VII: Cheshire Past in 2013 Part 1: Sites Investigated, Recorded and Protected

by Ruth Beckley and Dana Campbell*

Introduction

he Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS) is a sub-regional service which maintains the Cheshire Historic Environment Record, provides advice on policy and the archaeological implications of development for Cheshire East (CE), Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) and Halton and Warrington borough councils. Since December 2013 the service has had its own microsite www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk. This report summarises the fieldwork that the Service has instigated, reports received and other heritage management activities. To avoid administrative difficulties it covers the period April 2013 to March 2014 and excludes Wirral, so it is not strictly comparable to Part 2 of this review, on discoveries reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Sites investigated

During 2013–14, about 10,500 planning applications were submitted to Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington borough councils, of which 12% were checked against the Historic Environment Record for archaeological implications. A total of 171 pieces of archaeological work was advised (1.6% of all applications). Pre-application advice was provided on forty-two schemes. In addition advice was provided to Statutory Undertakers on eight schemes and to the Chester Diocesan Advisory Committee on three schemes. A total of sixty-five pieces of fieldwork took place and were monitored during 2013/14 as a result of the archaeological advice provided by the team. In addition 152 reports were received, although some of these relate to fieldwork carried out in previous years (Table VII.1.1)

Highlights of this work are presented below. CHER references indicate the number given to unpublished client reports in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record.

Cheshire East

Astbury: Watching brief at St Mary's Church (SJ 8459 6159), August 2013

A watching brief carried out by Aeon Archaeology during the demolition of part of the churchyard wall for the installation of disabled access revealed traces of an earlier wall and two late Victorian red brick burial vaults.

Fieldwork carried out April 2013–March 2014	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Halton	Warrington
Evaluation	1	13	1	
Excavation		7		4
Watching brief	7	24	1	
Building recording	1	3		1
Other	1	1		
Total	10	48	2	5
Reports received and commented on April 2013–March 2014	59	77	4	12

Table VII.1.1 Fieldwork carried out in Cheshire and reports received by APAS in 2013/14, quantified by local authority area

Cooke, R 2013. *St Mary's Church, Astbury: archaeological watching brief.* Chester: Aeon Archaeology. (Client Rep **0026**). **CHER R3554**

Congleton: Building recording and fieldwalking survey, land at Loachbrook Farm (SJ 8313 6323), October 2013

Building recording was carried out by L-P : Archaeology on a nineteenth-century farm complex scheduled for demolition prior to redevelopment of the site. Fieldwalking produced mainly post-medieval domestic wares and some redeposited flints.

Poole, B 2013. *Historic building recording and fieldwalking at Loachbrook Farm, Congleton.* Chester: L-P : Archaeology. (Client Rep **LP1607C-HBR**). CHER **R3541**

Crewe: Watching brief at the Bombardier site, Dunwoody Way (SJ 6934 5606), February 2014

Fragmentary remains of a large brick kiln depicted on Ordnance Survey maps of Crewe from the last quarter of the nineteenth century were recorded by Nexus Heritage during the redevelopment of the site for housing.

Leah, M. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Nantwich: Watching brief on Land at St Anne's Lane (SJ 6480 523), June 2013

Evidence of Roman industrial activity was uncovered when the northern part of this site was excavated a few years ago and a summary of the results may be found in the report on the excavations of the Roman site at Kingsley Fields in 2002 (British Archaeological Reports British Series **557** (2012)). The subsequent development of the site for housing led to the maintenance of a watching brief by Oxford Archaeology North in the southern area, where deeper, alluvial deposits suggested a marshy, riverside environment in Roman

^{*} Ruth Beckley, Dana Campbell, Project Officers, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service, Cheshire Shared Services, The Forum, Chester CH1 2HS. Email archaeology@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

times. The most noteworthy finds were a series of timber posts that may represent a revetment of Roman date.

