

X: Cheshire Past in 2015

Part 1: Sites Investigated

by Mark Leah*

Introduction

The Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (APAS) provides archaeological advice and monitors development-led archaeological work across the four unitary authorities of Cheshire East, Chester West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. This report summarises the fieldwork instigated by the Service. To avoid administrative difficulties it cover the period April 2015 to March 2016, so it is not strictly comparable to Part 2 of this review, on discoveries reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Sites investigated

In total, sixty sites were investigated between April 2015 and March 2016 as a result of archaeological advice provided by APAS to the four local authorities (Table X.1.1).

Table X.1.1 Fieldwork carried out in Cheshire in 2015/16, quantified by local authority area

<i>Fieldwork carried out April 2015–March 2016</i>	<i>Cheshire East</i>	<i>Cheshire West and Chester</i>	<i>Halton</i>	<i>Warrington</i>
Evaluation	4	21	0	0
Excavation	1	4	1	1
Watching brief	4	17	2	2
Building recording	0	0	0	0
Other	3	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	12	42	3	3

Further details of the more significant projects are provided below. CHER references indicate the number given to unpublished client reports in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record

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Cheshire East

Sandbach: Archaeological metal-detector survey and subsequent excavation at land to the north of Congleton Road (SJ 7594 6165), July–September 2015

A metal detector survey by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology across an extensive area of agricultural land prior to residential development suggested Roman activity across a part of the site, which was then subject to a strip-and-record exercise. This allowed the excavation of a number of Roman ditches and pits that have been interpreted as the plough-damaged remains of a small settlement.

Churchill, D 2015. Land at Congleton Road, Sandbach, Cheshire: archaeological watching brief report. (Unpublished client report **RPT-001**). Wardell Armstrong Archaeology. **CHER R3817**

Cheshire West and Chester

Tattenhall: Excavation at Frog Hall Farm, Frog Lane (SJ 4805 5839), April 2015

Archaeological investigations by L-P : Archaeology on the site of the recently demolished farmhouse, in advance of redevelopment for housing, revealed evidence of earlier structures. These consisted of the remains of sandstone- and brick-founded buildings which have been interpreted as a sequence of earlier farmhouses dating back to the seventeenth century.

Garner, D 2015. Frog Hall Farm, Tattenhall: Strip, map and record report. (Unpublished client report **L-P 1816C-AMR-v1.3**). Chester: L-P : Archaeology. **CHER R3781**

Chester: Evaluation to the north of Hunter Street (SJ 4026 6651), August 2015

Evaluation was carried out by Wardell Armstrong Archaeology in connection with proposals for the redevelopment of the car park site for student accommodation. The work revealed evidence of the western rampart of the Roman fortress, an intramural drain running from north to south and various other Roman features. The rampart had been truncated along its western front by the construction of the present retaining wall in the 1980s and it was shown that much of the site had been excavated in the recent past in a programme of excavation work which unfortunately has never been published. These activities had clearly compromised the significance of the remains but they were still of sufficient importance to justify preservation *in situ*. The data gathered during the evaluation were accordingly used to formulate a foundation design which will result in minimal damage to the surviving remains.

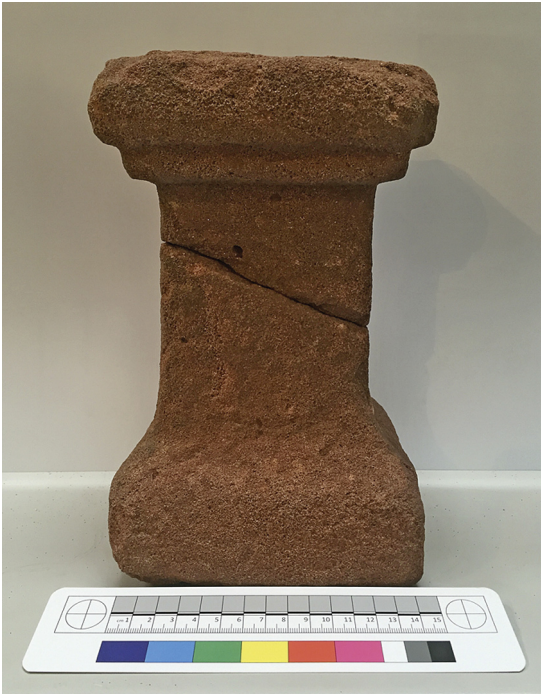
Cresswell, S & Daffern, N 2015. Hunter Street, Chester, Cheshire: archaeological evaluation report. (Unpublished client report **CP11363/Ve_2.1**). Wardell Armstrong Archaeology. **CHER R3854**

Chester: Watching brief at nos 51–57 Upper Northgate Street (SJ 4032 6692), August 2015

Following an earlier programme of field evaluation and the discovery of significant Roman deposits, including a substantial ditch, a foundation design was formulated which would allow the construction of new accommodation on the site in a way that caused minimal damage to the significant archaeological remains. The implementation of this strategy was

monitored by L-P : Archaeology. During this process a number of much more recent features were encountered and excavated. These included an eighteenth-century cess pit which incorporated much redeposited material. Among this material was a small, portable Roman altar made of sandstone (Ill X.1.1).

