Chapel Archaeology CIC

Archaeological Desktop Study

Wrexham Road Development Area

For Community Interest

April, 2017

Archaeological Desktop Study

Wrexham Road Development Area

Client	Community benefit/interest
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Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. Area information 1

3. Sources 1
   3.1 Cartographic Data 1
   3.2 Aerial Images 4
   3.3 LiDAR Data 5
   3.4 Historic Environment Record 6
   3.5 Documentary Sources 6

4. Interpretation 7
   4.1 Tithe Map 7
   4.2 LiDAR Data 8
   4.3 Roman Activity 11

5. Conclusions 12

6. References 13

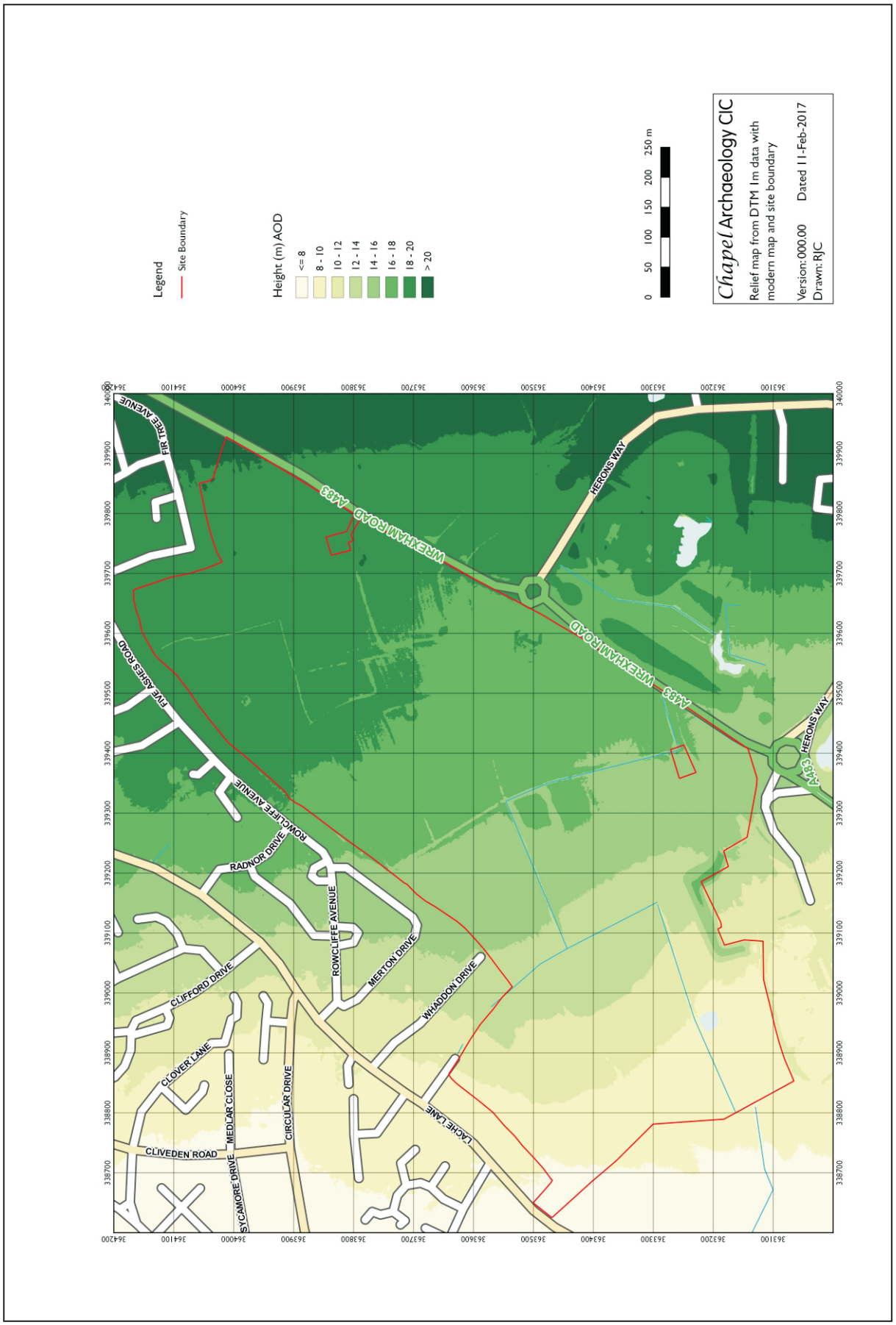


Figure 1: Relief Map with Site Boundary

1. Introduction

As part of its community support brief, Chapel Archaeology CIC (CA) has undertaken a desktop study of land adjoining the Wrexham Road in Chester scheduled to be developed into a major housing area[1]. This report will be distributed to interested local groups on a *pro bono* basis.