Leah, M. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Prestbury: Watching brief at St Peter's Church (SJ 9008 769), November 2013

The erection of a new extension immediately to the north-east of the medieval parish church was preceded by the archaeological excavation by National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit of the foundation pits for the concrete blocks on which the new concrete slab would rest. A total of thirty-five burials were excavated, some of which were complete and some of which had been seriously disturbed by later burials. All dated to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries and one of the male burials displayed evidence of *spina bifida* and had been subject to trepanation. All of the remains will be reburied within the churchyard.

Leah, M. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Wilmslow: Watching brief at St Bartholomew's Church (SJ 8481 8149), May 2013

A watching brief was maintained by Oxford Archaeology North during the insertion of a new floor within the nave and aisles of the medieval parish church (III VII.1.1). Extensive disturbance was apparent across the area, which was largely the result of grave-digging within the building. A number of vaults were uncovered and recorded, although the burials were not investigated further as the vaults were not seriously disturbed beyond the laying of new floor slabs. The opportunity was taken to record the foundations of the columns supporting the arcades separating the nave from the aisles. All disarticulated remains were collected and reburied beneath the new floor.



III VII.1.1 Wilmslow: Watching brief at St Bartholomew's Church (Oxford Archaeology North)

Raynor, C 2013. *St Bartholomew's Church, Wilmslow, Cheshire East: archaeological watching brief*. Lancaster: Oxford Archaeology North. (Client Rep **L10612**). CHER **R3536**

Cheshire West and Chester

Allostock: Excavation at Hulme Hall, Hulme Hall Lane (SJ 7246 7240), March 2014

Renovation of the hall, which is surrounded by a water-filled moat and is a designated Scheduled Monument (SM 13491), necessitated the reduction of floor levels to accommodate new floors. Excavation by Earthworks Archaeological Services revealed a sequence of clay floors of medieval and early post-medieval date. At the base of the sequence, features cut into the natural clay were recognised and have been interpreted as beam slots associated with an earlier, timber-framed structure. Observations during the installation of new services on the moated platform did not reveal any evidence that this had been artificially raised.

Leah, M. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Chester: Evaluation and building recording at Bollands Court, Commonhall Street (SJ 4047 6611), 2013

Evaluation by Earthworks Archaeological Services identified multi-period remains from this particularly sensitive part of Chester. Remains of probable Roman, Saxon and medieval date were identified. Several phases of Roman occupation were recognised, including surface layers and a possible timber structure. A corn-drier with quantities of late Saxon Chester ware was also encountered. Medieval remains included at least one pit feature.

Walker, W. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Chester: Evaluation at George Street School (SJ 4062 6676), April 2013 (Phase 1) and June 2013 (Phase 2)

Further traces of archaeological remains of Roman, possible Saxon, medieval and nineteenthcentury date were encountered by Earthworks Archaeological Services following earlier evaluation on the site. Roman linear features were encountered in several locations as well as traces of two possible Roman roads, suggestive of a roadside agricultural settlement in the area. Earlier discoveries of Roman cultivation soils and timber structures had been recorded across the Gorse Stacks area in 2002. Perhaps the most significant discovery, however, was the identification of at least one inhumation of possible late Saxon date, perhaps indicating a previously unrecorded cemetery site in this area. Carbon-14 dates are awaited. Later medieval remains were also encountered, including traces of at least one tile kiln and quantities of tile waste dumped in former clay pits. In the early nineteenth century the site was occupied by an iron foundry and some terraced housing, remains of which were also recorded.

Phase 1 – Dodd, L 2013. *New student accommodation at Trinity Hall, George Street, Chester.* Ewloe: Earthworks Archaeological Services. (Client Rep **E1216**). CHER **R3453**

Phase 2 - Walker, W. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Chester: Evaluation at Commerce House, Hunter Street (SJ 403 665), February 2014

Previous archaeological monitoring during the demolition of Commerce House led to the discovery of archaeological remains warranting further investigation. Four areas were evaluated by Earthworks Archaeological Services, revealing the remains of Roman walls and surfaces across the site. The work indicated two zones of archaeological potential, one in the car park having higher archaeological potential while the other, in the area of Commerce House, had more limited potential.

