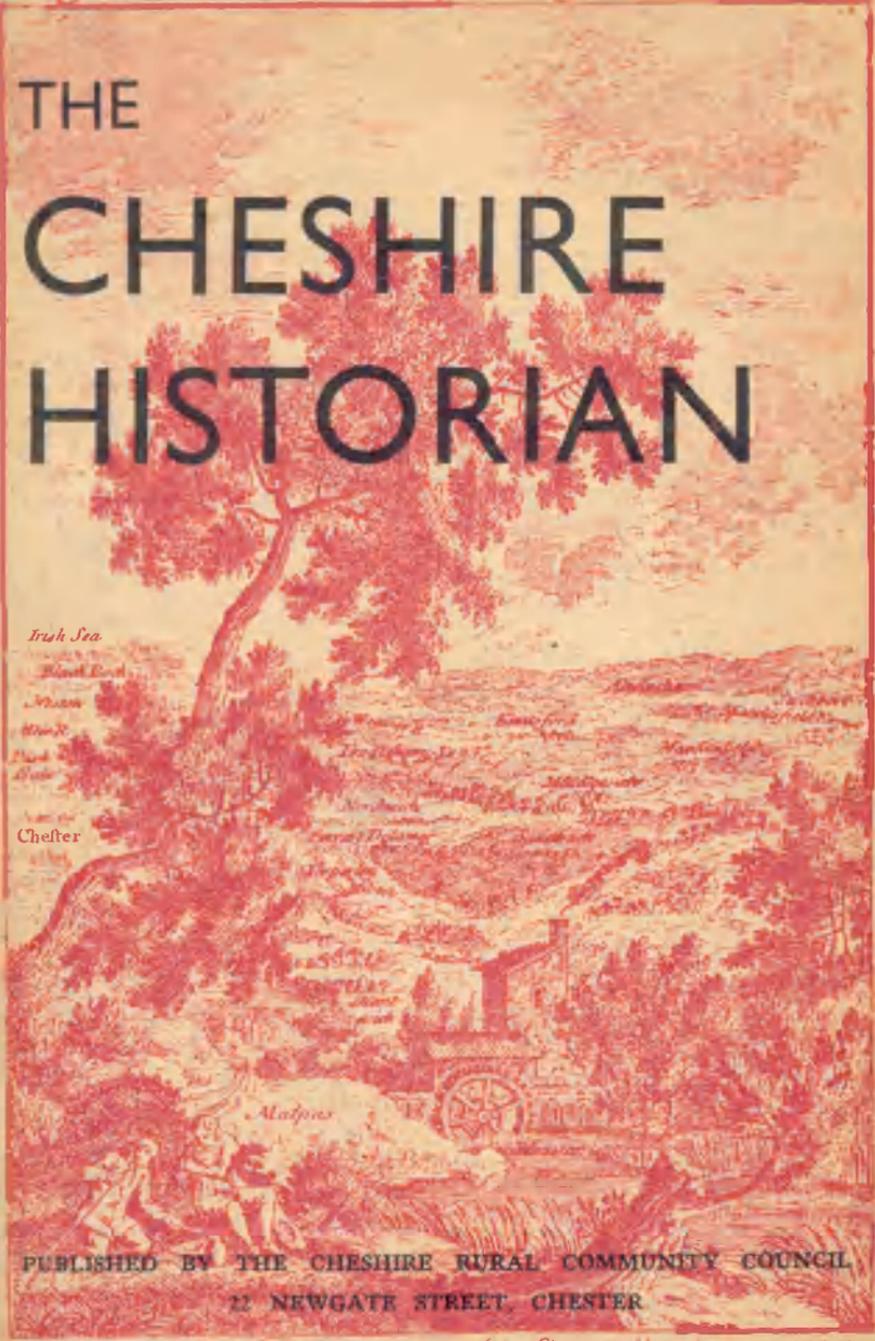


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*North West from London to the Coast of Cheshire & East of the County*

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# Wirral in Medieval Times

BY

ARTHUR OAKES, B.A.



**W**AS there a particular social behaviour and manner of life of Wirral folk, that distinguished them clearly from the people north of the Mersey or east of the Gowy? The habits and speech of the dweller in the heart of Cheshire soon make themselves plain; the Welshman, the Yorkshireman, and the Cornishman leave no one in doubt as to their place of origin. Was the same true of the Wirral man?

Regions, like people, have a personality, that sum total of qualities which makes them a type, and sets them apart. Just as an individual's personality is the outcome of his heredity, his contacts, his social conditions, and his upbringing, so is that of a region the result of its physical nature, its nearness to or remoteness from civilisation, its accessibility, the nature of its soil and its type of climate.

Thus there must have been a Wirral type, for Wirral is a region unique in many ways, both geographically and historically. And yet the typical Wirral man is hard to discover, on account of the rapid and recent industrial development of the area round Merseyside with the consequent influx of outsiders, for whom Wirral is merely a dormitory. The newcomers had their roots elsewhere and are alien to Wirral soil, but they have been transplanted in such numbers that they tend to oust the native and supplant him.

The characteristics of the true native of Wirral have been submerged in the ever-growing tide of this residential invasion. Wallasey and Birkenhead of 100 years ago must have been very like Bromborough of 50 years ago, or Burton or Ince of to-day, and even the last two are already yielding to the allurements of the speculative builder.

Let us see, therefore, what factors have gone to mould Wirral and let us attempt to make a few deductions as to their effect on the lives and habits of the people.

## I. ITS ORIENTATION.

The first factor of importance in the moulding of Wirral is its position relative to the lands and seas about it. Naturally this is a changeable factor, and particularly with a peninsula like Wirral. Its sea coast often protected its inhabitants, but occasionally gave access to the invader, as it did in Prehistoric and Scandinavian times. Generally speaking though its situation was one of remoteness from civilisation and of inaccessibility. The marshes of the Gowy and the Broxton Valley proved difficult barriers to cross and the inhospitability of the Mersey Estuary was a deterrent to settlement. Wirral was thus an isolated backwater,

rarely disturbed by the successive tides of culture that washed the south and east of England.

Thus in Prehistoric times, Wirral was little influenced by the invasions of the Megalithic folk except on the coastal fringe. At Dove Point, near Meols, on Hilbre, and at the Red Noses, there were evidently habitation sites, but they only served as links between much more populous areas in the Bronze Age. Wirral was a sort of half-way house between Anglesey and Derbyshire; and between Antrim and the Yorkshire Wolds. The Megalithic Builders, the Axe Men, and the Urn-Burial Folk influenced merely the edge of the Peninsula, the marshy hinterland and the heavily wooded districts on the boulder clay being too inhospitable for habitation.

But it was into these desolate and isolated areas that the Celts were driven by the incoming waves of Roman civilisation. From the Celtic place-names in Wirral, one realises how the Celts took refuge in its remote fastnesses. To mention only one, Ince, is to obtain a graphic description of that settlement site — an island in a wilderness of marsh.

So though the Roman military station of Chester was so near to Wirral, the Peninsula's inaccessibility was such that it did not attract the Roman gentleman, and in consequence the culture of the Roman villa passed Wirral by. In spite of this there must have been some sort of a road leading to the Meols neighbourhood, where so many Roman finds have been made. It probably followed roughly the line of the present Parkgate Road, perhaps much nearer the coast in the upper portion of the Dee Estuary than now, with a branch via Willaston (Street Hey) to the Storeton Quarries. This western route into the Peninsula by land and water was to play an important part in the development of Wirral.

After the departure of the Romans, the remaining British were left in undisputed possession of the district until in the early part of the seventh century, when as a result of the victory of Ethelfrith of Northumbria at Chester over the Britons, the Celts of Wales were separated from their kinsmen of the North, and by the time of Edwin's expedition to the Isle of Man, Wirral must have become Saxon, with the exception of those uninviting "islands" Wallasey and Ince.

Some 200 years later the Scandinavians from Ireland and the Isle of Man invaded Wirral, their settlements taking place on the north coast and the neighbourhood of Deeside. The many place-names terminating in "by" representing a farmstead or dwelling, and in "ea" or "ey" denoting an island, e.g. Wallasey "the island of the Welsh," give clues to this. If, as some authorities assert the battle of Brunanburh in 937 A.D. was fought at Bromborough, then very bad news was quickly conveyed to the Norse Assembly at Thingwall.

Thus by the time of Edward the Confessor, the dweller in Wirral ought to have been possessed of the hardihood of the Celt, the agrarian and economic ideas of the Saxon, and the sea-roving instincts of the Norseman, though little of the constructive ability of the Megalithic or the Roman people.

## II. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE EARLS OF CHESTER.

By 1070 The Norman Conquest was complete as far as Wirral was concerned and the great shadow of the first Norman Earl of Chester, Hugh Lupus, the Conqueror's nephew, fell over the land. For some 200 years it was to shut out the light of peace and freedom from Wirral.

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the great Earl's position was exceptional; his powers were immense; he was virtually a king in his own right, and therefore his territory was not subject to the Conqueror's law and government. Of this earldom, the chroniclers later wrote, "The King left Chester and returned to England." So, though physically a portion of England, the earldom of Chester was a separate political unit, and of this unit Wirral was the outlying portion. It certainly was not to bask in the suns rays of a beneficent king, but had to be content with the fitful moonlight of the Earl.

And why? Well, though the Earl was nominally subject to his over-lord, William the Conqueror, and though the Domesday Commissioners had surveyed Wirral and found its assessable value to William, the Earldom was a buffer state to secure the peace of England by preventing the predatory raids of the Welsh. It was to provide the troops to attack the Welsh or to receive the shock when they attacked. To lead these commandos was the Earl's task and because of its dangerous nature, he was given plenary powers and the right to add to his possessions by the sword as much land as he liked, provided it did not affect the holdings of the king.

Now Wirral was the part of the Earldom closest to Wales and would therefore be compelled to play a prominent part in these incursions into Wales and the inevitable counter thrusts. What an unhappy prospect for the Saxon in Wirral who had begun to appreciate the agricultural pursuits of peace.

As he made his way, say, up Townfield Lane, Lower Bebington, to cultivate his strip of land in the townfield and guide the eight-oxen plough, or tend his cattle on the common meadow, or his pigs on the wasteland, he could not have been at ease in his mind. "Why bother?" he would say, "to sow what others will most likely reap? I may have to go to war or my land may be harried by the Welshman." However, the body had to be nourished, the soldier fed, and in consequence, the main purpose in life was military. He owed service to his lord for the tenure of his land and this meant service in the Earl's army. His was Hobson's choice—work to supply the commisariat or active service. Yes,

the Earl meant business; he was building castles at Chester and Shotwick, as a de Lancelyn was soon to do at Poulton. The safety of the river Dee and the creeks of Shotwick and Bromborough Pool was essential.

When the Earl and his successors died, the last of whom, John Scot, left no male heir, the Earldom escheated to the Crown, and the King or the King's eldest son took the title and the lands. The County Palatine was clearly a valuable prize, and so it remained until 1536 when for the purpose of government it was merged into England and sent M.P.'s to Westminster.

### III. THE POWER OF THE LORDS ECCLESIASTIC.

As a result of the Conquest, the dweller in Wirral was soon to feel the authority of the ecclesiastic, the lord abbot or prior, as well as that of the lay lord. To secure the blessing of Holy Church on their adventures and to ease those twinges of conscience, the result of past misdeeds, the Norman Barons founded monasteries.

In 1093 Hugh Lupus ejected the secular canons of the church of SS. Peter and Paul in Chester and founded the Benedictine Abbey of St. Werburgh. In 1150 this act was imitated by Hamo de Masci of Puddington and Dunham with the establishment of Birkenhead Priory while a Cistercian brotherhood was founded in 1178 at Stanlow by John de Lacy, Baron of Halton and Constable of Chester.

The death of the lord of the manor, with no living male issue, frequently brought relief to his oppressed subjects for the property was transferred by marriage to another; sometimes it was split into portions and parts of it were sold to the tenants. My lord abbot on the other hand was like the king; he never died. His was a corporation and the land, in consequence, never changed hands through death. The monastic possessions grew and grew. By the fourteenth century, the Earl of Chester held only the manor of Shotwick in Wirral, the bulk of the rest of the Hundred being under the jurisdiction of the Abbot of St. Werburgh's. In fact, Woodchurch and Heswall were the only two churches the advowsons of which were not in monastic hands.

In addition, these lords ecclesiastic obtained special liberties in the Forest of Wirral and market rights, and in this way their pride became inordinate and their power immense. The inhospitality of the Mersey discomfited the monks of Stanlow and and its inundation of their buildings finally drove them to Whalley in Lancashire in 1294, but the monks of Birkenhead and Chester remained for nearly another two and half centuries. Yes it needed Anne Boleyn to dislodge them!

### IV. MILITARY SERVICE.

That the men of Wirral took part in the Welsh, French, Irish and Scotch campaigns is clear from the records, for where their

lords went their fighting men had to accompany them. Robert de Rodelent (Rhuddlan) was killed fighting against the Welsh in 1088, and there were several Wirral men in the "miracle" of the Constable Sands. A Massey was present at Crecy and Poitiers, and because of his prowess in the latter engagement, he was pardoned by the Black Prince for certain misdeeds. Soldiers of value to the Prince were frequently forgiven trespasses in the forest or even murders.

Sir John Massey and other Wirral Knights were in the rebel hosts of Percy at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403, the former losing his life there. Another Massey distinguished himself at Agincourt. The Pooles and the Stanleys were equally gallant and brought trophies from Flodden Field. Sir John Troutbeck died at Bloreheath in 1459 losing his life in the Lancastrian cause: Thomas Clegg of Gayton and Henry de Bromborough espoused the Yorkist cause and conspired to seize 20,400 marks on their way to Henry VI, but were imprisoned in Chester Castle for the attempt.

Kings too, featured in the events in Wirral. King John set sail from Shotwick in 1210 on his Irish expedition; Edward I went via Wirral on some of his Welsh campaigns; and in 1399 Richard II accompanied by a body of 2,000 Cheshire Archers, to whom he paid the comparatively high wage of 6d. per day, and among whom were many Wirral men, embarked from Burton Point for Ireland, as William III was to do later from King's Gap, Hoylake.

The average Wirral man must have had a rather hopeless outlook when all he had to look forward to was to die in the campaigns of his lord or be maimed permanently in his service. Economically he was badly off, socially, he was a nonentity; only in the military sphere was he of consequence. And why was it that between the campaigning he was of no importance? He lived in a forest and that was no enviable habitation.

## V. THE FOREST OF WIRRAL.

The obstinacy of his character and his love of the freedom he had gained during Saxon times made him resent the oppression of his Norman overlords, but he had displayed his opposition to the new regime very strongly, and Handle, the fourth Earl, found it so vexatious that he declared Wirral to be a forest and therefore subject to forest laws. It was a sort of transformation from civil to military law that we can appreciate in these days.

It meant that the bulk of Wirral was a chase for the pleasure of the Earl and his favourites. The native lived there on sufferance; his economic prosperity was of no consequence. Many farmsteads were obliterated to improve the chase, and so Wirral became a sea of wooded and open heath country with villages dotted in it like islands. Village life still continued but

with the difference that agricultural development was restricted and personal liberty limited.