2. Area information

The Development Brief[2] contains all the proposals at the time of writing, and clearly identifies the area concerned. Outlined on most of the figures in this report, it lies between the Wrexham Road and Lache Lane. Originally classified as Green Belt, in 2013, Cheshire West and Chester Council proposed to remove it from this classification and allow residential development. This change was agreed and approved in late 2014.

The current land use is agricultural, with a mixture of arable and pasture, a pattern which seems to have existed for a number of centuries. The site is sensibly flat from north–west to south–east but falls over 10m from north–east to south–west as shown in Figure 1. To show only the land surface itself, this image of LiDAR information uses Digital Terrain Model (DTM) data; see Section 3.3 for more details.

The Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation[3] places the site in an area of 'Medieval Townfields' with 'documentary evidence of open arable fields'. The Scheduled Ancient Monument of the moated enclosure strongly suggests the previous existence of domestic buildings but documentary evidence of such buildings remains elusive.

3. Sources

We have reviewed a number of (semi-)public sources including:

- Old maps (including tithe maps) and aerial photographs from the Cheshire Archive and Local Studies (CALS)[4]
- Old maps from the National Library of Scotland[5]
- Current aerial images from Bing[6] and Google[7]
- Current Ordnance Survey maps[8]
- Historic England resources[9]
- Public LiDAR data[10]

3.1 Cartographic Data

The earliest cartographic source that shows the relevant part of the Wrexham Road is Burdett's map of 1777[4]. Unfortunately, it shows no detail in the study area other than the original route of the northern kilometre or so of the Wrexham Road. This is prior to the opening of the Grosvenor Bridge in 1833. Previous work by CA has found the Burdett map to be inaccurate and attempts to display it in conjunction with modern maps serve little purpose. Moving forward in time, we have Greenwood's map of 1819[4]. As with the Burdett map, Greenwood's map is not sufficiently accurate to be shown with a modern map.

Providing much more detail and accuracy is the Tithe Map[4] of the township of Marlston-cum-Lache from 1845. This map is reasonably accurate (compared with modern OS maps) and provides the details of both field ownership and tenancy in the study area. See Figure 2. Although shown on this plot, one of the original fields now part of the development area is part of the township of Chester, St Mary On The Hill (Plot Ref 105). Twenty-seven plots from this period form the development area, as detailed in Table 1 below.