Dodd, L 2014. *Proposed theatre development: the former Commerce House Site, Hunter Street, Chester.* Ewloe: Earthworks Archaeological Services. (Client Rep **E1253**). CHER **R3604**

Chester: Watching brief at St Andrew's Church, Newgate Street (SJ 4067 6615), May 2013

Archaeological monitoring of two 0.75m-deep, east-west service trenches in front of the church by L-P : Archaeology revealed nineteenth-century deposits associated with the demolition of buildings that had fronted onto Newgate Street at the time. Mixed Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered.

L-P : Archaeology 2013. Archaeological watching brief report at St Andrews Church, Chester. Chester: L-P : Archaeology. (Client Rep LP1514C-AWB). CHER R3456

Chester: Evaluation at the former 'Habitat' site, Pepper Street (SJ 4060 6600), 2013

Remains of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date were encountered by Earthworks Archaeological Services. Traces of a Roman road surface possibly associated with a patrol track skirting the Roman fortress were identified in a single trench close to the line of the present Pepper Street, suggesting good survival of Roman remains (III VII.1.2). Medieval features were also encountered, including evidence of occupation surfaces and soil layers as well as features identified as a possible kiln or oven. An investigation into the more recent use of the site revealed that the warehouse to the rear of the Methodist Chapel was used to manufacture aircraft components for the Vickers Armstrong factory during World War II. Further information was also recorded on the history of the site, including the former Methodist chapel now incorporated into the building and the addition of air-raid shelters during the war.

Dodd, L & Garner, D 2013. *Proposed redevelopment of the former Habitat unit, Pepper Street, Chester: an archaeological evaluation.* Ewloe: Earthworks Archaeological Services. (Client Report **E1191**). CHER **R3530**

Chester: Evaluation at the former Boughton Retail Centre, Boughton (SJ 4143 6656), 2013/14 (Phases 1 and 2)

Archaeological remains of Roman and post-medieval date were encountered by Wessex Archaeology, including traces of a Roman ditch with several sherds of samian ware. The most extensive evidence dates from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, however, with substantial below-ground remains of mid-nineteenth-century terraced housing complete with house plans, streets and yard spaces clearly identifiable. The evaluation also recorded the first physical evidence of a late eighteenth- to nineteenth-century tanning complex including several timber-lined pits (III VII.1.3). Although subsequent study has identified



III VII.1.2 Chester: Roman road surface at Pepper Street (Earthworks Archaeological Services)

documentary sources linked to the possible tannery, the site was completely absent from maps, demonstrating the importance of a combined archaeological and documentary research approach to site investigation.

Wessex Archaeology. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Chester: Watching brief on electricity cable, Handbridge (SJ 4077 6565), August 2013 Monitoring by L-P : Archaeology during the installation of electricity cables south of the Old Dee Bridge revealed earlier road surfaces, a nineteenth-century brick culvert, and a possible Roman rock-cut feature.

Poole, B 2013. *Watching brief for land at Handbridge, Chester*. Chester: L-P : Archaeology. (Client Rep **LP0866C-AWB**). CHER **R3594**

Chester: Building recording of a World War II railway control bunker, Chester railway station (SJ 4138 6687), 2013/14

The structure was identified by Airfield Research Publishing as a type A2 District Control Room built to withstand a direct hit from a 500lb bomb by constructing it with two independent shells. As an additional precaution, it was provided with a poison gas filtration system. Chester was identified as a potential target and the shelter was intended to provide protection for key members of the railway staff to ensure that the lines could continue



III VII.1.3 Chester: Excavated remains of the eighteenth-century tanning pits at the former Boughton Retail Centre (Wessex Archaeology/CgMs)

running in the event of an airstrike. Survey included detailed photographic and written analysis of the individual rooms and their function.

Francis, P 2014. *Survey and report of a railway control room*. Airfield Research Group. CHER **R3569**

Chester: Evaluation at nos 51–7 Upper Northgate Street (SJ 4031 6692), July 2013

An evaluation carried out by L-P : Archaeology in advance of building new student accommodation showed that Roman features survive at a depth as shallow as 0.6m below the surface, and these are below medieval cultivation soils. A possible roadside ditch, in addition to boundary and drainage ditches, was cut into bedrock in the east part of the site, and a deep, rock-cut Roman military type ditch was found running east–west.