To those employed in and for the chase, the change must have been welcomed. Alan Sylvestre, appointed chief forester, was given the manors of Puddington and Storeton and a horn to blow, or cause to be blown at the Gloverstone in Chester in the early morning of every fair day. His under-foresters and others who went on the "regard" of the forest besides their fees, received many perquisites in kind, as did those later on in connection with the Cheshire Hunt. Indeed the Hunting Squire and Parson were the direct descendants of the forest lords lay and ecclesiastic, of the 12th and 13th centuries. The master forestership later passed to the Stanley family by marriage in 1280. Is it any wonder that the Grand National is run near Knowsley Hall and that the most important flat race is called "the Derby"? It was a member of the Stanley family who interested himself in the races at Leasowe in 1683 in which the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth was a jockey. Truly custom dies hard.

It would be the natural desire of the farmer to extend his arable land to provide additional food for the needs of his family, but if he "assarted" land, that is, encroached on the forest, he had to pay a fine for it. To keep out the deer or other straying animals of the chase he erected a paling or dug a dry ditch. but were the paling too high or the ditch too wide for the running deer to negotiate without danger to itself, more fines followed.

If the cold days of winter tempted him to trespass in the forest for fallen branches or turves, it was a dear and hazardous undertaking. An empty larder and hungry children must often have proved too great an incentive for him to let discretion warn him. He poached game, even the buck itself. We can picture the trepidation into which the family would be thrown on the appearance of an under-forester several days or so after the foraging expedition. Discovery meant a heavy fine or serious bodily mutilation or even death.

And should it be found out that the trespasser possessed a greyhound or other coursing dog, he was severely punished. Other breeds of dog he was allowed to keep, provided that they had been "lawed," that is three claws removed from each forefoot. This rendered the dog lawful, but useless to a poacher.

Great and small were compelled to respect these forest laws or pay the forfeit. Records show that the great abbot himself had to toe the line, but the great ones had a much more favourable chance of obtaining the liberty of the forest and exemption from the irksome restrictions and abuses of the chase, particularly the dreaded right of "putura"—a custom of feudal foresters to take food from the inhabitants within the perambulation of the forest. When he or his underlings were on their itineraries

through the forest, they could call upon the villagers for refreshment and accommodation for themselves and their horses. Bromborough and Eastham apparently were freed from this burden and other forest dues by a licence granted to the Abbot of St. Werburgh's for his manor of Eastham, and this privilege was certainly instrumental in promoting the development of these places.

## VI. THE BLACK DEATH.

Thus the people of Wirral had to bear like many other people in Cheshire grievous burdens additional to those which were general throughout the land, because of the forest. But they were now to be visited by that dreadful scourge, the bubonic plague, known as the Black Death, round about the middle of the 14th century. It was no respecter of persons; the only cure was apparently the "Quick, Far and Late" one. Whenever it occurred it was case of start quick, go far, and come back late. Naturally most were in a position that they could not try this cure. The Abbot of Chester, William de Bebington and the priests of Backford, Stoke and Woodchurch succumbed to the plague as did many others too unimportant to be mentioned in the records. Most likely Wirral suffered as did the rest of the country by losing a half or one third of its population. The remnant used their scarcity value to obtain alleviation from their lot by demanding an increase in wages and a decrease in irksome restrictions.

To the lords of the manor their demands appeared absurd, for they declared:

"The world goeth fast from bad to worse when shepherd and cowherd demand more for their labour than their master bailiff was wont to take. Labourers of old were not wont to eat of wheaten bread; their meat was of beans or coarser corn and their drink of water alone. Cheese and milk were a feast to them; their dress was of hodden grey; then was the world ordered aright for folk of this sort. Ha! age of ours, whither turnest thou?"

Nevertheless, the threats of the residue in Wirral were evidently no idle ones, for by the end of the 14th century the men of Cheshire were very lawless and out of hand.

## VII. THE LAWLESSNESS OF WIRRAL.

The monastic chroniclers refer to them as ruffians, turbulent, cut-throats, thieves, vagabonds, etc., and no wonder when they waylaid the Abbot of Combermere and played football with the head of a Vale Royal monk. Cheshire may have been "the seed plot of gentilitic" but it was no nursery bed of gentleness. The Wirralite would be no less a thug than the other gangsters of the county, for he must have had much tainted blood in him. The forest was not only the home of the lord's game; it harboured

felons and fugitives from the king's justice, and the offspring of such ruffians were not nurtured in the refinements of civilisation.

There is much recorded evidence of the brutality and savagery of the Wirral man and of his violence and indiscipline. Brimstage Tower was built in the latter half of the 14th century and was fortified by loopholes and machicolations. At the manor house at Ince is ocular evidence of the crenellation of that building, its strengthening by intermural passages, the outer wall of which was loopholed. This was at the end of the same century, in 1399.

This was the fateful year of Richard II, who was served so faithfully by his bodyguard of Cheshire archers. Adam Usk, an eye-witness of events at that time wrote, "in all places they oppressed his subjects unpunished, and beat and robbed them. These men whithersoever the king went, night and day, as if at war, kept watch in arms around him, everywhere committing adulteries, murders, and other evils without end. And to such a pass did the king cherish them that he would not deign to listen to anyone who had complaint against them; nay, rather he would disdain him as an enemy."

In the previous year a licence had been obtained by the Hulses to erect an oratory at Brimstage. This privilege would be craved because of the difficulty of travelling to Bromborough Church in bad weather over ill-conditioned ways, and because of the gangs of marauders about. The Hulses would not have been the first lords of the manor to have been molested on their way to mass.

Grievous though the legitimate forest taxes were, they became intolerable when an earl arose who regarded Wirral merely as a recruiting ground for his armed forces and a never-failing treasury for his wilful extravagances, as did the Black Prince. The peasant was prepared to pay the usual charge for the rights of pannage, i.e. when he turned his pigs into the forest in the Autumn to forage for acorns and beachmast; the customary charge was 1d. per pig up to 6, from 7 to 10, one pig, from 11 to 16 one pig and one penny, and from 17 to 20, two pigs.

This was no inconsiderable toll to pay for a pig to be turned out to fatten itself in the Autumn. Most peasants earned a penny a day so for half a dozen pigs it meant the forfeit of a week's wage. No modern farm labourer would enjoy giving up £5 15s. for a similar privilege now. And can't we easily imagine what a riot would be caused nowadays if this excessive charge were increased in order that the lord of the manor might have more income to spend on riotous living.

So the Wirral man's lawlessness in an acknowledged age of brutality was conspicuous. His military adventures and the condition under which he lived at home encouraged this hooliganism as did the lack of respect he was beginning to have for the lord ecclesiastic and the removal of the restraining influence of the

priests owing to so many of them dying during the plague: but the prime cause was the forest.

#### VIII. CHURCH BUILDING.

Roving bands of thugs preyed on the convoys of food to the army and on its pay wagons, as well as goods from the Decside ports in transit to Chester. It does not therefore come as a surprise to us that the citizens of Chester petitioned the Black Prince to disafforest Wirral towards the end of the 14th century, and of their joy at the granting of their petition by the Prince's father, Edward III, though Richard II, the Prince's son, a few years afterwards, fined Wirral 600 marks for the concession.

Probably this is an exaggerated picture of the banditry of Wirral, for records speak more of the wrongdoer than the law-abiding. There must have been some godfearing people in the Hundred, for if not, it is difficult to account for the church building and extensions that went on in the 14th century, not only at the abbeys of Vale Royal and St. Werburgh, but in the village churches. Gangs of masons were evidently available as they finished their assignments at the abbeys, but was the money? Yes, it was, but it did not come from the monks, who had appropriated so many of the Wirral churches. They were only responsible for the upkeep of the chancel, the rest of the fabric was the concern of the parishioners, and in particular the lay lords of the manor.

Building went on at Backford, Woodchurch, West Kirby, Shotwick, Thornton-le-Moors, Bebington and Eastham; the famous broach spires of the last two were built then. These churches could not compare in magnificence with those building at other places in the County of Cheshire, at Astbury, Audlem, Bunbury, Middlewich, Nantwich, Malpas, Tarvin, and Witton, nor with the "Wool" churches of East Anglia upon which so much labour and money were being lavished.

#### IX. WIRRAL AND THE WOOL TRADE.

Wirral like the rest of Cheshire did not benefit from the wool trade with Flanders. The City of Chester had applied to be given a licence creating it a staple port, but in vain. So Wirral bales had to be shipped to London for transit to the Flemings or had to be taken overland to the East Anglian ports. Thus the Hundred could not compete in this lucrative trade. Records show that the Abbey of Stanlow kept very few sheep and when we learn that only 200 bales of wool were collected in Cheshire by the Commissioners of Edward III against 1,500 bales from Shropshire, and at one mark less per bale than the Salop variety, we realise that the rest of Cheshire must have been similar to Stanlow. In other words, Wirral was not to grow fat on sheep, and this disability was seen in the inferiority of its church architecture. However, despite this, it is perfectly clear that Wirral was beginning to

engage in trade seeing that there was money available for church embellishment. Nantwich and other Cheshire towns got it from salt, but Wirral depended on its sea trade. Chester itself became more and more blocked with silt, and ports lower down the river engaged increasingly in wine from Gascony, slates, lead and millstones from North Wales, corn and cattle from Ireland, and timber and fish from Wirral. The port of Liverpool too was no longer an infant; it was some 150-200 years old, and the Mersey side of Wirral was benefiting from this, and particularly Bebington, Bromborough and Eastham; Burton was similarly benefiting from Deeside traffic.

#### X. GROWTH OF TOWNS, MARKETS AND FAIRS.

It is only natural that men should try to free themselves as soon as possible from the service they had to give to their lord, or commute it for a money payment. Trade and land utilisation brought this money and so Chester was the first to purchase freedom from this bond service, and the right of regulating its own trade, of establishing guilds to control both crafts and craftsmen, and of holding a weekly market, but not of controlling the three days' fair. This was the privilege of the abbots and the citizens' own business had to be suspended on those days and no ship was to be unloaded at the quay. All trade had to be done only at the stalls erected in front of the Abbey Gateway and the tolls for such concession went to the abbey exchequer — a great source of grievance to the Chester merchants and of profit to the Convent.

However, the citizens agitated for the transfer of the fair rights to the town and petitioned Edward I to bring this about. They obtained only a partial redress of their grievance. In 1288 the King granted them the right to erect stalls also and hire them to traders, provided they were set up some distance from the Abbey Square. This concession adversely affected the Convent's source of income, and as it must have been foreseen that the citizens' agitation for a partial transfer of fair rights would be successful one day; so the monastery chapter must have begun to look elsewhere for fair and market rights to make up the probable resultant deficiency in income. And where was so suitable as their manor of Eastham? Reports from Bromborough Court House clearly showed that trade up the Pool was flourishing and the abbey might just as well share in the profit.

Bromborough and Eastham's relief much earlier surely influenced their development and made them attractive places in Wirral. In the average manor there cannot have been much of what we know as trade, for it did not produce much more than its own requirements, and the inhabitants could secure their needs by barter. But as land was reclaimed and agriculture developed, there would arise a surplus and this could not be wasted. Hence a rudimentary but unlicensed market must have been held at

irregular intervals and these "Black" markets must have been reported to the Abbot.

What was easier then, when Edward I was several times in Wirral on account of the Welsh Wars and the building of the abbey of Vale Royal, for the abbot of Chester, who attended him when he stayed at the Court House and the abbot's manor house at Ince in 1277 to crave these market boons. Something like this must have occurred for the very next year the king, while at Dover, granted the request and handed to a monk of Chester a charter licensing a weekly market on Mondays and an annual three days' fair, and witnessed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Earl of Lincoln.

Thus began in the long days of June, the Bromborough Fair of Barnaby Bright, held on St. Barnabas's Day, the day before and the day after — three days that must have passed very quickly with all the excitement and bustle that took place round the market cross. No wonder Johnnie was so long at the fair, with the other yokels and lasses seeking new employment. The sale of cattle was interesting enough, and the busy-ness of the shops of the cobbler, the shoemaker, the saddler, the blacksmith, the wheelwright, etc. was something to wonder at, but most excitement of all was caused by the presence of strange traders, whose wares were as attractive as their tales. A year's thrill in three days with feasting and drinking at the inn. As late as 1561 there was only one inn in Bromborough and two in Eastham. Was the Bromborough one on the site of the present "Royal Oak" though it cannot have been called by that name in the 15th and 16th centuries? Was it the "Cross Keys" or "The Mitre" to please my lord abbot, or "The White Hart" for Richard II? It is very doubtful that it would be "The Red Lion" of John of Gaunt or "The Swan" of Henry IV, particularly in Wirral. This matter is worth some research. We cannot but doubt that one of the Eastham inns was then "The Stanley Arms."

Twenty years later in 1298, the same king granted similar concessions to William de Langton, Bishop of Lichfield to hold a weekly market on Thursdays and a three days' fair at the feast of St. James in Burton. This is an index of the importance of Burton in the 13th and 14th centuries then the chief port of Wirral possessing five inns. Yes, Burton and Bromborough were the busy B's of Wirral. How long these markets and fairs were held is not known, but they must have been allowed to lapse with the improvement of communications to Chester and Liverpool, and the development of Neston in the 16th century.

## XI. LAND RECLAMATION AND UTILISATION.

I mentioned previously that the surplus products for the markets came from increased sea trade and land utilisation. Land reclamation particularly after the disafforestation of Wirral, went ahead. After defeating the enemies of the realm and the forest

oppressions, the inhabitants began to attack nature herself. After uprooting trees, cutting down bushes, burning heather and bracken, and breaking up the ground with turf spades, it was ploughed by oxen. Its fertility was improved by spreading marl on the sandy soils; there was not sufficient farm yard manure available owing to the killing off of cattle before winter, so marling was resorted to, to stiffen the sandy soil. Marl pits abound in Wirral and were the scene of activity for hundreds of years, for when the abbot of Chester in 1296 was attacked by the Wirral foresters for digging marl pits without permission his answer was that his predecessors had had the right from time immemorial.

Draining work too was done by the abbots of Chester and Stanlow to reclaim the flooded land in the neighbourhood of the present Ellesmere Port. Thus more and more land was brought under the plough, the farmers' lands getting more and more farther from their farm houses. This accounts for the interesting feature of the Wirral farmhouses, being so frequently right in the villages and not in the middle of their acreage. An Inquisition Post Mortem of 1614 shows that John Poole, at his death was seized of several mills, both water and wind, 2,000 acres of land, 5,000 of meadow, 2,000 of pasture, 600 of wood, 1,000 of marsh and 1,000 of furze and heath on his manors in Wirral, and this is typical, though this is only one example of what was accomplished. The development of the land was general: the small-holder and the great landlord both did their share, in this land reclamation.

## XII. CHARACTERISTICS OF LATE MEDIAEVAL WIRRALITES.

His long and arduous fight with nature shows that Wirral man of the late Middle Ages was a sturdy and hard-working fellow; one not easily beaten by obstacles. Stubbornness was evidently one of his characteristics, and he could not be turned from his purpose easily. He was very jealous of his rights so dearly bought and perilously gained. His house was his castle and he was only too ready to fight for its security. A noteworthy example of this trait was seen in the affray that occurred at the manor house of Ince, after the Cottons had been granted the property at the Dissolution, and had sold it to the Cholmondeleys who had also received the spoils of Vale Royal. Sir Hugh Cholmondeley gave the tenant, Lady Maud Grosvenor, notice to quit, but she refused to do so. Though 60 men marched against the manor house in 1550 it was valiantly defended for four hours and the attackers withdrew leaving one of their party fatally wounded. The law stepped in and the Grosvenor party was tried for murder. Hans, the Gunner, a Dutch tinker, was hanged, but the Lady Maud was acquitted. Such was the ancestress of the Dukes of Westminster; she remained at Ince until her death in 1582.