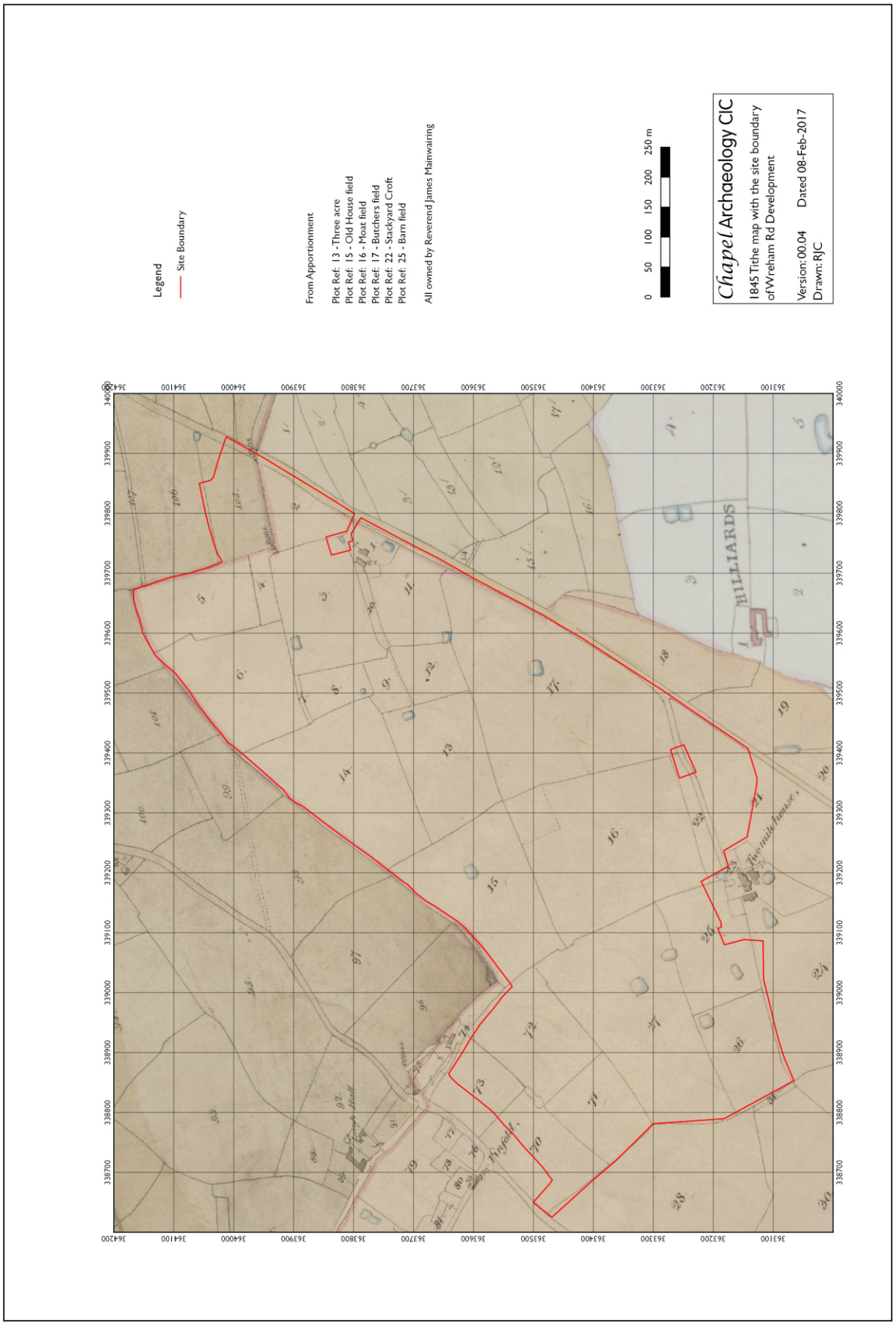


Figure 2: 1845 Tithe Map. [CALS EDT 261/2 and EDT 96/2]

Table 1: Plot details from the apportionment

Plot Ref	Premises	Land Use	Acres	Roods	Perches
1	House Building Yard Stackyard & Garden	Building and Garden	1	1	14
2	Near Chester field	Grass	3	0	7
2	Near Chester field	Grass	3	0	7
3	Clover field	Arable	7	2	14
4	Piece from Mr Snow in Exchange for Road	Grass	0	3	24
5	Piece	Arable	5	2	18
6	*Unnamed*	Pasture	8	2	8
7	Lane	Thoroughfare	0	0	21
8	Potatoe Piece	Arable	1	3	22
9	Part of middle piece	Arable	1	1	2
10	Road to fields	Thoroughfare	1	0	31
11	Croftback of Barn	Arable	3	0	28
12	Middle field	Arable	2	1	0
13	Three acre	Arable	7	2	18
14	Five acre	Pasture	11	3	22
15	Old House field	Arable	10	2	22
16	Moat field	Pasture	16	2	35
17	Butchers field	Pasture	19	2	15
22	Stackyard Croft	Pasture	1	0	37
23	House Buildings Yard and Garden	Building and Garden	3	2	30
24	Shippon field	Pasture	12	3	36
25	Barn field	Hay	6	0	25
26	Meadow	Hay	4	3	21
27	Horse Pasture	Fallow	15	0	0
70	*Unnamed*	Arable	5	1	20
71	*Unnamed*	Arable	6	1	34
72	*Unnamed*	Arable	3	2	15
73	*Unnamed*	Pasture	4	2	4
105	Part of near Chester field	Pasture	5	1	31

Table 2: Lessees of Rev. Mainwairing's lands.

Plot Ref	Occupiers	Plot Ref	Occupiers	Plot Ref	Occupiers
1	Samuel Jones	12	Samuel Jones	24	Robert Jones
2	Samuel Jones	13	Samuel Jones	25	Robert Jones
3	Samuel Jones	14	Samuel Jones	26	Robert Jones
4	Samuel Jones	15	Samuel Jones	27	Robert Jones
7	Samuel Jones	16	Robert Jones	70	Robert Jones
8	Samuel Jones	17	Robert Jones	71	Robert Jones
9	Samuel Jones	21	Robert Jones	72	Robert Jones
10	Samuel Jones	22	Robert Jones	73	Robert Jones
11	Samuel Jones	23	Robert Jones	105	Samuel Jones

When the Tithe map was recorded, plots 5 and 6 were owned by Edward Simon Snow, all the others by Reverend James Mainwairing. All Edward Simon Snow's plots were leased to J D Jaques and Joseph Keay. Table 2 above shows the occupiers (Lessees) of Reverend James Mainwairing's lands.

The later OS maps[5], surveyed in 1869, 1908 and 1938 confirm that very little changes in this area until after WWII.