L-P : Archaeology 2013. Archaeological evaluation report for 51–57 Upper Northgate Street, Chester. Chester: L-P : Archaeology. (Client Rep LP1524C-AER). CHER R3511

Chester: Strip sampling at Chester Zoo Islands Project (SJ 4090 4695), August 2013

Monitoring of works associated with the expansion of Chester Zoo by Headland Archaeology revealed the fragmentary remains of a probable Roman field system.

Murphy, A 2014. *Chester Zoo Islands Project: archaeological mitigation works, 2014.* Hereford: Headland Archaeology. (Client Report **ZOOC/01**). CHER **R3601**

Northwich: Evaluation of the former Magistrates Court, Brockhurst Street (SJ 6600 7382), May 2013

Trial-trenching by Oxford Archaeology North in advance of the redevelopment of the site revealed fragmentary traces of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Croft Salt Works, including the possible remains of a pan house, a well, and a channel extending north from the river Dane that appears to have been culverted during the late nineteenth century and converted to a sewer.

Mottershead, G 2013. Former magistrates court, Brockhurst Street, Northwich, Cheshire West: archaeological evaluation interim report. Lancaster: Oxford Archaeology North. (Client Rep **L10609**). CHER **R3474**

Saighton: Watching brief at Saighton Camp (Area B) (SJ 4323 6416), January 2014

A watching brief carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates in the south-eastern section of Saighton Camp recorded features related to a Roman field system and clarified details of Roman remains uncovered in 2007 in this area.

Pole, C 2014. *Summary trial trenching report, Saighton Camp, Chester (Crown Fields Phase 3).* Barnard Castle: Northern Archaeological Associates. (Client Rep **1178**). CHER **R2247**

Saighton: Evaluation at Abbey Gate College, Saighton Grange (SJ 4429 6183, June 2013

Wall footings associated with the medieval abbey grange were identified by Matrix Archaeology, while later features of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century date were also encountered.

Fletcher, M 2013. *Abbey Gate College, Saighton Grange, Cheshire.* Manchester: Matrix Archaeology. (Client Rep **2013–12**). CHER **R3528**

Tarvin: Pollen analysis at Hockenhull Hall (SJ 4747 6606), July 2013

Prior to the construction of a private lake at Hockenhull Hall a field survey, evaluation and programme of palaeoenvironmental work were carried out. The site lies on the eastern bank of the River Gowy, which formerly meandered through the area. Analysis demonstrated peat growth from c 6500 BC (the Mesolithic period) in this part of the Gowy valley, presumably related to rising sea levels and impeded drainage. Analysis of the pollen and microscopic charcoal provided a valuable insight into vegetation history in the Gowy valley with hints of human influence, the first time that this has been achieved in this area.

Grant, F R 2014. *Pollen analytic assessment of seventeen sub-samples from Hockenhull Hall, Tarvin, Cheshire.* Glyn Ceiriog: F R Grant. (Client Rep **01/14**). CHER **R3628**

Tilston: Watching brief at the 'Fox and Hounds', Wet Lane (SJ 4592 5141), November 2013

A watching brief by Earthworks Archaeological Services during the conversion of the former pub to residential use and the erection of a number of dwellings in the grounds did not reveal any traces of the Roman road from Malpas to Chester. Post-medieval cobbled surfaces and the fragmentary remains of buildings depicted on nineteenth-century maps were, however, recorded.

Leah, M. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Halton

Halton: Evaluation at Norton Priory, Tudor Road (SJ 5482 8305), March 2014

Proposals are currently being developed for the construction of a new museum building at Norton Priory, a Scheduled Monument (SM 27608), and limited trenching was carried out by Earthworks Archaeological Services to understand the effect of the proposed development on those areas where the new building will extend beyond the northern and eastern limits of the present museum building. Features of interest were apparent in most trenches but the most significant results were seen in the eastern trenches, where the foundations of the fifteenth-century Abbot's Tower were explored and several complex phases of stonework uncovered.