The native of Wirral was evidently very conservative, not because he dreaded change, but because tradition made change alien to him, and poor communications kept new ideas from coming his way. John Balls and Wat Tylers there must have been in Wirral but they lacked the organisation that came from life in a free town, such as the salt towns of Cheshire that showed an organised independence of spirit lacking in Wirral. Bromborough and Burton, the two places that had developed in the Mediaeval Period were under the control of ecclesiastical landlords.

The Stanleys, the Pooles, the Masseys, and the Troutbecks adhered to the old religion long after the Reformation, and were staunch supporters of the Royalist cause during the Civil War. The Bunburys of Stanney were apparently the only ones who followed the Reformed Faith and the Cleggs of Gayton Hall the only ones to support the Parliament side. It was with the Cleggs of Gayton Hall that William of Orange stayed while awaiting a favourable wind to blow him to Ireland to quell the Jacobite Rebellion.

Culturally, the man of Wirral was very backward, for the refining influence of the Renaissance was long in reaching the Peninsula. He appears to have remained cruel and ruthless for some time; he was a fatalist himself and had little time for sympathy with the misfortunes of others. That is why many of the shore dwellers made profit from the deliberate wrecking of ships and thought as little about the morals of it as the general run of inhabitants of the Hundred did about their blood sports.

But it is time that I let them rest for like the Priory of Birkenhead they too have been claimed by Time and have crumbled into dust. They can say to their descendants equally proud of their achievements:

“We, in the ages lying  
In the buried past of the earth.  
Built Nineveh with our sighing,  
And Babel itself with our mirth:  
And o’erthrew them with prophesying  
To the old of the new world’s worth:  
For each age is a dream that is dying,  
Or one that is coming to birth.”

(ARTHUR O’SHAUGHNESSY.)

# Cheshire Museums and Art Galleries

## No. 2. The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead.

G. STRATTON, A.L.A., CURATOR,  
PRESIDENT, NORTH-WESTERN FEDERATION OF MUSEUMS AND ART  
GALLERIES.

I HAVE deemed it advisable, before entering forthwith upon a description of the Williamson Art Gallery and its contents, to donate a little of the space at my disposal to a brief survey of the position of Municipal Art Galleries in this country today. It is a liberty which I trust is not untimely. Those of my readers to whom these observations will come as new, will, I feel sure, not view with impatience thus being 'put into the picture.' On the other hand, those who are already acquainted or familiar with the general background, particularly the many problems with which the modern curator is daily confronted, will undoubtedly welcome my taking this opportunity to give further ventilation to the position and agree that it may possibly have a somewhat salutary effect.

The fundamental basis of art galleries and museums lies in that creed which grants to each and everyone the right to seek after knowledge and to attain culture. It is precisely this belief which constitutes likewise the basis on which is established the whole present day system of education for all. Thus there comes into existence a bond between the work of the teacher and that of the curator and it is not a little encouraging to find that today that bond has become generally accepted. It has been said that the visual arts are one of the manifestations of quality by which a nation is judged and no society can afford to dispense with their humanising influence. Modern educational theories have come to recognise the ever increasing importance of visual education and the necessity for the visual arts to be closely allied to both education and design if a full advantage is to be gained by the community.

Yet, although education, as a result of the various successive Acts of Parliament and their compulsory administration by local authorities, has been ensured of a certain national standard and has developed into what has been aptly described as a great force for betterment throughout the nation, we may look in vain for anything even approaching a similarity of development with art galleries and museums. Of these latter, we can but assert that theirs is a growth which, if at all, has been left largely to chance with the inevitable consequence that, apart from the National

Institutions, the provinces are left with a museum and art gallery service which is unequal in distribution, is mostly inadequate and is indeed quite often absent. Even with the closely-allied public library service there can be no comparison and presumably such a state of affairs exists because of the lack of Governmental interest and the absence of statutory obligations upon local authorities.

It is estimated that today there exists in the provinces some 620 museums and art galleries, no less than 160 having closed their doors since the last survey carried out in 1938. The reasons for the closing of these 160 institutions included occupation by national or local government departments and damage by enemy action but still there remains about 50 which were closed through lack of local interest or of financial support. Of the 620 now remaining open, a little over half are municipally maintained, i.e. derive their income from local rates, and very few of these can claim equal good fortune with Birkenhead in that they are able to house their collections in separate buildings. As it is, buildings are all too often bad or most unsuitable for their purpose being in many cases a legacy from the last century when the national taste, especially in matters touching the architecture of public buildings, was exceedingly poor. It is plain, of course, that the root of the evil is in the pitiful financial circumstances in which so many of the institutions are struggling. This observation may be further illuminated by the fact that in 1945 over 400 of the existing museums and galleries had incomes of less than £300 per annum, and if further emphasis is required for this entirely deplorable situation I submit the fact that the annual expenditure, omitting the National Institutions in London, is approximately 3d. per head of population or the price of one cigarette. Surely then, this constitutes an effective answer to those deploring the low standard of culture existent today — it is somewhat difficult to see how in the circumstances it could be otherwise.

However the entire history of art galleries and museums is interwoven with the stories of distinguished and discriminating patronage. It could safely be claimed that over 90% of the contents of all provincial art galleries and museums consists of donations, either from individuals, associations or private trusts. Poor indeed we would have been without such help although I must add that it is a moot point whether the art institutions in many cases have benefited overmuch in quality, especially with the legacies of Victorian England. But today the wealthy connoisseur is rapidly disappearing and it would appear that Government intervention and assistance alone can take his place.

The early years of the 20th century were to prove of good fortune to residents of Birkenhead who were keenly interested in the development of art and culture. In the year 1912 was established the town's first Art Gallery and Museum and this was situated in the then vacated Central Library in Hamilton Street.

During the first World War, Mr. John Williamson, J.P., a well-known shipowner, director of the Cunard S.S. Co., and former Commissioner for Birkenhead, died, leaving directions in his will that the sum of £20,000 should be transferred to the Corporation on the death of his son with the request that the Council, without imposing any legal obligation upon them, consider the advisability of applying this sum towards the erection of an Art Gallery and/or Museum. Mr. P. A. Williamson survived his father by only four years and in his will directed that a further £20,000 should be paid to the Corporation. Thus on the 1st December, 1928 the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum was formally opened to the public of Birkenhead by Dr. H. Nazeby Harrington.

The new gallery, designed by the Liverpool architects, Messrs. Hannaford and Thearle, represented the fruit of much thought and careful planning. In this respect, one can safely say that it was only with the advent of the 20th century that the architectural evolution of a building for the express purpose of displaying art treasures occurred. First impressions of the Williamson Art Gallery is of a building, simple, unassuming and pleasant, possessing precisely those characteristics which should mark such an institution. A one-storey, red brick and white stone building, surrounded by grass plots and flower beds, it stands at the corner of Slatey Road and Balls Road in a quiet residential area of the town not too far afield as to discourage visitors from other quarters. The interior, apart from administrative offices and storage rooms, consists of a Sculpture or Entrance Hall which is 'en suite' with the adjoining galleries. Of these, there are 14 in number which, for the possible benefit of such as delight in statistics, offer a floor space of approximately 15,440 square feet and a wall space of 1,650 linear feet. Special interest has been paid to the systems of lighting, natural and artificial; the method of 'top-side' lighting has the effect of bathing the pictures and exhibits in bright illumination whilst the onlooker stands in the lesser shadow of reflected light. The same principle guides the arrangement of the artificial in that here the points of light, aided by strong reflectors, are placed in positions such as to eliminate as far as possible reflections on glazed surfaces.

The policy of the gallery is to offer a service of efficiency and living activity as distinct from the all-too-prevalent static undertaking. To this end, great efforts are made to bring all branches of art to Birkenhead in the form of loan exhibitions etc. But these loan exhibitions and other activities would be incomplete in themselves and therefore for many years now, steps have been taken to build up a valuable permanent collection. Thanks to such efforts today we find displayed in the picture galleries examples of the work of many of our more famous British painters.

The development of English painting with examples from various schools constitutes the underlying principle governing the arrangement in two of the galleries given over to oil paintings.

The following represents but a brief selection from these works:—  
works:—

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Richard Wilson.     | WELSH BRIDGE and LANDSCAPE.                   |
| "The Grand Classic" |   |
| George Stubbs.      | LIONS AND TIGERS FIGHTING.                    |
| John (Old) Crome.   | YARMOUTH JETTY and WHITLINGHAM<br>IN NORWICH. |
| J. S. Cotman.       | STANGATE CREEK and TREES AND BOAT.            |
| James Stark.        | MARLBOROUGH FOREST and LANDSCAPE.             |
| George Vincent.     | LANDSCAPE WITH CATTLE.                        |
| John Constable.     | AFTER THE STORM and VALLEY OF THE<br>STOUR.   |
| William Etty.       | TOILET OF VENUS.                              |
| Clarkson Stanfield. | COAST OF NORMANDY.                            |
| Sir Chas. Eastlake. | BRUTUS — LUCRETIA.                            |

One feature which may prove of particular pleasure to both collectors and students of local art is our practice, whenever possible, of devoting one picture gallery to the painters of the Liverpool School. We are, when speaking of this school, customarily concerning ourselves with the artists of the period 1810—1867, in fact we might say that the Great Exhibition of 1851 saw this local academy at its best. With the exception of few, such as William Huggins, the animal painter, James Campbell, H. B. Roberts, most of the school were essentially landscape painters. Many found their inspiration in the local countryside and in North Wales. At a date long in advance of most schools, they paid little attention to the conventional canons of art and painted direct from Nature. This perhaps is the reason which, together with the realisation that so many of the scenes painted are of our own favoured beauty spots, warms so many visitors towards them. Our well-known work "MORTON BEFORE CLAVERHOUSE" by W. L. Windus, known and appreciated as a pre-Raphaelite figure painter, has just been on view in London at an exhibition staged by the Contemporary Art Society.

It might perhaps not be entirely inappropriate to digress somewhat chronologically and to mention here the activities of the present-day group of workers who may be regarded in many ways as the modern counterpart of the Liverpool School. I refer of course to the Wirral Society of Arts who, with their annual exhibition held at the Williamson Art Gallery, are definitely attracting the attention of Northern Art circles. The aims of these two schools (and I do not think that I anticipate unduly in thus referring to the Wirral Society as a school of thought), follow quite similar pathways for Mr. Will C. Penn, their leader and guide, has said but very recently, "Free of alien fashions, we wish to paint our own subjects in our own way, and we hope by a study of Nature and tradition (mostly the former) to find a road that will lead us to new pastures, delightful and natural to us and to a manner of execution that will express ourselves."

"THE MUSLIN DRESS" by P. Wilson Steer, the artist who, born in Birkenhead in 1860, was to be described as the greatest landscape painter since Turner and Constable, is yet another well-known work favoured by visitors and much admired by Steer enthusiasts. This, Steer's "tour-de-force," was bequeathed to the Corporation of Birkenhead by the late Lord Leverhulme, of whose generosity, interest and influence so much has already been admirably written.

The water colour collection, which has received special attention from successive curators, occupies 3 picture galleries and is arranged in chronological order. Among the well-known artists represented are Turner, de Wint, Cox, Sir D. Y. Cameron, Sir A. M. Callcott, Girtin, Sir W. Russell Flint, Kate Sargeant, Talbot Kelly and others. It can be safely claimed that the art and practice of watercolour painting has been carried out more fully and with a greater measure of success in England than in any other country: it is a branch still flourishing. While it is no doubt true to say that most of our English masters have won their world-wide esteem by virtue of their works in oils, yet so many of them were trained as water colour painters. Turner is just such a case. It was this water colour school that originated the forward movement in landscape painting that was to wield so great an influence over the art of the last century.

The collection in the Williamson Art Gallery is reputed to be among the finest of early British water colours. It is from this collection that the Empire Arts Loan Exhibition so freely choose when building up their travelling loan exhibitions to tour the countries of New Zealand and Australia.

Room IV quite possibly possesses an air of familiarity which is shared by no other portion of the gallery: it is an atmosphere which, presenting a certain nostalgic appeal to the old, at the same time awakens an intense interest among the younger visitors. But it certainly has a great attraction for all who know Birkenhead and the surrounding countryside for here will be found those exhibits illustrating the history, the growth and the development of Wirral. The prints and the etchings, the views of old Birkenhead, of old Tranmere, long before the days of municipal incorporation, provide a record of the town conducive to much musing and reminiscing. The many ship models, fascinating to young and old alike, are a constant reminder of the part played by Birkenhead in the developing of the world's sea-borne commerce.

Many visitors will no doubt be equally delighted with the numerous exquisite examples of the potter's art, particularly with those originating from the Town's own pottery, the Della Robbia Works. During the years 1894—1906, this factory, under the personal supervision of Mr. Harold S. Rathbone, was to become very well-known, receiving the support of a considerable number of the leading artists and architects of the day. The leader and originator, Mr. Rathbone, himself a pupil of Ford Madox Brown,

was greatly under the influence of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and the effects of his leanings may be seen not only in his own work but also in the designs of his fellow workers. Other special features in the ceramic collections are examples from the Liverpool potters of Herculaneum pottery and the work of Sadler and Greene. Other exhibits are of Wedgwood ware, Staffordshire lustre, with an excellent collection of early Staffordshire figure pottery, while from further afield there are specimens of Japanese, Persian, early Viennese, Venetian, Dresden and French pottery.

It seems inevitable that any attempt to describe or even to introduce an Art Gallery in terms no matter how general the result must resolve itself into a minor catalogue or guide and more particularly when the writer happens also to be the Curator, he must of necessity close his ears somewhat to the demands of a large section of his gallery's contents for attention. Because of this and because, equally cogent, of the limited space available, I can but briefly refer to the glass ware, the etchings and engravings, the natural history section and in fact the general museum side of our institution. The only amplification that I can offer is to each and everyone "Come and see for yourself."

I should like, however, to make one or two observations concerning the role played by the Williamson Art Gallery in making available for the public the excellent travelling exhibitions organised by the various organisations such as the Arts Council, the Art Exhibitions Bureau and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Modern art especially forms largely the subject of such temporary exhibitions so that the gallery displaying not only satisfies the ever present public interest in the work of the present day artists but also acts as the very necessary shop window for that artist. Enthusiasts interested in the work of the moderns may well like to note the following exhibitions and the dates of display.

ART EXHIBITIONS BUREAU. ROYAL ACADEMY (23rd March — 26th April, 1952).

ART EXHIBITIONS BUREAU. NEW ENGLISH ART CLUB (3rd — 31st May, 1952).

It is often in connection with exhibitions, such as the six that are forthcoming from the Victoria and Albert Museum, that special attention is paid to schoolchildren, when organised parties accompanied by teachers visit the Art Gallery. We have here the first steps towards educating the future general public to a higher standard of art appreciation and culture.

The hours of opening are as follows:—

OPEN WEEKDAYS 10 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. (April to September).

" " 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (October to March).