3.2 Aerial Images

Aerial images have been around since the early 20th century; however, those on web sites such 'Britain from Above'[11] suggest that most pre-war aerials photographs were for 'scenic' purposes. Later aerial photographs are 'vertical', creating a very map-like appearance that is not so useful for archaeological purposes. Oblique images taken in a low sun angle are best for archaeology.

There are collections of historic aerial photographs, all copyright and unavailable without payment. There are limited collections from the early 1970s and 2000 from the CALS[4] but the images are small. Up-to-date aerial images are available from Google[12] and Bing[13] map web-sites. Figure 3 shows a recent aerial image.

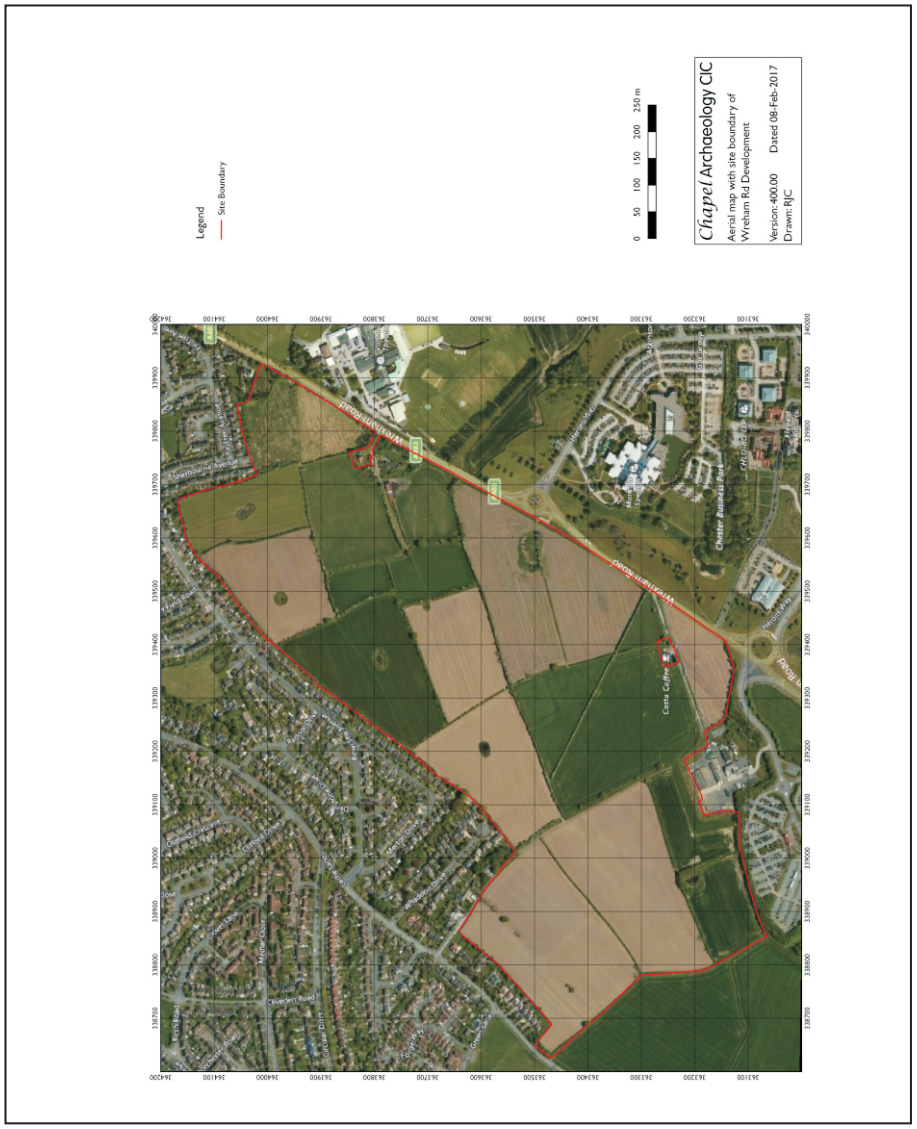


Figure 3: Bing Aerial image © 2017 Microsoft

3.3 LiDAR Data

LiDAR is a relatively new technique for determining the surface of the land. For those interested in a further explanation of the technique, this web-site[14] offers a good overview. Government funded LiDAR[15], previously only available for a fee, has been freely available since 2015.

The data is in two different types at different resolutions. Most areas are available at 1m or 2m horizontal resolution including the area of interest. The basic data is Digital Surface Model (DSM). This information may be processed to remove objects such as trees and buildings to produce Digital Terrain Model (DTM), but at the risk of introducing some processing anomalies. We have used DTM data for Figure 1 but only DSM data for all other images. Figure 4 below shows the LiDAR data with the current OS map overlaid on to it.