Dodd, L 2014. *Proposed new museum building at Norton Priory, Runcorn, Cheshire*. Ewloe: Earthworks Archaeological Services. (Client Rep **E1247**). CHER **R3611**

Warrington

Croft: Excavations at Southworth Quarry (SJ 6227 9416), May 2013

Excavation by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in advance of quarrying allowed the investigation of a subrectangular enclosure first identified on aerial photographs and subjected to a programme of evaluation trenching in 1993. This work had confirmed a Roman date for the site, allowed the investigation of the ditches, and confirmed the presence of features within the interior. The excavations in 2013 involved the stripping of topsoil across the whole of the enclosure and its immediate environs, the extensive sampling of the ditches, and the investigation of features inside and outside the enclosure. Preliminary results suggest occupation in the earlier Roman period and that the site functioned as a farmstead, although extensive plough damage had severely truncated many features.



III VII.1.4 Halton: Excavated remains of medieval and post-medieval wall features at Norton Priory, north-west of the undercroft (Earthworks Archaeological Services)

Moore, B 2013. *Southworth Quarry, Winwick, Warrington, Cheshire: archaeological excavation report.* Carlisle: Wardell Armstrong Archaeology. (Client Rep **10510**). CHER **R3542**

See also Moore et al, this volume.

Warrington: Excavation at Bank Park Depot, Kendrick Street (SJ 6020 8845), 2013

The grounds of the eighteenth-century Bank Hall in Warrington formerly contained an extensive ornamental lake. This has now been filled in but eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mapping shows a number of small square structures on the fringes of the lake. Redevelopment of the land at the northern end of the park allowed the exploration by National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit of the site of one of these structures which was seen to have utilised blocks of copper slag in its foundations. Unfortunately, major recent drainage works had seriously damaged the area and it was impossible to determine the original function of the building; it could have been concerned with water management or have been a shelter on the shores of the lake.

National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit 2013. *An archaeological watching brief at Bank Park, Warrington, Cheshire.* Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit. CHER **R3454**

Warrington: Excavation at the Horizon Centre, Loushers Lane, Wilderspool (SJ 6159 8680), February 2014

Redevelopment of the Horizon Centre provided L-P : Archaeology with the opportunity to explore the north-west fringe of a complex of Roman buildings lying to the east of the

major Roman industrial centre at Wilderspool and originally separated from this site by the Lumb Brook. This formerly drained into the River Mersey but has now been largely obliterated by changes in the landscape over the last two hundred years. The buildings to the east of Wilderspool were, on the evidence of excavations during the 1930s, of some sophistication with evidence of underfloor heating and stone construction. Previous programmes of work within the Horizon Centre had shown that although much of the area had been disturbed by recent landfill and sand extraction, some Roman features did survive. Unfortunately, various extensions and phases of car park construction over the last thirty years had clearly damaged these remains and surviving features were heavily truncated.

Leah, M. Pers comm. Report forthcoming

Warrington: Excavation at Land at Riversdale, Woolston (SJ 6573 8900), April 2013

Excavation by Earthworks Archaeological Services in advance of housing development revealed the remains of an isolated dwelling depicted on nineteenth-century maps of the area and named variously as 'Buttery' or 'Battery' Cottage (Ill VII.1.5). Fieldwork revealed the footprint of the building and an eighteenth- century predecessor, which was associated with a cobbled surface. In addition, pits and gullies of seventeenth-century date were recognised and excavated.

Dodd, L 2013. *Residential development on land at Riversdale, Woolston, Warrington, Cheshire.* Ewloe: Earthworks Archaeological Services. (Client Rep **E1207**). CHER **R3486**



III VII.1.5 Warrington: Excavated remains of the nineteenth-century cottage at Riversdale, Woolston (Earthworks Archaeological Services)

Recording Chester Urban Archaeological Database

During the year APAS successfully secured additional external funding from English Heritage, allowing the completion of the Chester Urban Archaeological Database Project and the production of the Chester Archaeological Plan.