OPEN SUNDAYS 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

# The Archæologist in the Field

(Part II)

## A. An introduction to the study of Romano - British Coarse Pottery

By GRAHAM WEBSTER, M.A., F.S.A., A.M.I.C.E.

## B. The Technique of Barrow Excavation

By J. D. JONES, B.A., F.S.A. (Scot.)

### A.

THE excavator on a Roman site in Britain is usually blessed with an abundance of datable material. On a large scale project the very quantity is likely to cause grave difficulties in washing, repairing, sorting, drawing and publishing unless the excavator has willing and able helpers. The bulk of this material will be pottery and it is essential that all students of the archaeology of this period should familiarise themselves with this material.

Coarse ware is defined as any pottery found on Romano-British sites other than the red-glazed Samian ware. The name Samian is derived from a remark by the Elder Pliny that a red-glazed pottery was made on the Isle of Samos. Early antiquaries concluded that similar pottery, found in Britain, came from the same source. German antiquaries rejecting this false belief coined the term *Terra Sigillata* or "figured ware." As most of this pottery is not decorated this term is also incorrect and in Britain the name Samian has become so widely used and it is so unlikely that any mistaken idea as to the production centre will arise, that it continues in favour. Unfortunately the difficulties in the way of this study are considerable. This is due to several factors. Firstly the variety of type, shape and fabric of the vessels is so great that no synthesis has so far been attempted. The chapter by Collingwood in his book "The Archaeology of Roman Britain" has since proved to be much over simplified. Studies of the subject within recent years have shown that there are far greater local variations in production than has been hitherto realised and parallels should always be sought from the nearest excavated site.

A great quantity of pottery has been published in excavation reports but much of this information is useless as the material is not stratified and only complete or unusual vessels are illustrated. The most useful groups of pottery one can study are those from pottery kilns. Here one has a contemporary group covering probably a period of at most five to ten years if the kiln is an isolated one, but a cautionary note must be added. The potsherds found on these sites are wasters, i.e. pots which have broken or cracked in the kiln during firing and which the potter has rejected. Their shapes may be distorted and the sherds over-fired by their

contact with the hot ashes. In this condition the fragments may bear little resemblance to the finished product.

When the Romans conquered Britain they found that the quality of native pottery varied from the elegant wheel-turned products of the Belgic areas of the south-east to the crude hand-made wares of the less civilised parts some of which in the mountainous areas still maintained late Bronze Age culture. The position is complicated by the introduction of imported wares such as Arretine from northern Italy and Samian from southern Gaul in the course of trade before the invasion. These vessels as well as glass and metal ware are found in quantity in the south-east and a small quantity penetrated into the north and midlands.

The quantity and quality of native pottery was not sufficient to satisfy the Roman military needs. The legions set up their own depots and made reasonably good imitations of Samian ware and Terra Rubra and Nigra. This industry continued to the beginning of the second century. The native pottery industry with the probable introduction of Gallic craftsmen had developed by the time of Hadrian to the point when the supply of coarse wares was sufficient for the needs of the permanent garrison as well as those of the civilian population. A policy seems to have been initiated about this time of buying from these private concerns and the military depots ceased making pottery.

The position in the second half of the first century can be summarised as follows:

- (a) There was a greatly increased importation from Gaul not only of Samian but of mortars and probably many other wares;
- (b) distinctive legionary pottery made near the fortresses imitating Belgic and Gallic wares;
- (c) the native potters attempted as quickly as possible to adapt Roman provincial styles into which they grafted their own traditional forms.
- (d) Gallic potters of coarse wares, migrated to Britain to take full advantage of the new market and cut transport costs.

The result is a queer mixture of the fine products of South Gaul nestling with coarse black gritty pre-historic looking wares of native manufacture. By the end of the century these differences were being smoothed out and the second century sees a ubiquity of fabric and styles. Mass production gradually lowered the standards of the Samian pottery and at the same time the native and immigrant potters improved the quality of coarse wares. The styles and fabrics became uniform over the whole of the province and between say 80 and 160 A.D. one can use some types for dating wherever they are found in Britain, but there were many types which are only found in localised areas even in this period.

One of the most important developments was the introduction of black burnished wares with looped and latticed decoration.

In the form of dishes and cooking-pots they rapidly superseded the earlier wares in brown, red and grey fabrics and have become one of the main keys for the dating of second-century sites.

After the troubles at the end of the Antonine period and the *Pax Romana* seemed to be a fading reality, the position changed. Continental imports appear to diminish and almost cease. Towards the end of the 2nd century Britain endured several serious wars on the frontier culminating in A.D. 196 with the vain attempt of Albinus to gain the purple in the process towards which he stripped the province of troops. These difficulties may have had a serious effect on trade and caused the drying up of pottery imports but it might equally well have been a new fiscal policy introduced by Severus in his civil reorganisation of the province. It is doubtful if we will ever know: what is certain is that Britain in the 3rd century was forced to use home products. Under this stimulus the British potters and Rhenish immigrants rose to the occasion. It was natural that they should imitate the most up-to-date continental styles. By the middle of the 2nd century the red glazed Samian had become very coarse and barbarised and it is not to be wondered that it went out of favour. In the Rhineland round Neiderbieber and Trier there had developed a pottery technique of a different type, producing smaller vessels with thin walls with a dense metallic lustre decorated with white paint or a thick strip applied *en barbotine*, i.e. squeezed through a funnel like the decoration on iced cakes. This gave a greater freedom to the craftsmen than the applied reliefs or stamped decoration at that time used by the Samian potters. These Rhenish wares came first into Britain at the end of the 2nd century although they were being made in Germany much earlier and it is these vessels which the native potters set about imitating. The result was the so-called Castor ware. While there is no doubt that a considerable pottery industry existed in the Nene valley near the Romano-British town of *Durobrivae*, similar pottery was produced at other centres on the east side of the country. The distribution of this pottery has yet to be viewed critically but at present it does not seem to be very even and it demonstrates a process which had already become well established, the distribution was becoming localised. While examples appear on the northern frontier, few are found in Wales or Chester and it may eventually be discovered that the main use of this ware was confined to the Lower Province.

The early vessels in this ware are very fine, consisting usually of floral scrolls applied in a free style, but animals are also common and the hunting scenes show an aesthetic lithe vigour which is very satisfying (Pl. 4a). Attempts were made at human figures, in the form of gladiators but these are usually of clumsy execution.

The sudden, and apparently inexplicable appearance of these vessels has given rise to the theory of a Celtic Renaissance. The hunt cup and scrolls certainly show freedom of style greatly removed from the highly formalised classical motifs used by the

Samian potters but it is due entirely to the introduction of the barbotine technique in the hands of competent craftsmen inspired, maybe, with the prospect of an expanding market.

Second century developments can be summarised as follows:—

- (1) The legionary depots ceased production.
- (2) Many shapes and fabrics became ubiquitous over the whole country.
- (3) Burnished black fabric in cooking-pots and dishes introduced about the time of Hadrian.
- (4) Imported wares by the end of the century diminished in quantity and the quality deteriorated.
- (5) Fine thin-walled Rhenish beakers with a high metallic lustre were imported after c. 180 A.D.; at the same time, colour-coated wares with barbotine decoration were being made in the Castor region and probably elsewhere.

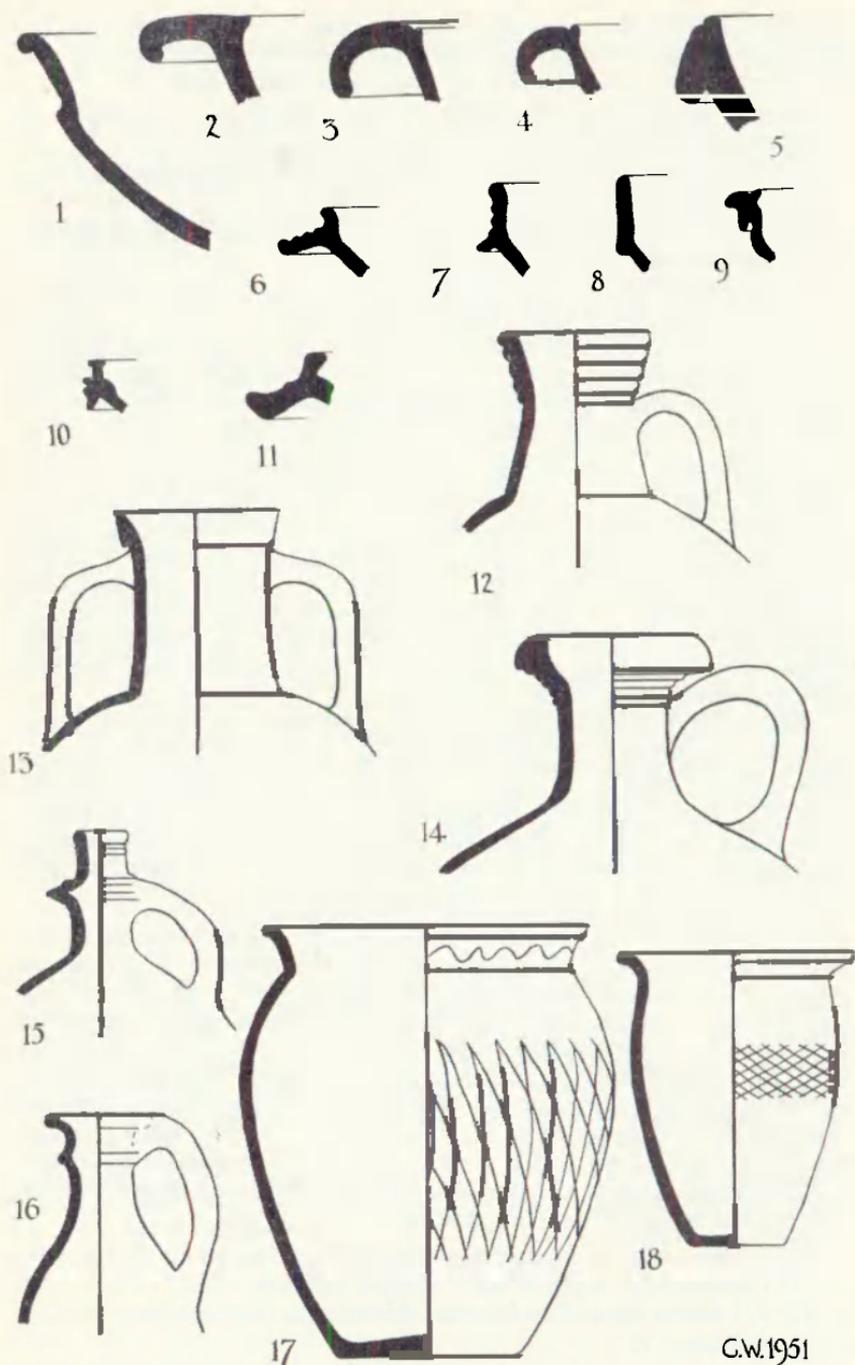
The production of fine Castor wares did not continue for very long, the absence of continental competition probably made the craftsmen slipshod and careless. The story of the industry of the third century like everything else of that period is obscure but it seems as if barbotine work gave place to paint as the only decorative feature (Pl. 4b). The technique of colour-coating the surface of vessels persisted and those wares with an almost metallic lustre in browns, chocolate and purple surfaces contrast strongly with those of the earlier centuries.

Apart from a perceptible thickening and coarsening of vessels there is little change in the products of the late fourth from those of the late third century. While there are no new types, except the heavy calcite-gritted cooking-pots which appear during the course of the fourth century, some forms tend to disappear. A tendency appeared for bowls and mortars to develop fantastic rim-formations and a heavy use of paint on internal surfaces.

The main centres of production appear to be such wastes as the desolate Yorkshire Moors and the New Forest where groups of potters worked together perhaps for safety, each family peddling their wares as far as their pack animals would take them. In these last centuries the regional characteristics became most marked and are apt to confuse a worker unused to the area. The New Forest products did not penetrate far north of the Thames and those of the Yorkshire kilns south of the Humber. There are probably other considerable groups in other parts of the country waiting discovery and until much work is done, it is difficult to gain a comprehensive view of the industry and its products.

Third century development can be summarised as follows:—

- (1) Continental imports cease almost entirely.
- (2) All wares tended to become thicker, coarser and were harder baked.
- (3) Paint and rouletting gradually replaced barbotine as a decorative feature.



C.W.1951

Fig. 1.

- (4) The counter-sunk handle and ring-neck flagon appear towards the close of the century.
- (5) Industries became established in the New Forest and in Yorkshire, supplying neighbouring areas and causing greater local variations in shape and decorative style.

The only way the archaeologist can come to know pottery types and fabrics sufficiently well to be able to date them, is by handling large quantities and studying the changes in form throughout the period. Published accounts give only the shape of vessels; fabric and surface texture and decoration are equally important. Visits to local museums are essential to see and if possible handle specimens, especially complete vessels for most excavations yield only sherds which cannot be identified unless the whole shape of the vessel is known.

Better still the beginner should undertake a small scale excavation and make himself responsible for publishing the results. In this way he will have to handle the pottery, draw it and find parallels. The best kind of excavation is undoubtedly that of a pottery kiln as this will give him an intimate knowledge of the local products at a particular period and also add to the sum of general knowledge, an important factor in our present state of ignorance.

## APPENDIX A.

*Notes on some types of Romano-British coarse ware.* (Fig. 1).

**T**HE *Mortar*, a heavy bowl used for pulverising food with the fingers and cheese making, was used throughout the occupation and undergoes a change of shape. It was thought at one time that these changes could be used within narrow limits for dating purposes. (*Wroxeter*, I and *Margidunum Ant. J.*, xxiv, 45). Unfortunately these early hopes have not been realised and it becomes increasingly clear that some types survived a long time after new forms had come into existence and the later vessels bear local characteristics. This short summary can serve only as an introductory guide to these complexities and perhaps illustrate the dangers for the unwary.

The first type illustrated (No. 1) was in use in the middle, but tends to die out before the end, of the first century. (*Camulodunum* Type 191 and *Corfe Kiln Ant. J.*, xv, 47). Contemporary with this is the hooked rim type which remained popular until the end of the second century. Some of the early varieties have a flat-topped rim (No. 2 from *Wroxeter*) and there is a general tendency in the second century for the bead to become more prominent (Nos. 3, from *Wroxeter* and 4 from *Balmuildy*). The Claudian—Neronian examples can sometimes be distinguished by the absence of grit on the inner surface which, instead, is roughened by horizontal rilling. At the end of the second century a new type of flattened hook with a predominant bead rim appears (No. 5 S. Carlton Kiln *Ant. J.*, xxiv, 139) a forerunner of the

fourth century wall-side type, but the hook rim was by no means finished. At some time in the 3rd century the rim tended to stiffen and it was decorated with corrugations to form the well-known hammer-head type which persisted to the end of the occupation (Nos. 6 and 7 from the same kiln — Swanpool *Ant. J.*, xxvii, 65). It is not difficult to see how these tendencies gave shape to the wall-side mortar of the fourth century (No. 8, *Lydney Park*) but there were also degenerate and perverse developments of the flange into angular forms which vary with the locality (No. 9 Yorkshire *Arch. J.*, lxxxix, 235; No. 10, *New Forest*, Pl. xa; No. 11, *Gt. Casterton* 1951, Fig. 9). A feature of these late mortars, wherever they are found in Britain, is the decorative use of paint in lines and splashes over the flange.