L-P : Archaeology *forthcoming*



Ill X.1.1 Portable Roman altar from nos 51–57 Upper Northgate Street, Chester. © L : P Archaeology

Chester: Evaluation at Weaver Street and Commonhall Street car park (SJ 4040 6619), September 2015

Evaluation work was carried out by L-P : Archaeology in connection with proposals for residential development. Trenching revealed the remains of one of the stone granaries of the Roman fortress, which had been investigated during excavations in the 1950s. The north wall of the granary was recognised, with well preserved masonry standing to a height of 1.6m (Ill X.1.2). A number of internal sleeper walls were also recognised, all sealed beneath a deep accumulation of tile and rubble, presumably derived from the roof and collapsed walls of the building. Also recognised were the north wall of a nineteenth-century chapel and an earlier sandstone wall which could be medieval or early post-medieval.

A foundation design has been devised which, through careful siting of the piles and restrictions on the depth of the floor slab and services, will ensure that the Roman remains will be preserved *in situ*.

Garner, D 2015. Weaver Street, Chester: archaeological evaluation report. (Unpublished client report L-P 1875C-AER-v1.0). Chester: L-P : Archaeology. CHER R3857



Ill X.1.2 North wall of the Roman granary in the car park at Weaver Street and Commonhall Street, Chester. © L : P Archaeology

Chester: Excavation at the new bus station, Gorse Stacks (SJ 4066 6677), November 2015

Excavation in advance of the construction of the new bus station at Gorse stacks by Earthworks Archaeological Services revealed Roman features across the northern third of the site that seem to represent a southern continuation of activity previously investigated at the George Street School. Remains included probable clay extraction pits, gullies, a sunken trackway, and fragmentary traces of timber buildings in the form of beam slots. Much of the southern part of the site is covered in an accumulation of dark soil up to 3m thick. The bulk of this deposit will be left *in situ* and will remain largely undisturbed apart from the concrete stanchions which will support the new structure. However, a large flood attenuation tank was also to be inserted into the deposit, and the footprint of this structure was excavated in order to obtain samples of the abundant post-medieval artefactual material. In addition, samples were obtained to allow a palaeoecological assessment and possible analysis of the strata. It had been thought that the depth of the deposit meant that it was likely to overlie natural clay but, in the event, a Roman surface (Ill X.1.3) was detected at the base of the deposit and appears to represent a trackway.

Earthworks Archaeological Services *forthcoming*



III X.1.3 Roman surface buried by deep accumulations of later material at Gorse Stacks, Chester. © Earthworks Archaeological Services

Chester: Excavation on the site of the former Linenhall, Stanley Street (SJ 4023 6625), December 2015

In late 2015 the first phase of archaeological mitigation was carried out by L-P : Archaeology and Nexus Heritage Archaeology in advance of the redevelopment of the site for student accommodation. Earlier phases of evaluation work had established the depth at which remains of the eighteenth-century Linenhall, the thirteenth-century Franciscan friary and Roman deposits occurred, and a foundation plan had been agreed which would largely avoid significant disturbance to the Roman and medieval remains. There was, however, a need for some limited areas of deeper intrusion, in the form of lift shaft pits and manhole inspection chambers, which had the potential to disturb the earlier phases of activity on the site. It was the excavation of these areas that comprised the first phase of archaeological mitigation. Across most of the site in the event this work did not disturb significant archaeological remains. At the southern limits of the site, however, the excavation of two manhole pits measuring 2m x 2m resulted in the excavation of a total of twenty burials associated with the friary. The second phase of mitigation will see limited ground reduction that will result in the excavation and recording of elements of the Linenhall.

L-P Archaeology *forthcoming*

Halton

Halton: Archaeological investigation at Halton Castle, Castle Road (SJ 5377 8206), July 2015

A community investigation was carried out at Halton Castle by the Centre for Archaeology, Salford University, in Association with Norton Priory Museum Trust in order to investigate a sample of the area enclosed by the castle's curtain wall and provide training in archaeological techniques for local people. Trenching revealed extensive spreads of rubble derived from collapsed buildings within the curtain wall. In addition, two burials were encountered. These were unexpected but were clearly post-medieval as the graves had been cut into the rubble noted above. They could be associated with use of the castle as a prison in the post-medieval period but this remains speculative until further research has been carried out.

Centre for Archaeology, Salford University *forthcoming*

Warrington

Warrington: Watching brief on land to the west of Farrell Street and south of Church Street (SJ 6129 8830), June 2015

A watching brief was maintained by Aeon Archaeology during the redevelopment of this extensive site as a supermarket. Work was concentrated along the Church Street frontage as this is one of Warrington's ancient thoroughfares that led west from the parish church. Previous investigations on the Church Street frontage had revealed significant, recent disturbance and only very limited archaeological survival. In this instance, similar disturbance was recognised but at one location a large pit was identified that had been cut into the natural sand. This measured *c* 4m across and contained a significant assemblage of later medieval pottery.

Cooke, R 2016. Land at Farrell Street, Warrington: archaeological watching brief report. (Unpublished client report). Chester: Aeon Archaeology. **CHER R3855**