

Excavations at Chester.
Medieval and Post-Medieval
Development within the
Northern and Eastern Suburbs
to c. 1900

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ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-880-0

ISBN 978-1-78969-881-7 (e-Pdf)

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Acknowledgements

Particular thanks are due to Mark Leah, Development Management Archaeologist and Team Leader, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service, Chester West and Chester Council, for his invaluable assistance with the formulation of this volume overall. Particular credit must go also to Mike Morris who, in his role as Chester City Archaeologist over many years, did so much to establish and reinforce the current approach to archaeology in Chester, with its emphasis on preservation *in situ*.

The projects summarised and discussed here involved several archaeological contracting organisations, their staff and volunteers both past and present, without whom this volume could not have been completed. These include: Bluestone Archaeology; Earthworks Archaeological Services; Gifford and Partners; L-P Archaeology; SLR Global Environmental Solutions; the former University of Manchester Archaeology Unit and Wardell Armstrong Archaeology. These are all acknowledged here along with their respective clients, developers and other organisations who funded the individual projects.

Thanks are due to the specialists for their input into the wider site reports, including Denise Druce (environmental remains for Witter Place) and Naomi Sykes (animal remains for Witter place and 20 City Road) and to Vanessa Clarke for information regarding the excavations at Witter Place. The reports written and work undertaken by these individuals has by necessity been brought up-to-date following the subsequent examination of the project archives, unpublished 'grey literature' reports and other hitherto unpublished material to which they relate. Any omissions, inconsistencies or errors in editing lie, however, with the author of this current volume.

Publication of this volume was funded by the Archaeological Planning Advisory Service, a shared service between Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cheshire East Council, which sits within Total Environment.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Summary

The archaeological excavations and investigations summarised in this volume were all situated within the historic suburbs to the north and east of the medieval and later City of Chester (Figure 1). The sites investigated within the northern suburbs were clustered around Chester's canal basin at Tower Wharf and at Trafford Street in the Newtown area, whilst those to the east lay north of Foregate Street and The Bars at Seller Street

and City Road. The investigations were carried out by a number of archaeological contractors in response to planning applications associated with the considerable urban redevelopment of these areas of Chester during the first two decades of the current millennium.

Fortunately, owing to the implementation of new planning guidance from 1990 onwards (Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 in 1990, Planning Policy Statement 5 from 2010, and the National Planning