*Flagons.* A narrow-necked vessel for holding liquids also had extensive use during the occupation but there were several different types and the changes are not so clear. Several tendencies can be noted, for example, the so-called screw-necked type in the first century had a number of equal sized rings (No. 12 from *Camulodunum*) but by the middle of the second century the top ring became predominant (No. 14 from *Balmuildy*) and the others reduced to mere grooves. Some of the mid-first century vessels also tend to be pear-shaped, whereas later examples are usually globular in shape. Late third and fourth century examples show clear distinctions. Almost all flagons are in this period colour-coated, whereas the earlier vessels were in cream or red wares. There is also a tendency to decorate the body with floral scrolls in white paint (Pl. 4b). Vessels tend to become thinner in the neck (No. 16 from *Gt. Casterton*) and the ring-necked flagon appears for the first time (No. 15 from *Gt. Casterton* 1951). The shapes of some of these vessels are much akin to the pewter types of the period. The handles, which in the first century are more angular in form (No. 13), become curved by the second century (No. 14) and the fourth century types are often fixed to the top of the rim (No. 16) but this characteristic has first century predecessors (Holt 116, *Y Cymmrodor* XLI and *C.A.J.* 38, fig. 10. No. 10).

One of the most valuable dating guides is the cooking-pot with trellis decoration. Although vessels of this shape appear in Flavian deposits, the decorative feature does not appear to have been used until the beginning of the second century. The early types are on grey and red fabrics but by the middle of the century, the pots had a dense black burnish. In the valuable deposit dated to the end of the second century from *Corbridge* (*A.A.A.*, xxviii, 186) it is stated that the wavy line on the neck and dense black fabric are characteristic only of cooking-pots of the second and third quarters of the second century (No. 17 from *Wroxeter* is a post-Hadrianic context). The vessels underwent a change in the third century, the rim became more everted and its diameter exceeded that of the girth and the angle of the



(a)



(b)

THE WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM, BIRKENHEAD.

Reproduced by kind permission of Mr. G. Stratton, A.L.A., Curator.



(a) THE WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY & MUSEUM, BIRKENHEAD.  
Photo by kind permission of Mr. G. Stratton.



(b) EXCAVATION OF THE PRIMARY BURIAL PIT AT  
YSCEIFIOG BARROW, FLINTSHIRE.  
By kind permission of The Editor of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*



EXCAVATION OF A TWO-PERIOD BARROW NEAR ODOORN, HOLLAND.

By kind permission of Prof. Van Giffen and the *Nieuwedrentsche Volksalmanak*.



(a) A FRAGMENT OF A CASTOR WARE WITH A HUNTING SCENE  
*en Barbotine* FROM RICHBOROUGH.

By kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries, London.



(b) A LATE THIRD CENTURY VESSEL  
WITH PAINTED SCROLLWORK.

By kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries, London.

trellising was flattened (No. 18 from *Wroxeter*). These late types are not so common as those of the second century and the trellising tends to vanish by the middle of the fourth century, although the form persists (*Lydney Park*, Fig. 26).

## APPENDIX B.

As emphasised in the main article, it is important that comparative material should always be sought from the nearest sites and pottery from distant parts of the country used with discretion. For the benefit of the beginner wishing to make a preliminary study of the subject, the following are a few references to dated pottery groups.

Some large scale excavations have produced pottery of several periods. Among the most useful of these are the Research Reports published by the Society of Antiquaries (obtainable from Bernard Quaritch, 11, Grafton Street, New Bond Street, London, W.1.), especially *Richborough* I, II, III and IV, *Wroxeter* I, II and III and *Leicester*, this last report is rich in illustrated pottery.

### SPECIAL GROUPS.

CLAUDIEN—NERONIAN (c.40-70 A.D.)

*Camulodunum* (Research Report No. XIV, 1947) Corfe Kiln. *Ant. J.*, xv, 42.

Belgic and early pottery at N. Ferriby, *Yorks. Ant. J.*, xviii, 262.

Claudian Well at Margidunum, *J.R.S.*, xiii, 114.

The origin of the Coritani, *Ant. J.*, xxi, 323.

FLAVIAN (c. 70-100 A.D.) Caerleon (mostly legionary wares).

*Arch. Camb.*, lxxxvii, 265.

Chester (including Holt fabrics) *Liverpool Annals*, xviii, 113 and xxiii, pls. xiv, xv, xvi.

Caerhyn, *Arch. Camb.*, 1934, 37.

Holt legionary depot, *Y Cymmrodor*, xli.

TRAJAN—HADRIAN (c. 100—140 A.D.)

Brecon, *Y Cymmrodor*, xxxvii.

*Gellygaer*, by J. Ward, 1901.

ANTONINE (c. 140—190 A.D.)

*The Roman Fort at Balmuildy* (1922) by S. N. Miller.

*The Roman Fort at Cadder* (1933) by J. Clarke.

*The Roman Fort at Old Kilpatrick* (1928) by S. N. Miller.

S. Carlton Kiln, *Lincs. Ant. J.*, xxiv, 129.

Corbridge, *A.A.3.*, viii, 174.

Verulamium (Research Report No. XI) and *Ant. J.*, xxi, 271.

SEVERAN (c. 190—220).

Corbridge, *A.A.4.*, xxviii.

*Lincoln Race Course Kiln 1950* published by the University of Nottingham.

Birdoswald, *C. and W.A.A.* n.s. xxx.

LATE THIRD CENTURY.

Verulamium, *Arch.* lxxxiv, 213.

Lockleys, Welwyn, *Ant. J.*, xviii, 339.

EARLY FOURTH CENTURY.

Swanpool Kiln, Lincoln. *Ant. J.*, xxvii, 61.

Margidunum, *J.R.S.*, xvi.

*The Roman pottery at Norton, E. Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 7\*).

*New Forest Potteries*, by Heywood Sumner, 1927.

LATE FOURTH CENTURY.

Yorkshire Signal Stations. *Arch. J.*, lxxxix, 203.

*Crambeck, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 1\*) and *Ant. J.*, xvii, 392.

*Throlam, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 3\*).

*Langton Villa, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 4\*).

*Malton, Yorks.* (Roman Malton and District Report No. 2\*).

*Gt. Casterton, Rutland*, 1951. published by the University of Nottingham.

*Lydney Park* (Research Report No. 9).

\*These Reports are obtainable from the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 10, Park Place, Leeds.

B.

**A**MONG the most striking prehistoric remains in the country are the burial mounds of the Bronze Age (c. 1800-500 B.C.) known as tumuli or barrows. Although we are confronted with an almost complete absence of the dwelling sites of this period, the distribution of its interments is extensive, and the map (Fig. 2) shows the many examples in Cheshire.

The form of these barrows varies with the locality, and with the ritual of the people who built them. The most common type is known as a bowl barrow; this is a circular mound of earth bounded by a ditch, and usually has a diameter of about forty feet, though this varies considerably. The primary burial is near the middle, often in a pit dug into the subsoil, but sometimes directly on the old soil surface. It may be enclosed in a cist of stone slabs or of timber, and covered with a pan of hard clay. In the earlier barrows (1800-1600 B.C.) the burial is usually by inhumation, but afterwards cremation becomes more prevalent.

Fortunately for dating purposes, the burials are usually accompanied by various objects, no doubt for use in future life. These take the form of pottery and personal ornaments, such as brooches. The pottery, in particular, forms a typological series datable with some accuracy, ranging from the well-fired beakers of the early Bronze Age to the crude cinerary urns which contained the cremations of the Middle Bronze Age. One of these urns, found recently at Kelsall, was illustrated on page 27 of the first number of the "CHESHIRE HISTORIAN."

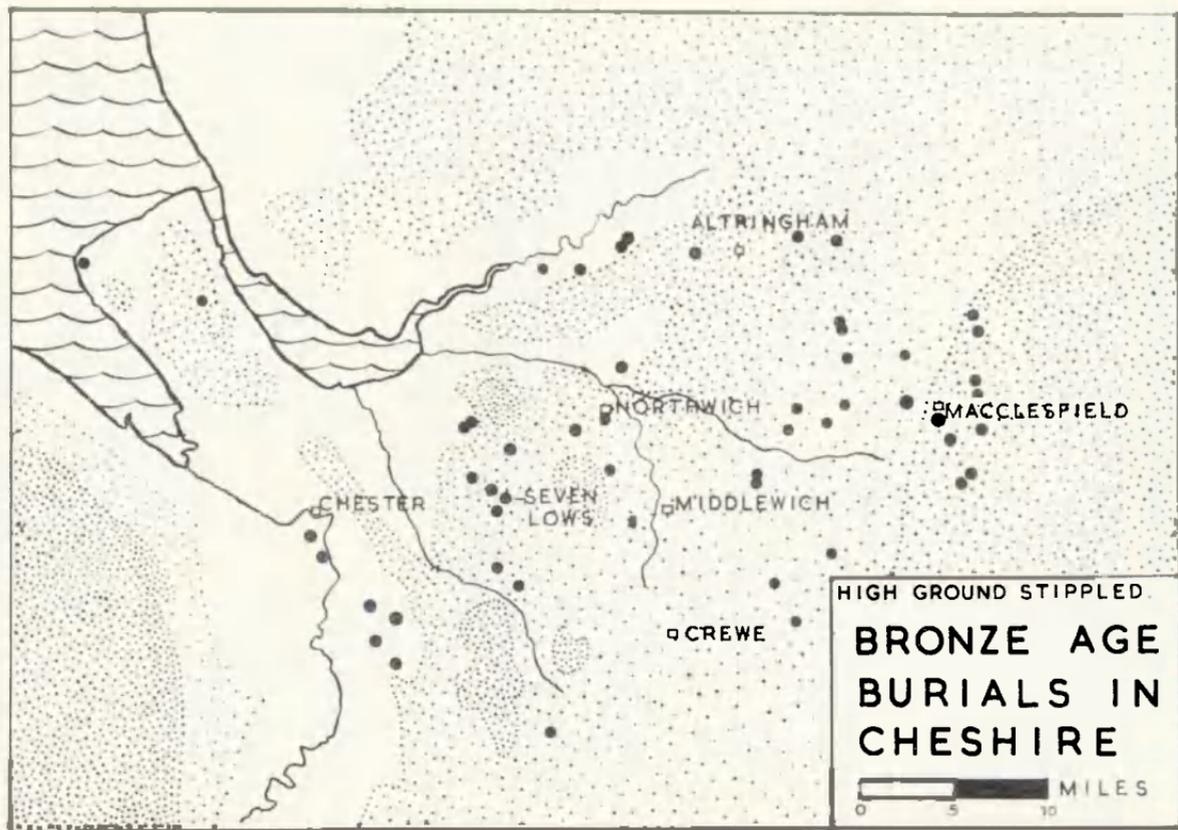


Fig. 2.

One variant of the burial mound is the bell barrow. This is identified by a distinct berm or bank between the mound itself and the ditch. Another type, the disc barrow, comprises a circular ditch with a low bank on the outside, enclosing a flat area with a small mound in the middle. This is usually found to contain a cremation.

*With the growth of interest in antiquities in the late 18th century it was natural that barrows should receive much attention. Those whose mounds had not been ploughed away were easily visible. Many lay in groups convenient for digging, such as those at Winterbourne Stoke near Stonehenge in Wiltshire, and the "Seven Barrows" at Lambourn in Berkshire (a group which numbers over thirty).*

The early barrow diggers used no finesse. Their whole effort was directed to the purpose of extracting the burial and its accompanying deposits from the middle of the mound, and they did this by sinking a vertical shaft from the top. This method was quick but inefficient, because it uncovered only a small area of the original subsoil, and often missed the primary burial by a few feet. Sometimes the burial that was recovered was a later insertion, with no relation to the actual building of the barrow. Often the directors would not appear on the site until the actual burial was reached, by which time the workmen might have shattered all the pottery. Grinsell, in "The Ancient Burial Mounds of England," describes the orgies of 18th century excavation, and quotes an account of Faussett's excavations on a site in Kent in 1759: "At the next stroke or two, part of a skull and a few vertebrae of the neck (all much decayed) were indiscriminately with the soil cast down into the pit, without the least care or search after anything. That concern, they said, they left to me and my servant at the bottom, who were nearly blinded with the sand falling on us, and in no small danger of being knocked on the head, if not absolutely buried, by the too zealous impetuosity of my honest labourers." Even at this early stage, however, Dr. Stukeley occasionally recorded the stratification of the mound. But not until the excavations of Canon Greenwell in the second half of the 19th century do we find a minute and careful record of work on barrows, and long before this the devastation was widespread. In many of our surviving barrows a cup-shaped depression in the top is evidence of the acquisitive operations of earlier diggers. Occasionally the mound was dug by driving in a tunnel from the side. This method was justifiably used on Silbury Hill, Wiltshire, which, standing 130 feet high and covering an area of five acres, is the largest prehistoric artificial mound in Europe.

With the elaboration of excavation technique in the present century, a careful method of barrow excavation has been evolved. Attention is directed not merely to the burial but to the entire mound. The aim is to expose the ground plan, while obtaining

as many sections across the mound as possible, for only these can show clearly the various stages of its construction. The ideal objective is to dig away the entire tumulus, as Sir Cyril Fox did at Ysceifiog, Flintshire, in 1925. The method he employed was to lay out two parallel lines, on either side of the barrow, marked with pegs at intervals of a foot. The pegs on one side were then joined by string with the corresponding pegs on the other, thus dividing up the barrow into slices of a foot in width. The first strip was then dug carefully down to the natural subsoil, maintaining a vertical face in front and throwing the soil behind. When this was finished the section was advanced, a foot at a time, until the primary burial pit in the middle was reached. The section near the pit was then worked forward a few feet so that the whole of the burial cist appeared in plan before it was dug out (Plate 2b). The advantage of this method was that a section was visible throughout the work, and the depth and position of finds was easily recorded.

Often, however, limitation of resources or the size of the site preclude such a complete treatment, and we have now to consider

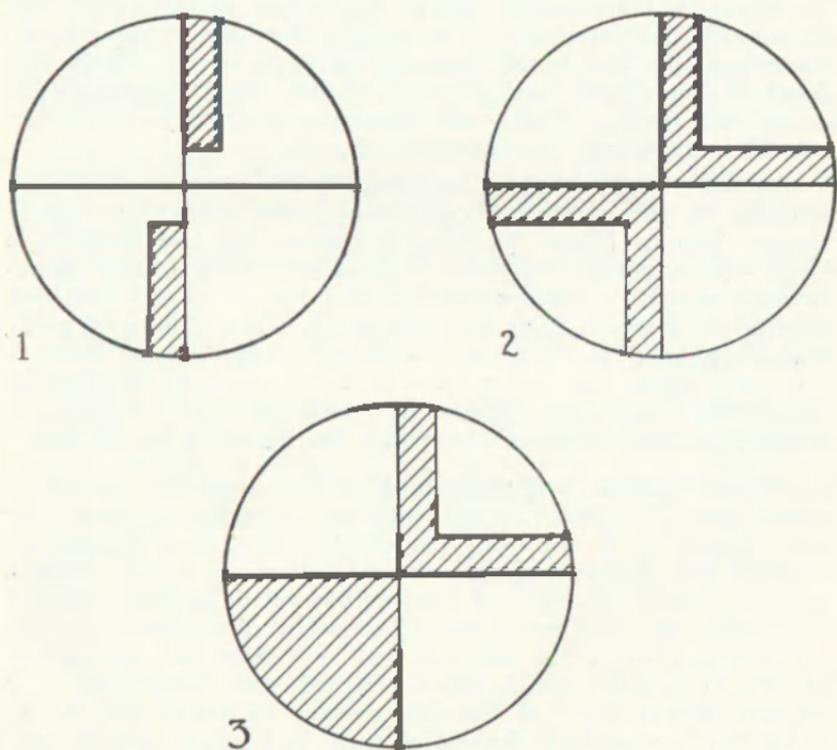


Fig. 3.

a method of excavation which gives the maximum information in a shorter time. There are several questions which the excavator must try to answer. For instance, does the barrow represent more than one period of building? Was the mound constructed as soon as the burial had been made, or after an interval? Were any secondary burials accompanied by an enlarging of the barrow, or were they simply dug into the original mound? Finally, is there any trace of timber or stone structure in the burial pit, a concentric ring of posts, or a palisade in the barrow ditch?

