. It also seemed timely, as we were perhaps prompted by intimations of mortality – sadly to be realised in the death of our Vice President Hugh Thompson – and by the changes that were rapidly altering the shape of the archaeological profession.

This volume does not purport to be a synthesis of archaeological discoveries or a history of theory or methods, although these subjects are obviously relevant: rather it is about individual people – their backgrounds, aspirations, successes and failures. Scientific techniques have made an increasingly valuable contribution to archaeology in recent years, but the overall direction taken by the subject, as by all others, is ultimately dependent on subjective decisions, often taken by a small number of people. For the pre-war period the account has necessarily been tackled in the conventional historical manner, but we are fortunate that we have been able to deal with the post-war years through a series of first-hand accounts by the individuals responsible for the archaeology of the city.

Many of the ways of working described here will seem dated to the younger generation of archaeologists, so quickly has the discipline changed. Alongside notable successes there were what we would now regard – and indeed were regarded at the time – as unacceptable losses. However, we do not think it is complacent to state that overall the tale is one of hard work and an enlightened sense of responsibility, both by the Society and the City Council, against a background of public interest and support. It is to be hoped that such values will continue in our city into the next millennium.

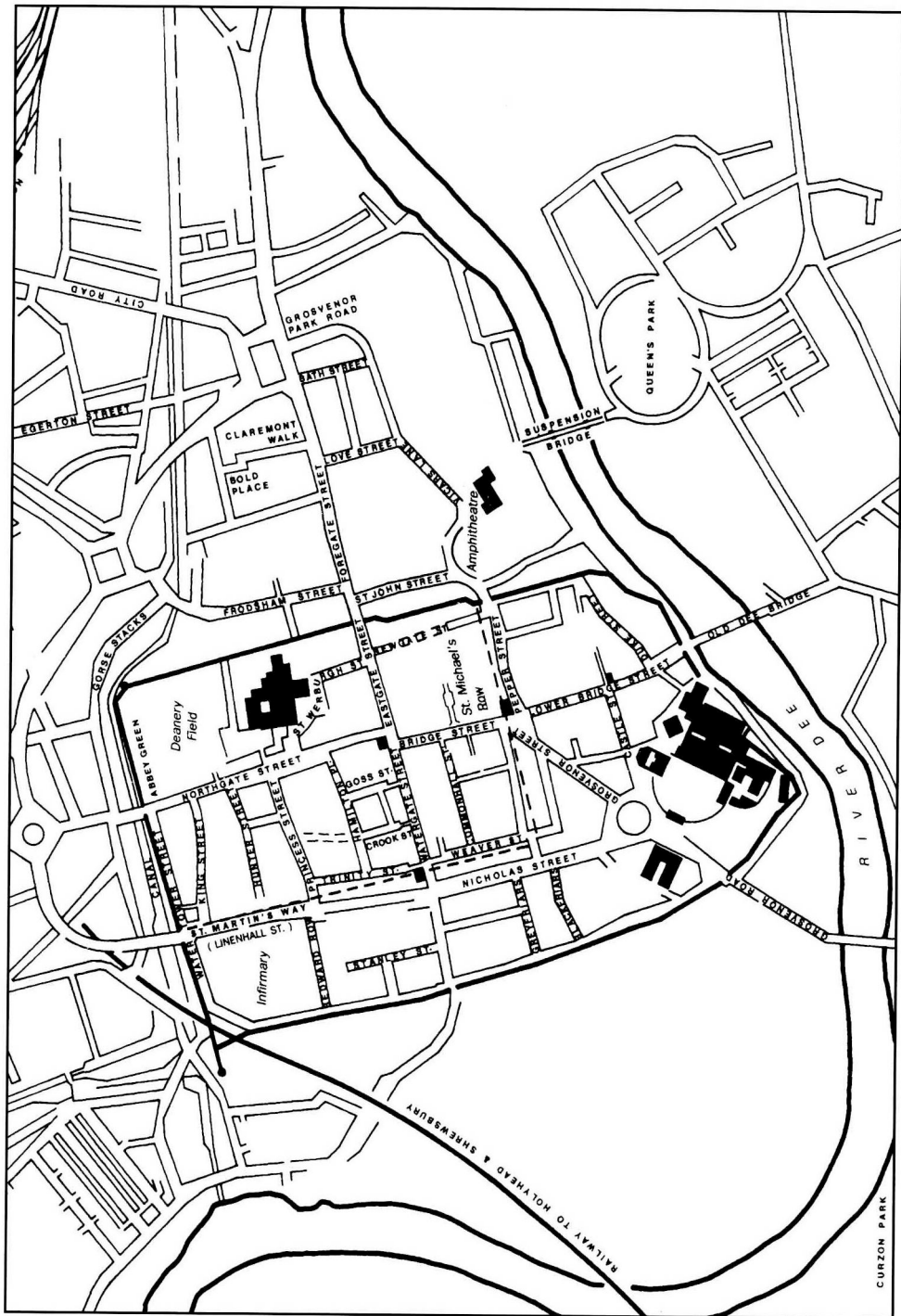
MICHAEL N MORRIS
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1 Map of Chester city centre. (Drawn by C Quim).