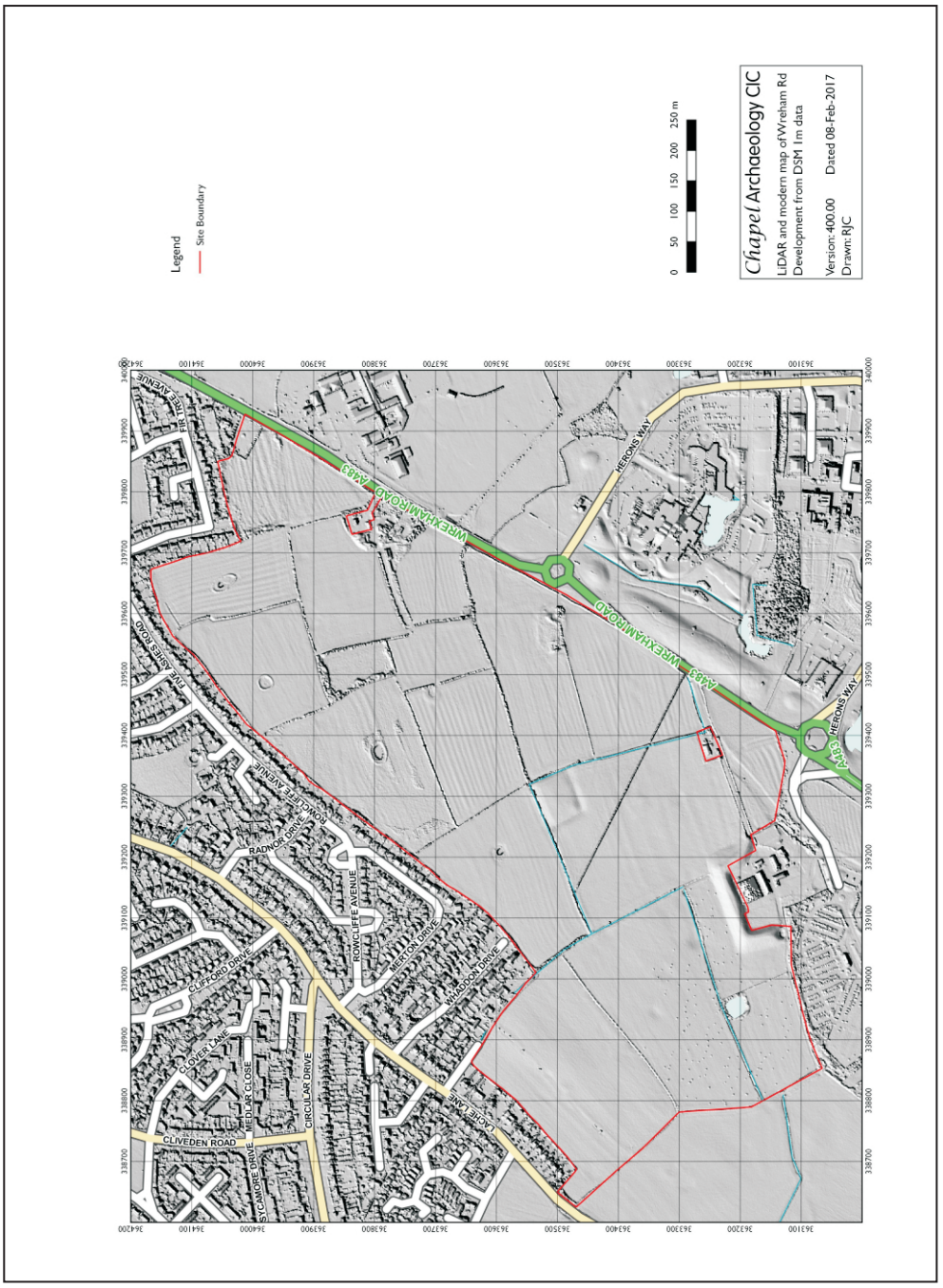


Figure 4: LiDAR data overlaid with modern OS map data
Map data © Crown copyright and database right 2017

3.4 Historic Environment Record

A search through the Historic Environment Record16 (HER) shows there is a recorded ancient monument[17], [18]. In summary, "*The monument includes a moated site exhibiting traces of an access causeway and outer bank. The grassy island, measuring 63m x 47m, possesses surface features that include a low mound at the S corner some 8m x 7m x 0.2m high, and a low platform 0.1-0.3m high x 13m wide running NE-SW for some 30m. Surrounding the island is a dry moat 15m wide x 1.5m max. depth that is crossed by a causeway on the SE arm. An outer bank 0.3m high x 9m wide runs along the SW side of the moat. This monument is thought to have been the site of the manor house of Marlston, but it is not depicted or shown as occupied on early maps, thus suggesting early abandonment*". An alternative nomenclature is that of Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). The site developers are aware of this SAM and have worked with Historic England to provide a preservation proposal as the draft development brief[2] shows.

