

Section B: The Alderley Sandhills Project

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B.1: Project Origination

As outlined in Section A, this project originated from the Alderley Edge Landscape Project (AELP). During this extensive multi-disciplinary project the site of the Hagg cottages was identified as an area where more detailed archaeological research could be conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the local community's connection to the landscape of Alderley Edge.

The sandhills area where the Hagg cottages are situated was notified as a SSSI by English Nature in 1993 and was granted Scheduled Ancient Monument status by English Heritage in 2001.

B.1.1: Site Location

The Alderley Sandhills Site is located just south of the National Trust land on an area controlled by a private landowner. The site lies approximately 100 metres East of the end of Whitebarn Road (Figure B.1). The site itself contains the subsurface remains of the two Hagg cottages, as well as their associated outbuildings, privies, gardens and rubbish middens (Figure B.2). The site is heavily wooded and overgrown which obscures the majority of the archaeological remains.

B.1.2: ALSF Funding Background

In 2002 the School of Art History & Archaeology collaborated with the Manchester Museum, which was already conducting the Alderley Edge Landscape Project, to apply for project funding through the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund as a means to finance the more extensive research of the Hagg cottages site. The research proposal was accepted by English Heritage in late 2002 and the project received the first phase of funds from the ALSF in March 2003.

B.2: Original ASP Aims and Objectives

B.2.1: Aims

Investigations were designed to focus on two interrelated themes:

- Transformations of domestic life and consumer culture over the Industrial Era.
- Transformations in the natural and cultural landscape of Alderley Edge brought about by local intensification of mineral extraction industries from A.D. 1750.

B.2.2: Objectives

- 01 To advance knowledge on the archaeology of the recent industrial past.
- 02 To identify and locate intact subsurface archaeological features related to the Sandhills cottages.
- 03 To characterise the nature, distribution, deposition, and demolition of structures, artefacts and ecofacts from the Sandhills cottages.
- 04 To investigate the relationship between ethnographic and archaeological sources of evidence on the recent past.

- 05 To examine the relationship between field recovery rates and the coarse-sieving of 100% of stratified soil contexts.
- 06 To produce a site archive of all data collected during fieldwork.
- 07 To characterize the local nature of domestic life and consumer behaviours over the Industrial Era.
- 08 To involve the local community, interested public, and students throughout field and laboratory stages of data collection and archive preparation.
- 09 To produce a visitor pamphlet on the Alderley Sandhills Project for public distribution during excavations.
- 10 To produce and erect temporary visitor signage on the Alderley Sandhills Project during excavations.
- 11 To produce and maintain an Internet website diary for daily updated 'weblogs' on excavation and laboratory results
- 12 To produce a public lecture series for the communities of Manchester, Macclesfield, and Alderley Edge, with delivery of various historical and archaeological results in-progress.
- 13 To create a travelling public and educational exhibit on the project for local schools, libraries and museums
- 14 To create permanent public interpretation signage for on-site erection, which will explain the significance and fragility of the Sandhills heritage resources.
- 15 To publish excavation results in a popular (non-specialist) booklet for dissemination to the wider public.

B.3: Updated Project Design Aims and Objectives

During October 2003, an Updated Project Design and Assessment Report was approved by English Heritage. This document indicated that the specialist analysis of recovered materials drew upon the original project objectives outlined above in order to answer the following revised research questions:

01 To advance knowledge on the archaeology of the recent industrial past.

To gain new understandings of the domestic side of industrialisation, three research questions will be examined through material analysis.

- What types of consumer goods increase in households over the industrial era?
- What is the nature of domestic labour required for home maintenance?
- Is there evidence of increasing use of the specialised artefacts, such as decorative items, tablewares, cutlery, or food storage items that have been associated with middle-class aspirations and 'respectability'?

02 To identify and locate intact subsurface archaeological features related to the Sandhills cottages. An interdisciplinary range of materials will be considered to identify archaeological features recorded during excavations:

- What was the nature and age of deposits recovered from the Area D test trench?

- What was the nature of the large depositional feature to the southeast exterior of the Area B structure?

03 To characterise the nature, distribution, deposition, and demolition of structures, artefacts and ecofacts from the Sandhills cottages.

- How early is the initial occupation of the Area B cottage?
- Were local materials used for construction of the "Stanley-type" cottage recorded in Area A?
- When were the cottages demolished?
- How and when were structures modified over their use-life?
- How did occupants adapt the structures to mediate environmental problems of their local environment, such as rising damp, erosion and foundation subsidence?

04 To investigate the relationship between ethnographic and archaeological sources of evidence on the recent past.

- When do memories (as a source of knowledge about the past) support and/or contradict artefactual evidence?
- Are oral histories shaped by the social identity of the interview subject?
- Does material evidence of activity areas within the cottages correlate with recorded oral histories?

05 To examine the relationship between field recovery rates and the coarse-sieving of 100% of stratified soil contexts.

- Does coarse-sieving promote the number of small finds?
- Does coarse-sieving promote the diversity of small finds?

07 To characterize the local nature of domestic life and consumer behaviours over the Industrial Era.

- Does the introduction of a waged economy transform the scale of economic exchange and consumer practices during the Industrial Era?
- Do occupants engage in activities to supplement their officially reported livelihoods?
- How does the nature of food acquisition and preparation change during the Industrial Era?
- Do different types of mass-produced commodities appear within domestic assemblages at different periods of industrialization?
- How are practices of personal health, hygiene and sanitation transformed during the industrial era?
- What was the nature of recreational activities practiced within the households?
- Can social identity (class, age, gender, etc.) be interpreted through the material record?