The minimum requirements to provide this information are at least one complete section through the middle of the mound, and the excavation of one quadrant. The first stage is to lay out two lines at right angles, intersecting at the presumed centre of the barrow. Trenches, about four feet wide, are then dug down to the subsoil on alternate sides of one line, to within a few feet of the intersection (Fig. 3i). These are then advanced slowly until they meet in the middle, by which time some part of the primary burial should be visible. The next stage is to dig similar trenches at right angles to the first pair. There will now be two complete sections across the middle of the barrow (Fig. 3ii) and the various stages of its construction should be visible, the old turf lines showing as dark streaks in the section. The area of the primary burial can then be cleared, and one quadrant of the barrow dug down to the old soil level (Fig. 3iii) to find any traces of post or or palisade settings. Finally at least one of the trenches should be extended out across the barrow ditch.

An interesting technique was used by Professor Van Giffen of Holland in the excavation of a two-period barrow at Eppie's Bergje, Odoorn (Plate 3). Having cleared the top levels of a large earth barrow, he found underneath it an earlier stone-covered mound. He continued digging down to the old soil level, leaving the stones in their original positions, on columns of earth. By this method he preserved the shape of the mound while at the same time elucidating its plan and removing the primary burial from the centre. The same procedure can be followed to retain secondary interments dug into the barrow from the top.

Modern barrow excavation is, by earlier standards, extremely meticulous. This leads to a disquieting thought; we should be over-complacent in regarding modern technique as definitive. For example soil analysis and radio-carbon dating are in their infancy, while the study of cremated remains has yet to be fully explored. Meanwhile the number of intact barrows is diminishing, and the archaeologist might be well advised to confine his excavations chiefly to mounds which are threatened with destruction from various sources. Most of the sites recently excavated did in fact belong to this category. Several of them in England and Holland were destroyed during the construction of airfields in the last war, and were previously excavated. The latest barrow group to

be dug in this country, at Stanton Harcourt in Oxfordshire, is at present threatened by gravel quarrying operations. With the extension of housing schemes and other public works, many more barrows may have to be destroyed. In such cases it devolves on the archaeologist to reach for his trowel and ensure that they do not go unrecorded.

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## Excavations 1951—Chester

**T**HE excavations organised by the Chester Archaeological Society have this year been curtailed by the serious labour shortage in the city. The two sites investigated, have been the work of volunteers under the direction of Mr. Graham Webster, the Curator of the Grosvenor Museum.

Early in the year attention was directed at the S.E. corner of the legionary fortress. The discovery of the Agricolan turf rampart on the west side, in the Linenhall Street excavation of 1948, had made it imperative to test the presence of this feature elsewhere on the known circuit of the Roman defences. Sections were cut both inside and outside the internal angle tower and the base of the turfwork was found in position. This defined the position of the Agricolan defences, as being coincident with those of Trajan at this point and it became clear that it is probable that the initial legionary fortress occupies the same area as that of the first stone period of Trajan. This has yet to be proved for the North Wall and as soon as labour is available, this outstanding point can be cleared.

It was possible to study in detail the relationship between the turfwork and the stone wall at the south east angle. Conclusions were reached that the stone wall had been inserted in the front of the turfwork but the front line of the defences had been preserved.

The second excavation was directed at the Infirmary field where it was hoped to find a Roman burial. The area investigated on the southern boundary of the field produced the foundations of a substantial Roman building, probably a military store house, but to date, there are no indications of burials in the ground explored.

# Introduction to the Records of the City of Chester

BY MARGARET J. GROOMBRIDGE, M.A.,

CITY ARCHIVIST, 1948-1951

IT is to be regretted that only at very infrequent intervals has anything been written about the records which the City of Chester possesses. The number of people who can be said to have studied the City's records closely within the last hundred years number less than a dozen, but all honour is due to these few who were prepared to penetrate the dust in which they were kept and gave to the world much of its present knowledge of the civic history of Chester. Amongst them mention must be made of Rupert Morris, Thomas Hughes, and Frank Simpson. The only misfortune is that more was not printed.

Chester probably has one of the finest collections of borough records in the country and its various classes of documents are remarkably complete. It has charters dating from the 12th century, while its court rolls begin at the end of the 13th century. It is not alone among boroughs in having records as old as this, but in comparison with many counties they are certainly older. To understand the reason for this one must realise that the county with its comparatively vast area often had changing centres for holding the Sessions of the Peace, the main source for its records, in order to suit the convenience of people living in various parts of the county. Therefore, one can hardly be surprised if the Clerk of the Peace, who was responsible for keeping these records, mislaid some in the course of centuries. The borough, on the other hand, occupied only a small compact area and so could have a permanent central meeting place where its records could be kept. In the case of Chester this was the Treasury Chamber, a room in the Pentice, a building constructed on to the south side of St. Peter's Church and used for many civic purposes. It may, however, be difficult for some to appreciate why Chester's records have been so little consulted in the past when so much has survived, but when there was no-one whose specific task it was to care for them, it was inevitable that the minimum amount of attention should be given to these documents and that research students should not be welcomed.

This state of affairs is reflected in the past history of the records. Until 1500 it was largely the charters, court rolls and a few Assembly orders that were preserved, but it would seem that about that time, a more conscientious effort was made to keep all documents which were produced in the process of administering the City and from the 16th century they began to be kept in

increasing numbers. By 1600, their accumulation must have already become something of a problem. Even in 1576, Henry Hardware, mayor in that year, had a book of parchment bought in which he caused to be entered all the records of note which he thought magistrates should know about, as he said that the originals were little looked at and that it took time and trouble to search for them. The first list of the City's records, however, was not made until 1654 when Randle Holme (Harl M.S.S. 2056) undertook this task. He was most thorough in his work and put dates on many documents which today are often used as a clue when the original has become very faded. For his work, which took a year, he was paid £20, but even this amount was not obtained without his petitioning the Assembly for recognition of his trouble and threatening to "disist from further medlinge and surrender up my trust." In 1700 the records were again found to be in a state of chaos, for it was reported in that year that "the Treasury Chamber over the Pentice of this Citty is extreamly out of repair for want of backs to several presses and boxes therein." and that "many of the ancient records of this Citty have been eaten or consumed with rats or otherwise perished." It was consequently ordered that the presses should "with all convenient speed . . . be well and substantially repaired." In the process of this work, Holme's arrangement must have in all probabîlty been upset, but it was not until 1762 that Thomas Brock, the then Town Clerk, was given 20 guineas for "his care and trouble in looking after and fixing the same (the records) in a regular manner." The list he made then survives in a Property Book of 1763 and one gains the impression that the list was compiled in a very casual manner and that Brock's chief interest was leases. Possibly the confusion in which the records have remained within recent years commenced at this period and matters were not improved when a further list was made in 1806, it is believed by the Lancaster Herald, at a time when the records were moved from the Pentice to the Exchange. As everything was done in haste it was inevitable that errors should have crept in which are only now being rectified.

In the last hundred years the City's records have been the victims of more than one incident. Several were taken to London in the 1840's for the purposes of lawsuits and some nearly lost, including the 17th century Assembly Book. They were only rescued by the Town Clerk, John Walker, in 1866 so that the list of the records made in 1853 by G. Tibbits notes their absence. This list was made within ten years of the fire which destroyed the Exchange, but unfortunately the only damage the records suffered then was from water, though that was bad enough. As a result all the documents were moved to the City Gaol, then on the site of the present Queen's School. There they remained until the Gaol was closed down in 1874 before they were returned to the new Town Hall and listed by J. C. Jeaffreson of the Historical

Manuscripts Commission in 1878. This list is the only one of the City's records that has ever been printed and though it has now been found to be not strictly accurate, it does give a comprehensive idea of the whole collection. An end to the misfortunes of the records had, however, not yet been reached. Another fire occurred in 1897 which necessitated a further arrangement and the list produced in 1906 by Mr. Fergusson Irvine as a result, is the latest one that has been made. Mr. Irvine was the first to recognise the considerable amount of misnaming that had arisen and been perpetuated owing to the speed with which the 19th century lists were made. He urged then that something should be done, but owing to the 1914-18 War no action was taken until the late Mr. C. T. Lamacraft began the enormous task of repairing the records in 1935. This chapter of incidents could probably find its parallel in other boroughs, but Chester is fortunate that so much has survived these perils. The great need at the present time is to get order out of chaos and to carry on with the repair work so that the whole collection may be made easily accessible for all to consult as soon as possible.

Perhaps it was to be expected that some of Chester's records should have become better known than others. Chief in this category are the charters, about which more has been printed than any other of the City's documents. They consist largely of grants to the Corporation, but there is also a miscellany of other deeds relating to the City's privileges. The earliest is a writ of Henry II of about 1176 protecting the trading rights of Chester in Dublin, which were later twice confirmed by King John. The first to grant civic privileges, however, were given by the Norman earls of Chester in the early 13th century, as the earldom did not come directly under the Crown till 1237 on the death of the last Norman earl. Within two years of this resumption of the earldom, a Mayor is first heard of acting as witness to various deeds, though he is not mentioned in any charter until that of 1300, when Edward I granted the City considerable privileges. Further additions and confirmations of the City's rights continued to be sought and obtained throughout the 14th and 15th centuries, but it was only in 1506 that Chester gained its charter of incorporation from Henry VII. This charter laid down the full details of the City's constitution and mentioned for the first time, in several instances, privileges which had been enjoyed by custom for over two centuries already. So much did this charter merely write down custom, that where any variances occurred the Assembly considered itself at liberty to follow custom rather than the letter of the charter and it was not until the 18th century that this decision caused any trouble. The later charters were almost word for word confirmations of that of 1506, while the spate which came under Charles II and James II were typical of those granted by these monarchs to many other boroughs throughout the country and,

as elsewhere, were the cause of much dissension.\* Charters have always been valued by boroughs and consequently always well cared for, since on them were based all their rights and liberties. Through them could be obtained freedom from outside control, the right to levy their own taxes, to manage their own affairs and to elect their own officers. These privileges the Crown was not unwilling to grant as they were a means of gaining support and money. The case, however, was different if a local noble was the overlord of a borough, as he, being more on the spot, wished to exercise more control. Indeed, the considerable expansion of Chester's civic privileges came after Henry III took back the earldom into his own hands.

On these grants made in the charters hinge all the other main groups of records which have come down to us. Those relating to trade in the City are amongst the earliest. As I have mentioned above, the City's first royal grants were connected with this subject. Chester in the Middle Ages was one of the most important west coast ports, possibly second only to Bristol. Though it never achieved the greatness of some of the east coast ports which were nearer the European continent, nevertheless even the "Liber Luciani" written in the 12th century refers to ships coming to the City from the Baltic, Gascony, Spain, as well as from Ireland and the Welsh coast. Within the City itself, trade was early regulated by the grant of a Guild Merchant made by Earl Randle III about 1200, which controlled wages and the conditions of trading. This Guild, which had a common fund, was probably the negotiating body for the early charters and one of the first it is likely that it obtained, was the restriction of trade in the City to freemen except at the time of fairs. The mere fact that fairs were held in the City is a sign of its expanding trade and growth. By 1340 it was one of the towns under the Statute of Merchants where debts incurred by merchants of various towns could be enrolled to safeguard themselves and others. Later in the same century, the City was also given admiralty rights over the Dee estuary from Chester to Hoylake and so was enabled to regulate the shipping and collect customs from ships entering the port. The Wars of the Roses and the problem of silt in the River Dee affected trade in Chester rather seriously in the 15th century, but the Customs Entry Books do not give the impression that it was an idle port. In the following century, however, much money was spent on building a new quay at Neston. It was never a great success and during the course of the 17th century, there were several other schemes put forward for the better navigation of the river but nothing was done until 1732, when a new channel known as the New Cut was constructed diverting the main stream from the Wirral to the Flintshire shore. By then Liverpool had already become a dangerous rival to Chester and though

\*For further details about charters see the author's "Guide to the Charters, Plate and Insignia of the City of Chester."

ships continued to reach the City until the '80's of the last century, it was found that more money could be made from the land reclaimed in the estuary than from the shipping. The only people who in fact benefited from the treacherous state of the river were the smugglers, whom the 18th century files of Mayors' Papers show as landing wines, spirits, tea, coffee, Irish soap and so on. on the Wirral shore.

Another large section of the City's records are those accruing from the enforcement of order. There were at one time, in the 16th century, as many as five courts of law active in the City. The oldest is the Portmote Court which may have developed from the borough court of Norman times, the laws of which were mentioned in detail in the Domesday Survey of 1086, but from then there is a gap in our knowledge of over a century and only in the early 13th century are deeds again found mentioning the Portmote Court. During the course of this century, references to it become more frequent until in 1295 — not earlier as some authorities say — is found the first court roll. This court dealt with cases of debt and trespass and in particular with cases concerning real property and land. In the early days at least it was presided over by the Mayor and Sheriffs but as this court only met once a fortnight and every suit was protracted over several sittings, many cases were very prolonged.