3.5 Documentary Sources

A recent publication[19] offers more background into the moated site. It suggests the owners were the Blunds. It notes that as well as the usual symbols of power and status, moats "offered security against cattle raiders (a frequent problem in late medieval Cheshire and the Welsh borderlands). It maybe the case that in the borderlands, high levels of crime may have rendered the defensive function of moats more important". However, as the moats were shallow and the bank low (see 3.54 above), perhaps these features were more for show than defence. The site was probably abandoned towards the end of the 14th century.

The Blund family were a wealthy Chester merchants. John Blund, granted the serjeanty of the Northgate in the early fourteenth century, was sheriff in 1311–12, mayor in 1316–17, and died during his second term of office in 1317–18[20]. Various other members of the Blund family became Chester mayors between 1332 and 1360 and a later John Blund was mayor for eight terms in the 1350s[21].

3.5.1 Ormerod

The antiquarian George Ormerod[22] records the township of Marleston cum Lache (now Marlston cum Lache) as follows. We have retained his originally spelling and punctuation but removed his references.

> "*This township formed two distinct manors at the time of the Domesday Survey, Leche and Merlestone, both situated in Atiscros hundred. The first had been the property of the seculars of St. Werburgh, the second was that of the baron of Nantwich.*
>
> *Ipsa ecclesia tenuit Leche ; ibi una virgata geldabilis; terra est dimidia caruca ; wasta fuit et est.*
>
> *Willielmus filius Nigelli tenet Merlestone ; Erne tenuit : Ansgordus tenet de Willielmo, et habet ibi dimidiam carucam ; ibi una virgata terrae geldabilis, ibi unus servus est. Wasta est, modo valet IV solidos.*
>
> *The first of these fell into the hands of the earl, and one moiety was given by Randle Gernons to the abbey of Basingwerk. The whole was afterwards held by the Blunts under the earls. Roger Blunt held the manor of Marleston cum Lache from the earl, by paying Id. into the exchequer, and also one carucate of land in Lache, containing 40 acres, each acre being worth VId. Katherine, daughter and heiress. Inq. p. m. 23 Edw. IIL*
>
> *This manor subsequently was the property of the Benedictine nunnery of St. Mary in Chester, and after the dissolution was granted to the Breretons of Hondford.*
>
> *The said manor, with lands in Handbridge, was conveyed, in 1654, by sir William Brereton, to Thomas Minshull, apothecary, subject to certain long terms in the same, granted by the said sir William Brereton, which became vested in col. Roger Whitley, whose eldest daughter and coheiress, Elizabeth, brought the same in marriage to sir John Mainwaring, of Peover, bart.*

By will dated 1725, sir Thomas Mainwaring, of Baddely, bart. (son of the said sir John and Elizabeth) devised his interest in this manor, &c. to his wife Martha, late Lloyd, who, after the death of her husband, married Edward Mainwaring, of Whitmore, esq. and becoming again a widow, by will dated Dec. 20, 1740, devised all her lands, &c. in the city and county of Chester, to James Mainwaring and Rowland Cotton, esqrs. in trust, for sale, to pay her debts, and the residue after payment of the same, to the said James Mainwaring.

James Mainwaring devised the same to his son James Mainwaring, esq. which James Mainwaring the younger, in 1748, gave the greater part of his lands, including the aforesaid interest, to his son Charles .Mainwaring, esq. who purchased the perpetuity of the same, in 1773, from Roger Ayton, esq. and Sarah Blackburne, mortgagee. The said Roger Ayton was seized of the same in right of his wife Barbara, who after the death of her son, Thomas Samuel Mynshull, succeeded thereto by settlement of her first husband Thomas Mynshull, son and heir of Richard, brother and heir of Thomas, eldest son of Thomas Mynshull, apothecary, to whom the same was conveyed by sir William Brereton as before mentioned. The manor is now the property of James Mainwaring of Brombrorough, son of Charles Mainwaring before mentioned. The manerial privileges are confined to the appointment of a gamekeeper. The estate, as parcel of the lands of Chester Nunnery, is tithe free.

Lache Hall, which was occupied as a garrison by sir William Brereton during the siege of Chester, was sold by his family to the Manleys of Monksfield (a younger branch of the family of Manley of Poulton), whose descendants resided here in great respectability for several generations, and sold their estate to Mr. John Snow, an alderman of Chester, about the middle of the last century.

