

## Mercia

### CHESHIRE

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#### Alderley Edge



##### Survey

The second full year of the Leverhulme-funded Landscape Project, a collaborative undertaking with the Manchester Museum, saw the completion of the main objectives of the survey, of reports on many of the areas of study and a start made on the preparation of the results for scholarly publication. From the point of view of the Trust's management, the detailed GIS-based archaeological survey of this complex and extensive ancient landscape, is of the greatest value. Many previously unknown mine workings,



*Alderley Edge Exhibition, Manchester Museum.*

*Interactive mapping display of the Landscape Project.*

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*Alderley Edge Exhibition, Manchester Museum. Part of the display on mining.*

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hollow-ways, early field systems and other earthworks have been charted, and work is continuing on the interpretation, the Conservation Plan and detailed recording ahead of erosion repairs on the ground at this most heavily visited site.

A general book to be produced by the Trust in association with Manchester University Press will contain sections on the geology, natural history, palaeoenvironment, archaeology, mining, buildings, social history, legend and conservation. The detailed reports on the excavations, experimental archaeology and finds are due to be published by BAR.

##### Exhibition

Much of the year was taken up with preparations for the Alderley Edge Exhibition, sponsored by Zeneca. Rooms to the north of the Museum's entrance foyer accommodated displays on natural history, architecture and social history, ending in a sound and light show diorama featuring the wells, legend and costume. Elsewhere, displays concentrated on the geology, archaeology and early mining, leading to areas dealing with the Stanley family and an audio show developed thematically from recollections gathered by the Project's sound archivist. School groups took part in the 'Wizard Quiz', challenging pupils to answer puzzles set by the displays.

The exhibition's success was owed entirely to an enormous collective effort by staff and volunteers too numerous to thank individually here. It benefited from material loaned by the Derbyshire Caving Club and others, all coordinated by the Museum's Director and Keeper of Archaeology. Alan Garner wrote a booklet specially for the event, the University vice-Chancellor lent his support, and the exhibition was opened by Lord Stanley on 12 October. The exhibition closed on 30 January with vigorous performances of the

Alderley Mummer's play as reconstructed from the collected memories of the few survivors of this oral tradition.

The exhibition panels have been well made so that they are suitable for permanent relocation at the visitor room at the property. In the meantime the community continues to be involved through a regular project newsletter and through a series of lectures. Administered by the University of Manchester's Centre for Continuing Education, these proved wildly popular, with packed audiences in the assembly hall at St. Hilary's School, Alderley Edge.

#### Dunham Massey



##### Parks survey

Following the completion of the non-intensive archaeological survey of the Estate, detailed survey of both Old and New Parks at Dunham was initiated. In this case digital topographical mapping commissioned from Sitec Survey Services, forms the basis for layers of other map-based data including archaeology, botany and the utilities. Both Dr John Wilcock of Staffordshire University and Bradford University archaeological sciences student Cathryn Bowden, who had lately served a placement with the Trust at Cirencester, employed Irwin Scollar's programme, originally designed for the rectification of air photographs, on the John Harris 'bird's eye views' of the park. These aerial obliques, painted in 1750, depict the Old Park *ne plus ultra*. Would it be possible, we wondered, to 'drape' the rectified Harris over the digital maps and relocate the bases of some six or seven monuments known to have been lost in c1780? To do so would aid immeasurably the plan for restoration of this precious landscape, since it is the monuments, an assortment of whitened obelisks, urns and classical or Biblical figures on plinths, which form the cardinal points of the various avenues and rides that criss-crossed the park.

There were two facets to the archaeological research: a 'broad-brush' earthwork survey based upon new detailed topographical mapping and, during the week 22-7 March, some focussed excavation assisted by working holiday volunteers, at sites of four of the monuments. This was preceded by geophysical prospection undertaken by teams from the South Trafford Archaeological Group and the University of Bradford under Dr Armin Schmidt. In the event, only two of the sites investigated produced evidence for monuments. These were



Base of monument in the South Avenue within the Old Park, Dunham Massey.

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Early formal landscape features in the Main Drive at Dunham, during excavation.

JEREMY MILLN/NATIONAL TRUST

Bollington Avenue and South Avenue and in both case massive footings were encountered. Brick and moulded stone, apparently from the early seventeenth-century house, were used in deep footings sufficient to support huge figures, perhaps those of Cain, Able or Hercules, known to have been sold to a plumber in 1781.

### Mobberley Priory

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#### Geophysics

Mobberley possessed a priory for Augustinian canons founded by Patrick de Mobberley in c1206. However, there were irregularities concerning the endowments and it appears to have been abandoned by 1250, leaving perhaps but the faintest earthworks in the Trust's pasture land between the church and the manor house. In view of the use of this ground for burials, survey seemed prudent. Fluxgate Magnetometry produced a recognisable, if irregular, row of rectangular anomalies, measuring approx. 12m by 6m, which from its form and relative position, may be the priory chapel.

The magnetic susceptibility survey found evidence of a large enclosure. This is trapezoidal in shape, with an entrance to the north-east which apparently underlies the rectangular structures. Its magnetic signature suggests that it is not a stone structure, but is ditched; its form suggests a Romano-British origin.

## SHROPSHIRE

### Attingham

M Pm 

#### Church survey

The survey of Atcham, the last of a series of churches with close associations with the Trust's estates in Shropshire, was completed. These were carried out at odd weekends over a period of years beginning with Young Archaeologists' Club volunteers and members of the Family History Society. Genealogical records have now been compiled; the starting point being annotated lists

of the monuments of each, together with their transcriptions. Reports of each of the churches covered in the survey – Benthall, Quatt, Morville and Atcham – are lodged with the local studies library.

From the Family History Society came interest and expertise in transcription and documentation; from the National Trust, the commitment to conservation management. For the latter, detailed topographical mapping with all monuments identified to scale, condition assessments and photographic surveys, were compiled. This collaborative work was always rewarding. Recording for the first time the early Coalbrookdale cast iron slabs at Benthall or the challenging Latin of the Wolryche family tomb chests at Quatt, produces all the thrill of discovery and interpretation of a formal excavation as well as plenty of friends old and new.

### Home Farm

M Pm 

The clearance of inconvenient villages from the path of landscape improvers in the eighteenth century is a familiar story. For Noel Hill, shortly to become the first Lord Berwick, the obstruction in the 1780s was the Domesday village of Berwick Maviston, which was ruthlessly removed with the single exception of an old house and a barn or two which became his Home Farm. The house is one of those which conceal its secrets well. It is externally all brick, but strangely lofty in proportion and, on inspection, by no means built entirely of one kind of brick, for inside, it is a framed structure that from about 1650 had been progressively encapsulated. A frame that had presumably already by 1650 begun to fail is quite likely to be ancient and indeed it is one of those rare houses with a crown post roof.

It seemed too good to resist so, thanks to Dan Miles, the Oxford Dendrochronologist, the timber was dated. It is 1385-6, a nice addition to the fifteen other Shropshire crown posts which have produced dates ranging between 1287 and 1431. The Trust's tenant has imaginatively combined efficient farming with tradition, rare breeds and historical interpretation and Home Farm is a particularly popular visit for local school parties. The date adds pleasingly to the story.