The other early court is the Pentice Court, which took its name from the building where it was held. This court was, until comparatively recently, considered to be the oldest of the City's borough courts, but there is no evidence to support this. The only clue is a very fragmentary roll endorsed, probably by Randle Holme in 1654—10E.1. (1282). I have queried this date as the writing more closely resembles that of Edward II's reign and the dating on the Edward II rolls is very irregular and could easily be misunderstood. I would therefore give as the earliest surviving roll of this court that of 1297. The Pentice Court was probably formed during the course of the 13th century to relieve the Portmote of its numerous cases. Hence there was no rivalry between the two even though they dealt with the same type of case. As the Pentice Court, presided over by the Sheriffs, met three times a week and so could give speedy justice it was much liked, though cases concerning land were generally heard in the Portmote as there was less likelihood of error there. Those who have read Morris will note that he says the Portmote also dealt with cases "de pace ferenda" (keeping the peace). This information he probably got from the Mayors' Books but they were Crownmote, not Portmote, cases. The City had in 1300 been allowed by Edward I to appoint their own Coroners to try all crown pleas which had up till then been heard at the Castle before royal justices, but no Crownmote Court rolls survive till 1316. The only earlier references to these pleas are found in the occasional marginal reference "Corona" on the Portmote Court rolls. As the Portmote

and Crownmote are spoken of together in Henry VII's charter of 1506, it is probable that the sittings of these two courts were held together and hence the records were frequently combined. In this charter also, two new courts were formed, the Passage Court and the Court of Quarter Sessions. The Passage Court was for trial of cases of debt and has records surviving from 1540. It was held once every six weeks and was preceded by a feast known as the Passage Breakfast, which was the cause of much trouble later, as it was alleged that so much time was spent on the feast that the court never met. The Court of Sessions of the Peace, on the other hand, came in time to oust all the other courts in importance. It did not exist as early in Chester as in other boroughs in the country owing to Chester's position as a borough in a palatinate county, and therefore not entirely under the same government as the rest of the country until Tudor times. As the Justices of the Peace were all aldermen who had been mayors and included the then mayor, it was also necessary to have a man with knowledge of the law appointed as Recorder. Provision for this was therefore made in the 1506 charter, and according to it, the Recorder was to be chosen from amongst the Aldermen of whom he was one. Until after the Restoration his choice was left entirely to the City. At first this court dealt chiefly with minor cases and seems to have been largely concerned with presentments of non-freemen for selling ale and beer in the City, but later on cases of assault, public nuisances and irregular morals came within its purview. As various Acts of Parliament increased the duties of the Justices of the Peace, so the cases before this court became more and more numerous. The administration of the Poor Law, cases of bastardy, the administering of the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and the registration of the rules of societies formed for social and economic purposes are but some of the matters with which they dealt. Thus the files of this court which survive from 1531 throw considerable light on life in the City, far more so than any other court records.

With regard to the general administration of the City, it is again to Henry VII's "Great Charter" of 1506 that one has to turn for a detailed list of the City's officers and how they were to be elected. The Mayor, who first appears as a civic official in Chester in the 13th century, seems in his early days to have held office for a considerable period, for in the first sixty years there were only four mayors. Even in the 14th and early 15th centuries it was not unusual for a Mayor to hold office for from three to four years and it was only later that it appears to have become the onerous duty which no man wished to hold for longer than one year at a time. From the 13th century at least, Chester has also had two Sheriffs appointed by the Assembly. Their duties in general resembled those of the sheriff of the county and Chester probably had its own, owing to its position as the capital of the County Palatine. This distinction it shared with other county

towns though today there are only fourteen boroughs in the country which still have their own sheriff. Both the Mayor and the Sheriff were assisted by a number of minor officials but there were other officers of importance such as the leavelookers, an office taken over from the Guild Merchant, the murengers, who superintended the repair of the walls and streets, and the treasurers, all of whom including the auditors, were chosen from among members of the Assembly. This Assembly, as the Council was then called, was composed of 24 aldermen and 40 common councilmen or councillors. It met generally on a Friday in the Common Hall of Pleas, which in the 17th century formed part of the present Music Hall Cinema, though on rare occasions meetings were held in the Pentice. It is difficult to generalise on how often the Assembly was held, as the intervals varied from a week to from two to three months. There was always a meeting on the first Friday after St. Dennis Day (October 9th), when the Mayoral election took place, but it was left to the discretion of the Mayor as to when others should be summoned. The Assembly Books, which begin in 1540 and continue down to the present day, throw considerable light not only on the civic administration of the town but also reflect the outlook of the Assembly. It reports not only the elections to vacant places in the Council and the appointment of various officials, the leasing of City property and the collection of money owing to the City, but also the more important decisions that had to be made relating to every aspect of City life, protecting the trade of the town, levying rates for the repair of the streets or walls and even laying down regulations for the prevention of the spread of plague. In the 17th century the Assembly was at the height of its power, but even then there was a tendency for membership to remain in the hands of a few families, a tendency which became more marked in the 18th century, when the Assembly became negligent of many of its duties and largely concerned itself with renewals of leases, admissions to freedom of the City, nominations to charitable trusts, and appointment of officials. Thus the growing needs of the town were left to be remedied by Acts of Parliament which authorised the establishment of committees, of which by the early 19th century there were two or three in being in Chester to deal with such problems as police, lighting, paving, and the River Dee, but it was not until 1835 with the Municipal Corporations Act that the Council was formed with its many Committees as we know it today.

It has only been possible here to touch on some of the City's records. From the beginning of the 19th century is found an enormous increase in the number of records as the number of social functions imposed on the Corporation increased, particularly in the fields of education and health. Much research work needs still to be done, however, before the information they contain is fully revealed.

# Marling in the Mouldsworth District

By S. JACKSON

**T**WO the man from the industrial areas the word 'pit' conveys the idea of a coal mine, just as to the actor it signifies the body of the theatre. In most parts of England a pond of water is . . . just a pond. But in Cheshire, where salt-mining has caused subsidence the ponds so-formed are called 'flashes,' and further west where there is no salt, but where every other field has its pond, these ponds are designated 'pits.' Originally they were marl pits which in course of time have filled with water. Before the days of artificial manure, this marl was dug and spread over the fields, and a good farmer, particularly on the light sandy soils, was keen on marling his land. For hundreds of years this custom prevailed, and as far back as the reign of Edward I in the 13th century, leases of land contained clauses obliging farmers to spread marl over their land.

The marl beds round Manley and Mouldsworth are in detached pockets, some small, some many yards in extent and in depth. The marl is a kind of clay containing calcium carbonate, potash, and phosphoric acid in varying proportions. Cases are on record where whole farms have been marled and the letting value of the land, as a consequence, has increased sometimes by as much as six-fold. As a general rule marl was spread over the fields in the immediate vicinity of the pit, but in some instances it has been carried for long distances.

Long ago marling was carried out by special gangs, generally about five in a gang, and these marlers had a most curious custom. One of the gang would be chosen as "Lord of the Pit" and he acted not only as leader but also in the capacity of treasurer. Visitors to the field in which they were working, or any passers-by, were expected to contribute something to the marlers. Holland, in his "Glossary" says that they did not ask for money and if that statement is correct, the marling custom was so well known that there was no need to ask; passers-by would know they were expected to give. But if they did not ask for money, they did the next best thing, for Dr. J. C. Bridge describes how when a passer-by made his appearance, the Lord of the Pit, carrying a marl hod on his shoulder, would approach the visitor, and usually he would receive sixpence or a shilling and in some cases even half-a-crown. Returning to the gang, the Lord of the Pit would then summon them together and they would form a ring. With great solemnity and in a loud voice the "Lord" would then announce the gift thus: "O Yes! O Yes! O Yes! This is to give notice that Mr. — has given us marlers part of a thousand pounds, and to whosoever

will do the same we will return thanks and shout." The men would then join hands and shout "Largesse! Largesse!" four times, and on the fourth shout they would give a lengthened and much louder shout letting the sound die away gradually. If the gift were sixpence the Lord would proclaim it part of a hundred pounds; if a shilling, part of a thousand pounds; and if half-a-crown should be given as long and as loud a shout as ever their breath would hold out. The Lord of the Pit kept the money until the next Saturday evening, when the gang would assemble in the nearest ale-house, drinking the healths in turn of all those who had given them money, when they once again renewed their ceremony of shouting.

Clearing the surface of a pit was known as "feying the pit," and the top layer thus cleared was termed the "fey." Spreading the marl was known as setting," and clearing out the mud and water from a pit was "ladling and slutching."

With the gradual but steady rise in wages and with the coming of comparatively cheap artificial manures, marling has gone out of fashion. There are still living a few of the older generation who can remember marl pits being worked, but some years ago I talked with one old man who had actually been a marler. He came of a marling stock, his father and his grandfather before him having been marlers. Over eighty years old at the time of our conversation, he told me he could remember how as a boy he had worked for his father who was foreman of the big government marling operation carried out at Organsdale, Houndslow, and the New and Old Pales, and for seven years at the Dark Ark Pit at Mouldsworth. He said his father had told him how many of the small pits dotted about in surrounding fields were dug out at the time of the French wars in "Boney's days." He knew all the details of the marling of over 248 acres of the Houndslow Farm and stated that nearly thirty thousand cubic yards were taken from the pit at the north corner of Castle Hill Wood.

Particularly interesting was his story of the origin of the Dark Ark Pit. When Mr. St. John Vigior Fox came to the Manley Estate, he was intrigued, one hot summer, to see on Peter Turner's farm a field where clover was growing. On this particular field the tenants of Manley Common Farm had previously never been able to grow clover.

"Then if that is marling," said he, "I'll marl the whole estate," and forthwith set to work. A large red and green marl patch was located at Dark Ark and in the next seven years or so, thousands of cubic feet of good marl were taken from this pit. When it was decided to marl Sunny Bank Farm, on Simond's Hill, a light railway track was laid down. At first the wagons were pulled by horses, but as the work proceeded these were superseded by a little engine called the "Firefly." Two enginemen worked the locomotive and several men were employed in "feying" and "getting" and "filling."

The man who gave me this information was a fine example of the hard-working, independent, self-reliant countryman of his day. I can see him now . . . his corduroy trousers tied with string at ankle and knee, his sun-browned face crowned with a well-worn picturesque old hat, his lips cleanshaven but his whiskers meeting under the point of his chin. When past his four score years he was still able to put in a full days work on a farm, and spend the long summer's evening scything his own little croft. When asked if he had ever heard any stories of the old-time marling gangs who used to elect one of their number as "Lord of the Pit," the old man beamed. "Why," said he in broad Cheshire dialect, "my grandfather was a Lord." Then he went on to tell details of his grandfather's life as a "Lord of the Pit." The old marlers were evidently a type of navy who prided themselves on their strength and their fighting ability. All their arguments and differences were settled by fierce battles and the Lord of the Pit was lord by virtue of brute force.

"You had to be careful," went on the old man, "what you said when you were working with a marling gang, or you would have to climb out and do battle on the top till one or other of you was beaten."

"And how did your grandfather get on in these fights?" I asked.

He gave me a look that plainly told me that I wouldn't have thought of asking such a question had I known his grandfather.

"Eh!" said he, "my grandfather was a big powerful man. Once Lord of the Pit he stayed Lord of the Pit and no one dare call him out." Then, ruminating a little, he struck another note with: "But they were big powerful men in those days, not like they are now, brought up on white bread." He attributed the "big powerful men" of his grandfather's day to the bread they ate, when, as he expressed it, there was "nowt taken out of it."

One of the last marling operations in the Mouldsworth district was carried out by the late Mr. Edwin Wright at Stone House Farm, now in the occupation of his son Mr. Bert Wright. At that time on the opposite side of the road, just below where the West Cheshire Water Works now stands, there was a common marl pit for use by anyone in the parish. Some seventy years ago Mr. Wright carted marl from this pit to spread on the Broad Oak Field and the Rose Meadow and we are given to understand that this was the last occasion on which marl was taken from this pit or from any pit in the district.

# Local History Scrapbooks

By WINIFRED M. COMBER

WOMEN'S Institutes are always encouraged to take an interest in the history, traditions and customs of their villages; several counties have already collected and published information obtained from members. Two years ago the Cheshire Federation inaugurated a "Village Scrap Book Competition" and issued suggestions on the kind of records required and where and how to collect them. Stress was laid on obtaining the personal memories of older people, on details of occupations and crafts as well as of interesting buildings, old documents and family traditions. The whole village could help in supplying material but the actual compiling and editing of the books must be undertaken by W.I. members only.

As a preparation for this competition, meetings held in Chester and Wilmslow were addressed by Mr. Arthur Oakes, B.A., Chairman of the Cheshire Local History Committee, Miss Anne Roper, F.S.A., Vice-Chairman of the Kent Local History Committee and Mrs. Davies, B.A. Copies of the questions issued by the Cheshire Committee to their local correspondents were also circulated to Institutes and proved most valuable. For the next twelve months those entrusted with the main responsibility for their respective Scrap Books were hard at work, visiting libraries or the Grosvenor Museum, inspecting church and parish records, interviewing anyone suspected of having a good story to tell. By the closing date of August 31st, 1951, no less than sixty-nine scrap books, many of them hand-bound, richly illustrated by sketches, photographs and maps and with letterpress amounting to several hundred pages, had been personally delivered at the W.I. County Office.

The problem of adjudication was solved by the generous offer of the Standing Conference for Local History to appoint a Panel of their members for this purpose. Final decision rested with Mr. P. D. Whitley, Chairman of the Executive, Mr. R. B. Pugh, Editor of the Victoria County Histories and the Hon. E. C. Corbett of the National Federation of Women's Institutes. They chose five prizewinners in the following order: Mobberley, Audlem, Barthomley, Lostock Gralam and Grappenhall; in addition Barrow, Nether Alderley, Prestbury, Brimstage, Great Budworth and Five Crosses were highly commended. All the Scrap Books were exhibited at the Annual Meeting of the Standing Conference in London and received high praise. The adjudicators have given their opinion that any amount of good material is available for publication. Some Institutes may decide on printed versions of their letterpress for local sale and the Cheshire County Executive is contemplating the issue of a small

volume with selected material from every scrap book. Exhibitions of the books, open to all W.I. members, are also being arranged.

In their historical researches many Institutes have traced their villages to the Domesday Book, Five Crosses has a dedication to the memory of Froda, a Saxon, the earliest known settler in this district (circa 908 A.D.); Grappenhall describes the finding of Bronze Age urns (1,000 B.C.); Delamere the discovery of a keeled dug-out Canoe on the shores of Oakmere and also the possibility of pile-dwellings of the early Iron Age having existed there; Lostock Gralam, in its history of Salt, goes back to the lagoon which once stretched from North Ireland to Staffordshire. Many pages are naturally given to churches and church registers: Barrow records rectors and curates from 1313; one was excommunicated by the Chancellor of Chester for never having taken any Services and yet continuing to hold office. In the churchwardens' accounts Barthomley found such characteristic entries as "to a poore woman that had her house burned 2s. 6d." and "For the heads of three hedgehogs 6d." Mobberley found penalties for failing to obey the order of burial in a woollen shroud and Prestbury the grant of licences to eat flesh in Lent on account of serious illness.

The search for the origin of Field Names has illuminated much local history. "Dead Man's Field" (Acton and Reaseheath) originated from an action in the Civil War, "Gambler's Field" (Audlem) was a favourite spot for cockfighting after that sport was made illegal.

Changes of occupation and the loss of village crafts are recorded in many books. Barthomley once had wheelwrights, tailors and shoemakers — one of the latter always said he lost 2s. out of every pair of shoes he made and when asked how he carried on said, "I couldn't if I did not make a lot." At Five Crosses when the Hiring Fair was held at dawn near the "Ring of Bells," orderly groups of weavers, shepherds, thatchers etc. assembled in appropriate costume carrying the tools of their trade, cowmen had a cow's tail or horns, cooks a long wooden spoon whilst a dairy-maid would be dressed in a blue gown, apron and bonnet and have a three-legged stool and bright milking pail. Poaching and salt smuggling added spice to life in Mobberley; on one occasion when foresters sought for a stolen buck the poacher's wife sat spinning and rocking a wooden cradle in which lay the buck covered over like a baby.

Old remedies include such gems as "For sore throat—apply to throat a piece of fat bacon and wrap round with a stocking that has been used the previous day" (Audlem), and "To stop bleeding hind round with cobwebs" (Minshull Vernon).

Well-illustrated nature notes form a feature of several books. There is something nostalgic in Grappenhall memories of nightingales round Undercliffe Lane Bridge and how "all kind of

transport came and blocked up the roads, from Wagonettes to Four-in-hands."