The Trussels had also an antient estate in this township, which passed, for a considerable length of time, with the serjeancy of the East Gate, and the manor of Blacon.

This township lies in a flat unpleasant situation, about two miles south–west of Chester, immediately contiguous to the principality."

We shall see the Mainwarings (or Mainwairings) were still owners of the land in 1845.

3.5.2 Hanshall

John Hickson Hanshall, in his 'History of the County Palatine of Chester'[23] largely repeats (almost verbatim) the description of Marlston cum Lache from Ormerod, However, Hansall does add this final paragraph:

> "*A large tract of waste land, called the Lache-eyes, extends from this township, to that of Dodleston. The soil is of excellent quality, and the parishioners of St. Mary's, Chester, and of Dodleston, claim the privilege of pasturing cattle, &c. on it.*"

4. Interpretation

4.1 Tithe Map

With one notable exception, the tithe map shows that there has been no major change in the field pattern since 1845. The exception is the field boundary that starts where the access track to 'Two Mile House' (later Moat Farm) meets the Wrexham Road and continues north–west to the boundary of plots 16 and 15 (Moat field and Old House field). This boundary seems to disrespect all the other field boundaries and is recent. It is not shown on the aerial photograph of the early 1970s[4] but is there in that of 2000[4]. Its purpose is unclear but it may be associated with the provision of services or utilities.

The SAM of the moated enclosure is clearly identified on the tithe map and equally clearly by the field name of 'Moat field'. The name of the field to the north–west of Moat field, Old House field is of interest, although it is not clear whether this means the old 'house field' or 'old house' field. In either case there is a strong indication of the presence of dwelling in the past; presumably the building within the moated enclosure.

A number of individuals are mentioned in the tithe apportionment as owning or leasing land in the area. A search through the relevant records[4], [22], [25], [26], [27] reveals the following.

Edward Shackfield Simon Snow was born in 1789 and died aged 54 on 27th June 1843 at Lache Hall. He was buried at St Mary's-on-the-Hill on 3rd July 1843. He was a surgeon by profession and is listed in the 1828 edition of Pigot's Directory as living in Pepper Street, Chester.

Rev. James Mainwairing (also spelt Mainwaring) was a member of the aristocratic Mainwaring family of Cheshire. He was born in 1787 in Avignon, France and was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford. Whilst a curate in Cubley, Derbyshire he married Anne Edwards. He also worked at Caynham, Welshampton and Bromborough. Whilst living at Bromborough Hall, he was Poor Law Guardian for the Wirral Union. He held extensive property in Bromborough, Liscard, Wallasey, Willaston, Poulton-cum-Seacombe, Bretton, Saltney and Chester. He died on 17th September 1850.

Isaac David Jacques (also listed incorrectly as JD Jaques) was born in 1796. He married his first wife Mary Richards in 1820 in St Oswald's parish, Chester. After being widowed, he married Elizabeth Frankins on 7th March 1839, also in St Oswald's parish. He appears in the Electoral Rolls in Newton, Chester between 1834 and 1840 and in Malpas between 1842 and 1846. Isaac is listed as an occupier of 39 plots of land in St Mary's Chester, Newton, Upton and Picton. He leased the plots to tenants, such as Joseph Keay.

Joseph Keay is listed on the 1841 census as being age 47, born c. 1794 and a farmer at Leach Farm.

Samuel Jones is recorded in the 1841 census as being a farmer in Marlston-cum-Lache, aged 50 (rounded up or down). He was living with his wife, two daughters and several servants.

Robert Jones is listed in 1852 in the Marlston-cum-Lache registration district as being aged 52, born in Shotwick, and farming 192 acres, employing two labourers.

4.2 LiDAR Data

Looking at the 2-dimensional LiDAR data, both the old and new field boundaries and the moated platform are clearly visible, as are the historic ploughing marks. These are probably Victorian, rather than medieval 'ridge and furrow'. Nevertheless they do suggest fields which were traditionally pasture and those that were arable. Overlaying the LiDAR data on to the tithe map produces Figure 5 below.

We can now more easily identify the field boundary changes since 1845. Apart from the major new field boundary mentioned earlier, Field 17 (Butchers field) has been divided; Fields 16 (Moat field) and 22 (Stackyard Croft) have been combined; Fields 9 (Part of middle piece) and 12 (Middle field) seem to have been combined; part of the Fields 70 and 73 facing Lache Lane have been built upon, as has part of Field 105 bordering Wrexham Road.