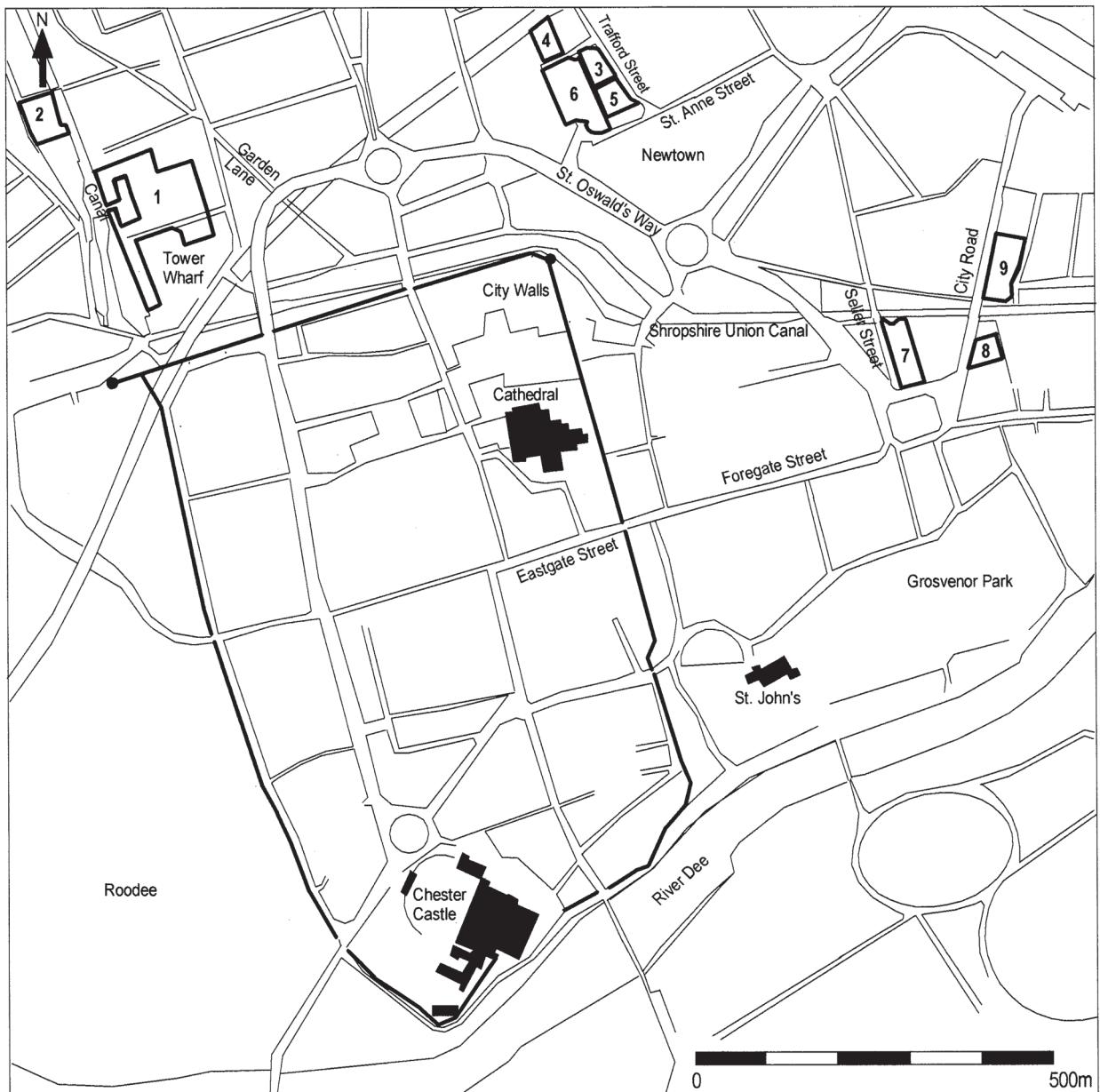


Figure 1 Location of the sites investigated

Policy Framework from 2012 and revised in 2018), an outcome of this widespread urban redevelopment has been the completion of numerous developer-funded archaeological interventions; from watching briefs to field evaluation and, in certain instances, open-area excavations. Unfortunately, however, the resulting information has often remained confined to the pages of numerous unpublished ‘grey literature’ reports. Two notable exceptions being the recently published results from a post-medieval stone quarry located at Gorse Stacks, to the north of the City (Cuttler *et al.* 2012), and a 19th-century tannery excavated at Boughton, within Chester’s eastern suburbs (Powell *et al.* 2018). The overall lack of publication, especially accessible publication, regarding the excavated archaeology of Chester’s post-medieval and industrial past to c.1900 has been highlighted recently by Nevell (2018).

This current volume attempts, therefore, to bring together the results of the sites investigated within a single, and importantly, readily accessible volume. Taken together, the results presented here demonstrate the lack of any substantial development at the sites investigated throughout the medieval and early post-medieval periods. Evidence for Chester’s involvement during the Civil War of the mid-17th century and its impact upon the landscape was encountered at two of the sites. However, it is the subsequent urban expansion during the early industrial age that is without doubt the common theme of the sites summarised here. There is, therefore, a bias towards the archaeology of the period from c. 1750 to c. 1900, during which time the canal network, and later, the railway network, arrived

at Chester. Although outside of the main scope of this volume, where evidence for activity during the Roman period was encountered within the sites investigated this has been summarised briefly.

The sites

To the north of the City the sites investigated (Figure 1, Table 1) were located at Tower Wharf and Taylor’s Boatyard (2007–2016) and at Trafford Street, Newtown (2015–2018). The sites at Tower Wharf and Taylor’s Boatyard were investigated piecemeal over more than a decade and by several archaeological contracting organisations. The results from these sites, effectively six areas of investigation, have been amalgamated here into a single chapter (Chapter 2). Similarly, the four sites investigated around the Trafford Street area of Newtown have been amalgamated into a single chapter (Chapter 3).

The sites investigated to the east of the City (Figure 1, Table 1) were located at Witter Place, Seller Street (Chapter 4) and at City Road. The two sites at City Road have been amalgamated into a single chapter (Chapter 5).

The archives from all of these sites have either been deposited at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, or are currently being prepared for deposition.

An attempt has been made throughout this volume to standardise, where possible, the terminology and conventions adopted by the various archaeological

Table 1 Gazetteer of sites investigated

Site number	Site	Year/s	Type of investigations/s	Chapter
1	Tower Wharf, Raymond Street	2007–16	Evaluation trenches, area excavations, watching briefs	2
2	Taylor’s Boatyard, Upper Cambrian Road	2013	Evaluation trenches, strip and map record, watching brief	2
3	Newtown Bakery, Trafford Street, Newtown	2015	Evaluation trenches and limited area excavation	3
4	Oakbase House, Trafford Street, Newtown	2017	Evaluation trenching	3
5	Land off Trafford Street, Newtown	2018	Evaluation trenching	3
6	Northgate Fire Station, Newtown	2018	Evaluation trenching	3
7	Witter Place, Seller Street	2002	Evaluation trenches, strip and map record, limited area excavation	4
8	20 City Road	2007–8	Evaluation trenches and limited area excavation	5
9	City House, City Road	2013 and 2018	Evaluation trenches and limited area excavation	5

contracting organisations within their unpublished 'grey literature' reports that form the basis of the sites summarised here. Throughout, it has been necessary to limit the number of context numbers referred to within the text in order to avoid duplication and confusion. Similarly, not all context numbers have been included on the accompanying figures. Reports on finds, animal

remains, environmental remains and other specialist fields have been limited to those that are particularly pertinent to the interpretation and, where appropriate, dating of the sites investigated. Graphical conventions used throughout this volume are summarised below (Figure 2).












	site area: hatched excavated area: black		stone surface
	limit of excavation		pits and post holes: minor
	wall		pits: major
	earlier wall		pits: stone-lined
	wall conjectured	B1	Building 1
	ditch: major	fp	fireplace
	ditch/drain: minor		

Figure 2 Graphical conventions used in this volume