In the realm of sport pride of place goes to Audlem's account of Dr. Bellyse (b. 1783), the King of Cheshire's cock fighting fraternity. His picked birds were fed on eggs, bread, milk, butter and rhubarb. He recovered a stolen cock in Court because of its soothed behaviour in the hands of its real master and when he returned triumphantly with it to Audlem the church bells rang out.

The Bridgewater Canal has provided fascinating material for Grappenhall and Thelwall; before its construction cries of "River's rising, get your water" meant that inhabitants must rush out with buckets before flood water fouled their springs. One villager tells how her mother, determined to marry the man she loved, eloped by means of the Packet Boat on the canal.

Altogether this competition has revealed unsuspected literary and artistic gifts and stimulated local pride. Much unique information is now safely recorded and pages can be added with fresh discoveries and future happenings. Undoubtedly these scrap books will be treasured village possessions, giving infinite pleasure to readers of today and future generations.

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### CHESHIRE HISTORIAN No. 1

A very limited number of the No. 1 issue, Spring, 1951, of "THE CHESHIRE HISTORIAN" at 2s. per copy, is still available, and can be obtained on application to The General Secretary, The Cheshire Rural Community Council, 22, Newgate Street, Chester.

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The Hon. Editor (G. B. Leach, Ashton, Chester) will be pleased to receive articles, short notes and queries to be considered for inclusion in future issues. He wishes to express his thanks to all who have contributed articles or in any way helped him in his task, also to the Manchester University Press, the Manchester Public Library and the Chetham Society for the use of the cover block.

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CORRECTION. "The Cheshire Historian" No. 1, p. 38, eighth line of last paragraph. RICE should read PRICE.

## THE CHESHIRE CAT

THE problem of the Cheshire Cat is always likely to raise some interesting and imaginative speculations and suggestions. Mr. Oakes, in the last number, brought forward the idea that it originated from the heraldic bearing of the Norman Earls of Chester through the medium of the inn sign. It is true that lions and leopards often degenerate into cats but this is by no means peculiar to Cheshire. There is a "Red Cat" as far away as the Hague in Holland, while in England there are, or were, several similar creatures such as "The Cat" at Egremont, Cumberland, "The Black Cat" at Lancaster, and the famous "Cat and Lion" at Stockport. (Larboard and Hotten "*History of the Signboard*," 3rd ed., p. 197). One must seek an explanation more closely related to the county.

The simile of the grinning cat can be traced back to the late Middle Ages where the adjective was used in a more horrific sense than it is today and there was the implication that the person or creature referred to was showing his teeth rather than demonstrating a broad humorous appreciation. Shakespeare illustrates this point in Richard II (Act II, Scene II).—

" . . . . . , for within the hollow crown  
That rounds the mortal temples of a king  
Keeps Death his count and there the antic sits  
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp."

It would be interesting and helpful to know just when the phrase was applied to the cats of Cheshire. The earliest reference noted by the writer is by Wolcott, (1770-1819) (*A New English Dictionary*)—

"Lo! like a Cheshire Cat our court will grin."

Perhaps readers can supply other and earlier examples.

The question concerning the origin of the phrase has been asked several times (*N & Q 1850, ii, 377 and Cheshire N & Q 1884, iv, 172*) but no satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming. It was stated in 1850, presumably by an inhabitant of Chester that—"some years since, Cheshire cheeses were sold in this town moulded into the shape of a cat, bristles being inserted to represent the whiskers." (*N & Q 1850, ii, 412*). This was suggested as the origin of the saying but it seems more likely that these cheeses were made, as a novelty, to represent the already notorious Cheshire Cat.

Curiously enough, another explanation based on cheeses has been made to the writer by an old inhabitant of Chester. He says that about fifty years ago there was a small cheese known as a "cat" and its size caused a shrinkage greater in proportion to surface area than in the larger cheeses. In consequence the cheese cloth became very wrinkled and gave the appearance of a grinning cat. This might have been possible if the cheese were round in shape like those still made in Holland. Unfortunately, inquiries in the cheese trade have so far failed to produce support for this interesting suggestion — it is now up to our readers. G.W.

## Book Reviews

THE Grosvenor Museum and in particular its Curator, Mr. Graham Webster, are to be congratulated on having produced at the remarkably low price of one and six, "A Short Guide to the Roman Inscriptions and Sculptured Stones in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester." Its appearance fills a gap of long standing, for little has appeared in print to assist the student when visiting the Museum. Indeed until the great array of inscribed and sculptured stones had been sorted and better arranged, there was little to tempt the visitor to stay for long in the former gloomy, overcrowded gallery, even though Chester possesses one of the best collections of Roman material in the country. The new guide accompanies the great transformation which has taken place under Mr. Webster, notably during the past twelve months. The title is quite clear and the reader must not expect to find a printed catalogue of the Museum exhibits. It is in fact a much more useful and important document for the visitor because it presents the study of the Chester material against the background of its period. In several short, clearly described sections, Mr. Webster deals with the composition and organisation of the Roman Army and the dispositions of its units in Britain. A map of considerable interest shows the birthplaces of the legionaries of the Chester garrison. A further section deals with the growth and significance of Roman Chester. There follows an account of the different kinds of Inscriptions one might expect to find in Britain, such as altars, building dedications, tombstones, stamps and other official proprietary marks and *graffiti*. The last section gives an account of some thirty-three of the important inscriptions and sculptured stones in the Museum prefaced by a well tabulated list of abbreviations. The Guide is admirably illustrated with photographs and had it been twice the price it would have remained an outstanding bargain.

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MISS MARGARET GROOMBRIDGE the Chester City Archivist has written a "Guide to Charters, Plate and Insignia of the City of Chester" and it will certainly take its place amongst the guides which will remain of permanent value. Both price (1/6) and cover are attractive although the latter gives little indication of the nature of the contents to the uninitiated. Numerous charters and other manuscripts ranging from the 12th to the 19th century are listed with short descriptions, eight of them being illustrated in whole or in part. Part two is also illustrated and deals with the coats of arms, seals and civic insignia of the City, together with a short (too short) description of the City plate. It is in this section that greater detail would have been welcome for it is unfortunate that in an otherwise admirable guide no record is given of assay

marks on the silver. There are very few adverse criticisms to be made and the most striking are typographical. It is for instance unfortunate that the 17th century Done document (73) should have been post dated to the first World War.\*

\*This error has been corrected in the second edition now published.

NOTE. An Exhibition of the City Charters and Plate in the Town Hall will be open to the public every Thursday afternoon from 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.—Ed.

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The Journal of the Chester and North Wales Architectural, Archaeological and Historic Society, has appeared in a new uniform and in step with the recent changes in format which have taken place in her neighbour the *Archaeologia Cambrensis* and her even older parent, the *Antiquaries Journal*.

Volume 38, admirably edited by Mr. P. H. Lawson, F.S.A., and printed by G. R. Griffith of Chester contains four articles of outstanding interest, though strangely biased towards the city of Chester. Indeed it is a considerable time since North Wales appeared in the pages of the journal, an omission which the Editor might do well to rectify in future volumes.

The four articles which appear are the outcome of careful and original research and are put together by persons of authority. With the generous support of the Council of British Archaeology, the report on the Excavations in Goss Street, Chester, two years ago by Prof. Ian Richmond and Graham Webster, has put on record the discovery of the origin and first developments of the Roman *principia* and established beyond further question the fact that the first *principia* and indeed the first Chester fortress was a wooden structure erected about the eighth decade of the first century and was not superseded by stone buildings until the first half of the 2nd century.

Graham Webster in the second article throws interesting light upon Chester in the Dark Ages and helps by inference to indicate in part why some five hundred years of history has left hardly any mark upon the buried foundations of our city. He makes no attempt to solve the many problems still attached to Saxon Chester but collates valuable material which one day may contribute to a solution of them. It is perhaps unfortunate that the find, whose preservation is due to Mr. Webster, of the Saxon silver coins etc., recently made near the Castle occurred too late to appear as an appendix to this account, it may do so in some future journal.

Archdeacon Burne continues his careful study of some of the most critical years of the history of the Church in Chester, the Marian period and the Elizabethan settlement as it affected the Cathedral and adds a valuable note upon the rape of the Cathedral lands. The very copious references to the Cathedral accounts, the main source of his material, add considerable interest and authority to an already detailed paper.

The final account is that by the former Vicar of Holy Trinity, dealing with the surviving transcriptions of the Church wardens accounts of his city church from 1532-1633, which span the important year of change, decay and restoration, providing us with important documentary evidence for the way in which state decrees influenced individual parishes in particular areas.

The volume which is wholly satisfactory and well illustrated, must please every member and should be a great incentive towards adding new members to a very excellent Society.

MAURICE H. RIDGWAY.

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The Effigy and Tomb of Sir Hugh Calveley, by C. Blair, B.A. No. 4. THE BUNBURY PAPERS, edited by Maurice H. Ridgway, Bunbury.

The high standard of these papers has been well maintained in this number. Mr. Blair has not only written a very full account of the finest mediaeval monument in Cheshire but has also given us a useful introduction to military equipment of the late 14th century. The account is illustrated with three views of the tomb and the Stothard drawings. A full-length modern view of the effigy from above would have improved the paper.

GRAHAM WEBSTER.

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CESHIRE MATERIAL CULLED FROM THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE LANCS. AND CESHIRE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, 1949, vol. lxi.

CESHIRE BELLS, pt. ii, J. W. Clarke.

THE PRE-REFORMATION EFFIGIES OF CESHIRE, pt. ii, by C. Blair, B.A.

THE CESHIRE ACTIVITIES OF MATTHEW BOULTON AND JAMES WATT OF SOHO, NEAR BIRMINGHAM. 1776-1817. by W. H. Chaloner, M.A., Ph.D.

ASSESSED TAXATION IN ASHTON ON MERSEY IN 1820-21, by E. Ogden, B.A., and G. H. Tupling, M.A., Ph.D.

PROCEEDING.

WHEELED STOCKS, by Dr. J. T. D'Ewart.

COMMUNICATIONS.

A SAXON MONEYER'S HOARD AT CHESTER, by A. J. Hawkes, F.S.A.

RECENT FINDS IN THE WIRRAL PENINSULA, by P. Culverwell Brown, M.A., F.S.A.

# Useful Aids for the Local Historian

REVIEWED BY PROFESSOR R. F. TREHARNE, M.A., Ph.D.

(Professor of History, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth:  
Editor of HISTORY, the Journal of the Historical Association).

**I**N pursuit of its primary purpose, the fostering of the study of local history as part of the common heritage of all, the Standing Conference for Local History has planned its LOCAL HISTORY SERIES of brief, simple and cheap pamphlets, compiled with the help of some of our best scholars and bibliographers, and designed to assist anyone interested in local history, whether he merely wants to know the best book on his own locality or proposes to write the history of his parish or town or to study any other of the many varied aspects of local history. Despite present difficulties publication has been rapid, and already the series is becoming increasingly valuable as each new title reveals another element in the whole design. Ordinary readers for pleasure or personal interest, beginners in the art of writing local history anxious to make the best use of limited time and needing to discover quickly the best books and the likeliest sources of unpublished material, adult classes studying the technique of local history under the guidance of trained tutors, and even historians of experience and standing, will all find help increasingly from this steadily developing plan.

A PLAN FOR THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY (No. 1, April 1949, 11 pp., 6d.) describes the aims of the Standing Conference and its project of promoting the formation of County Committees to co-ordinate the efforts of all organisations working on or interested in the study of any aspect of local history, and shows how such committees can advance both the study and the writing of local history. THE COMPILATION OF COUNTY BIBLIOGRAPHIES (No. 2, December 1948, 8 pp., 6d.) sets out a simple but comprehensive outline plan for listing all printed books and articles which might be used for the study of the history of any country, town or village. A SELECTION OF BOOKS ON ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY (No. 3, February 1949, 16 pp., 9d.) the most useful title so far, offers a carefully chosen list of books which would help any student of local history, and would prove especially useful for beginners working either individually or in groups. Part I is a short list of general biographies, reference books, and books on research technique in local history generally: part II lists, county by county anything from four to fifteen of the most important books on each county and its principal towns. A DIRECTORY OF AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF LOCAL HISTORIANS (No. 4, March 1950, 11 pp., 6d.) is a helpful and practical list of such national organisations as are wholly or partly engaged in

local history work, government departments and other bodies working in fields related to local history, local government associations, county local history committees, and county archivists. NOTES ON THE RECORDING OF LOCAL HISTORY (No. 5, December 1950, 8 pp., 6d.) makes generally available a useful practical device which has been successfully employed in Berkshire, a model record form, with notes for use, for recording local history data. LOCAL HISTORY EXHIBITIONS (No. 6, March 1951, 12 pp., 9d.) is a strictly practical account of what can be attempted and achieved by a village history exhibition, and how it can best be organised: based on much direct experience, it should enable enthusiastic organisers to tap resources and to avoid pitfalls which they might not have imagined to exist until they read this leaflet.

The Conference has also in hand pamphlets on HOW TO WRITE A PARISH GUIDE (a much-needed lead in a popular field), an illustrated pamphlet on ROYAL ARMS IN CHURCHES, and others on THE LOCAL HISTORIAN AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY (the first of a sub-series dealing separately with each century), on METHODS OF TEACHING LOCAL HISTORY IN SCHOOLS, and on THE RECOGNITION AND REPORTING OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES (prepared jointly with the Council for British Archaeology). The authority with which each pamphlet is written or compiled, the simplicity of both language and plan, and the low price of the pamphlets should make them very useful in the spreading of sound standards over a wide field in the study of local history.

Copies of any of the above pamphlets and information about the wider services of the Standing Conference, may be obtained from the Secretary, The Standing Conference for Local History, 26, Bedford Square, London W.C.1.



LIST OF NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF SECRETARIES OF SOCIETIES.

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The Cheshire Rural Community Council, 22, Newgate Street, Chester:

General Secretary, N. G. Cottam.

The Editor, Cheshire Historian:

G. B. Leach, Ashton, Chester.

The Standing Conference of Local History:

G. Dando, 26, Bedford Square, London, W.C.1.

The Council for British Archaeology:

74, Onslow Gardens, London, S.W.7.

Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings:

Local Correspondent. The Curator, Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

Macclesfield and District Field Club:

A. J. Wood, 3, Brooklands Avenue, Macclesfield.

The Chester and N. Wales Architectural, Archaeological and Historical Society:

H. C. Wickham, 13, St. John Street, Chester.

The County Archivist, Cheshire Record Office:

Major F. G. C. Rowe, The Castle, Chester.

The City Archivist, Chester:

The Town Hall, Chester.

The Grosvenor Museum, Chester:

Graham Webster, Curator.

Workers' Educational Association:

Frank Garstang, 62, Hope Street, Liverpool.

The Bromborough Society:

Mrs. A. Anderson, 17, Rake Lane, Bromborough.

Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society:

H. Clegg, 10, Granary Lane, Worsley, Nr. Manchester.

Liverpool Geological Society:

J. C. Harper, Geological Dept., The University, Liverpool, 3.

Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire:

R. Sharpe France, Lancashire Record Office, County Hall, Preston.

Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire:

G. Chandler, 202, Pitville Avenue, Liverpool 18.

Ancient Monuments Society:

L. M. Angus-Butterworth, Ashton New Hall, Ashton-on-Mersey, Cheshire.

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