This project is part of a national programme of urban archaeological databases funded by English Heritage and covering major towns in England. The project was carried out by temporary project officers Ruth Beckley and Dana Campbell between June 2011 and December 2013. The first phase of the project saw the compilation of the database, archaeological characterisation and research framework. Further funding for the final stage, the production of the Archaeological Strategy or Plan, was agreed with English Heritage and the plan was accepted by the Cheshire West and Chester Local Development Framework Panel as a key evidence base document for the emerging Local Plan. This project is based on the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and will permit the effective management of Chester's archaeological resource. The Plan provides advice on the significance of heritage assets and how they should be managed by planners, archaeological consultants and contractors. The detailed records of Chester's archaeological resource are available *via* the *Revealing Cheshire's Past* database (http://rcplive.cheshire.gov.uk/), while the plan and associated documents are available on the archaeology website (http://www.cheshirearchaeology.org.uk/?page_id=156).

Cheshire Historic Environment Record

The Cheshire Historic Environment Record (HER) is the record of all known designated and non-designated archaeological sites and historic landscapes in Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. It includes sites dating from prehistory through to the military remains of the more recent past. At the start of 2013/14 the HER comprised 61,500 records in the following nationally defined categories: monuments, designations, events, finds, sources and landscape characterisation. During 2013/14, nearly 5000 new HER records were created, 9,500 were amended and 275 consultations for information were received. *Revealing Cheshire's Past*, the public access version of the Cheshire Historic Environment Record, received 57,000 search requests.

Built historic environment data

Work has continued to identify and incorporate data relating to the built historic environment. Maps have been produced for incorporation into the Conservation Area Assessments for Sandbach, Nantwich and the Shropshire Union Canal. Work has started on adding the Warrington Borough Local List to the HER.

Image scanning

A programme of image scanning is being carried out for the HER by the Cheshire Record Office. Over 6000 images have so far been scanned and incorporated into the HER, including images of listed buildings in Cheshire East and oblique aerial photographs. The most recent addition is 5000 historic excavation images from Chester. A selection will be made available on *Revealing Cheshire's Past*.

Church Lawton barrows, Church Lawton, Congleton

The Church Lawton barrows were excavated in 1981 by the late Robina McNeil. This was one of the most important investigations of an early Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial site undertaken in Cheshire. As part of the process of investigating options for publication of pre-PPG 16 excavations, Malcolm Reid was commissioned to prepare a report for publication; this has now been submitted to the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*.

Protection

Managing Nantwich Waterlogged Deposits Project Phase 2

APAS has successfully secured additional external funding from English Heritage to allow the extension of the Nantwich Waterlogged Deposits Project for an additional two years, to ensure the collection of comprehensive data to inform the management strategy.

The second phase of the Nantwich Waterlogged Deposits Project started in 2010 and has been extended until 2016 in order to obtain comprehensive data. SLR Consulting Ltd act as the project consultants. The project aims to produce a well informed management strategy for the nationally important waterlogged archaeological deposits in Nantwich, which are unique in Cheshire and exceptional in the north-west. The project will provide archaeologists, planners, and developers with information on the archaeological implications of future developments in the town, in order to ensure the survival of the town's archaeology through sympathetic construction methods. Monitoring of the water levels and quality in the network of dipwells established in Nantwich has continued on a quarterly basis and will help to monitor the stability of the waterlogged deposits in the town.

Cholmondeley logboat

In July 2013 a long piece of worked oak was found during an ecological survey at the side of Deer Park Mere, Cholmondeley Castle, and reported to APAS. The single piece of oak is 2.54m long and 0.38 m wide and seems to be the remains of a logboat, which unfortunately is not in very good condition. Advice was provided by the English Heritage Regional Sciences Advisers on recording and dating methodologies and English Heritage provided funding for a radiocarbon date, which shows that the tree from which the logboat was made died in 1040–1220AD (SUERC-47779; 887±27BP). Further advice will be taken from English Heritage on additional recording or reburial of the boat.