

IX: Notes

1: Cheshire National Mapping Programme (NMP) and Lidar Project: Sampling the Peak Fringe, Cheshire Plain and Mersey Valley

by Ian Hardwick*

Archaeological Research Services Ltd, working with the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service and Historic England, have recently completed the Cheshire NMP and Lidar Mapping Project. The project was funded by Historic England's National Heritage Protection Commissions Programme and involved interpretation, mapping and recording of archaeological features from aerial photographs and airborne laser scanning data (lidar) to NMP standards (Winton 2017). The aerial photography ranges from 1940s RAF photography through to the latest vertical imagery available from Next Perspectives™, with lidar available from the Environment Agency and processed by the project team. The sites recorded range in date from the Neolithic period to the Cold War.

The survey was a pilot study which aimed to assess archaeological survival and identify potential threats to heritage in four different landscape areas of Cheshire, in the process updating and enhancing the records held in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER). The sampled areas included:

- The upland fringe of the Peak District between Macclesfield and Disley
- The eastern lowland Cheshire plain near Congleton and Chelford
- An area of the Mersey valley to the north and north-west of Warrington
- Part of the Dee valley in the western Cheshire plain around Farndon and Tilston

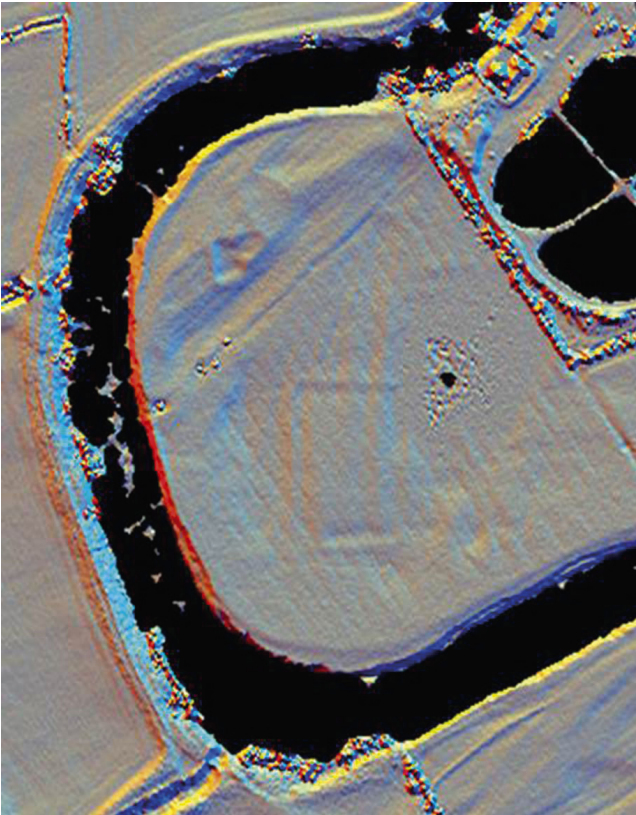
In total, 206 Ordnance Survey kilometre grid squares were mapped by the project (covering 8.6% of Cheshire). Digital mapping was created for each archaeological feature or site, with accompanying monument records entered into the National Record of the Historic Environment (selectively available online *via* the PastScape website) and Cheshire HER (selectively available online *via* Revealing Cheshire's Past). A final report summarising the aims, methodology and findings of the project is also freely available online (Hardwick 2017). Altogether, 710 monument records were created that were entirely new to the Cheshire HER, with seventy-one existing entries updated.

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Many of the features consist of medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow ploughing or isolated field boundaries predating the current field system. However, a number of later prehistoric funerary monuments and enclosures were mapped (some newly discovered), as was a potential new Roman fortlet and road embankment close to Farndon (III IX.1.1). Medieval settlement remains were visible in the Dee valley, part of the surviving extensive medieval field system dominating much of the fourth sample area and including the motte and bailey castle (or castles) at Shocklach and multiple moated sites.

A number of industrial sites were identified and mapped in other areas, including early coal mining and stone quarrying in the Peak fringe area and larger collieries elsewhere, as were features associated with post-medieval landscape parks. Other features mapped by the project include a number of Second World War searchlight and anti-aircraft batteries, civilian air raid shelters, the ammunition depot on Sandle Heath near Chelford and the large military airbase of Burtonwood near Warrington. A Royal Observer Corps monitoring post dating to the Cold War was identified on 1960s photography close to Aldford.

Threats to heritage identified or confirmed by the project range from sand and gravel extraction in the Chelford area to infrastructure and urban growth around Warrington, and land improvement and mega-dairying practice in the Dee valley. It is hoped that the mapping



III IX.1.1 Lidar image showing a potential Roman fortlet enclosure, overlain by medieval ridge and furrow, in a meander of the River Dee. LIDAR SJ3955 Environment Agency FIRST RETURN 13-JUN-2006 © Historic England; source Environment Agency Geostore Survey Open Data

and records produced by the project will provide baseline data from which to better assess archaeological survival and risks to such heritage within the areas covered, as well as allowing future comparison with other similar landscapes within Cheshire. This will assist with ongoing management and assessment of the archaeological resource for the county.

Bibliography

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