There are a number of features in Moat field that warrant closer inspection. Figure 6 below is a detailed image of the LiDAR data centred on Moat field whilst Figure 7 shows the same area in 3D. Particularly noticeable in Figure 7 is the linear feature, Item 1, referenced twice as it extends across the whole image. This is not 'real', in that it does not represent a true feature of the ground surface; it is an anomaly produced by the computer software used to create the image. Although there are signs of 'ridge and furrow' marks, they are not as pronounced as in adjacent fields, suggesting a different usage pattern. The marks that do appear seem to stop when meeting another linear feature (the dotted line in Figure 7 labelled Item 2). To the north–east of that line the ground is noticeably flatter suggesting minimal ploughing activity. To the south–west of that line, the ridges are less distinct and further apart. A possible explanation is that this area was once part of shared, strip farming system. There are stronger

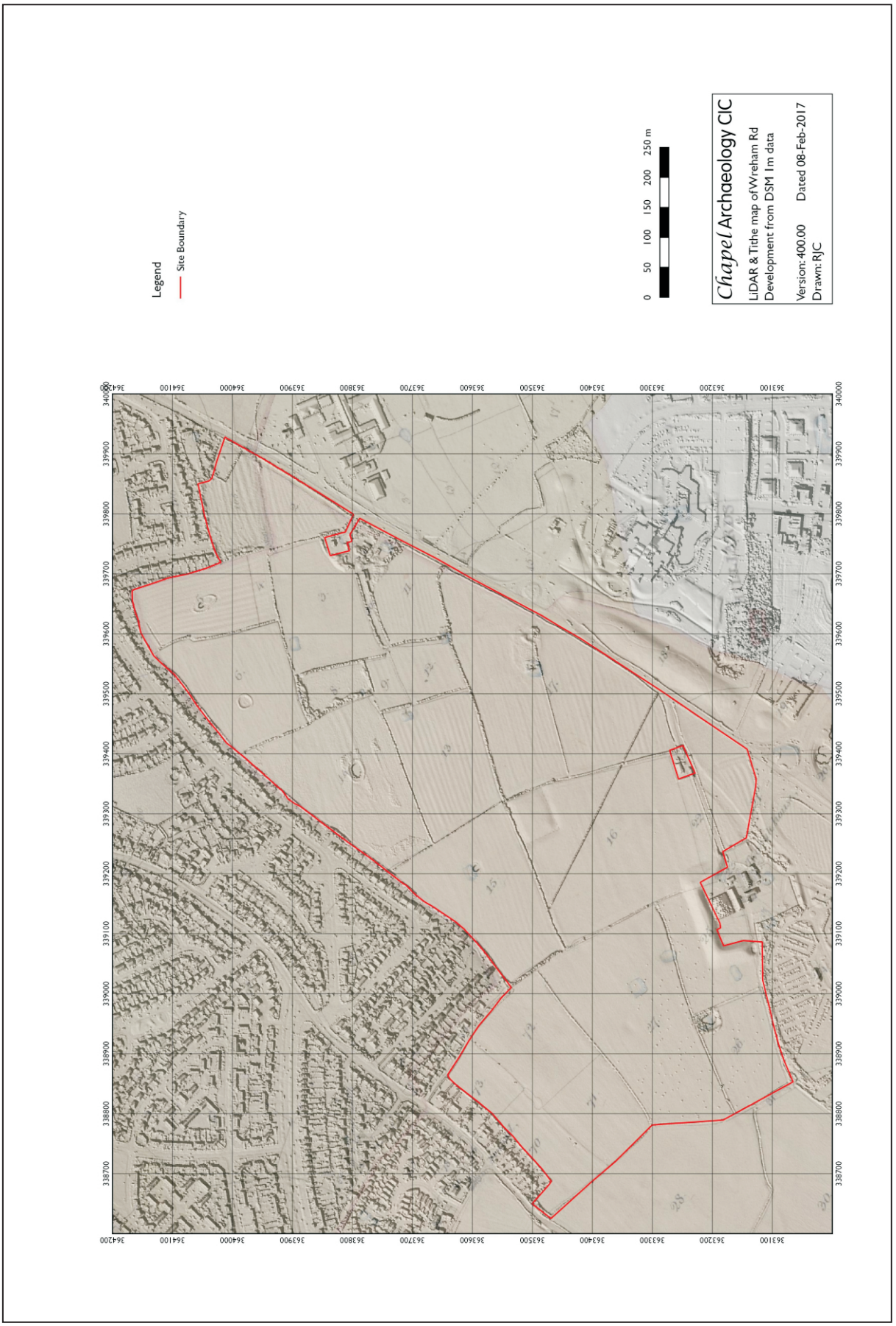


Figure 5: LiDAR data overlaid with the 1845 Tithe Map. [CALS EDT 261/2]



Figure 6: Detailed 2D LiDAR image of Moat Field

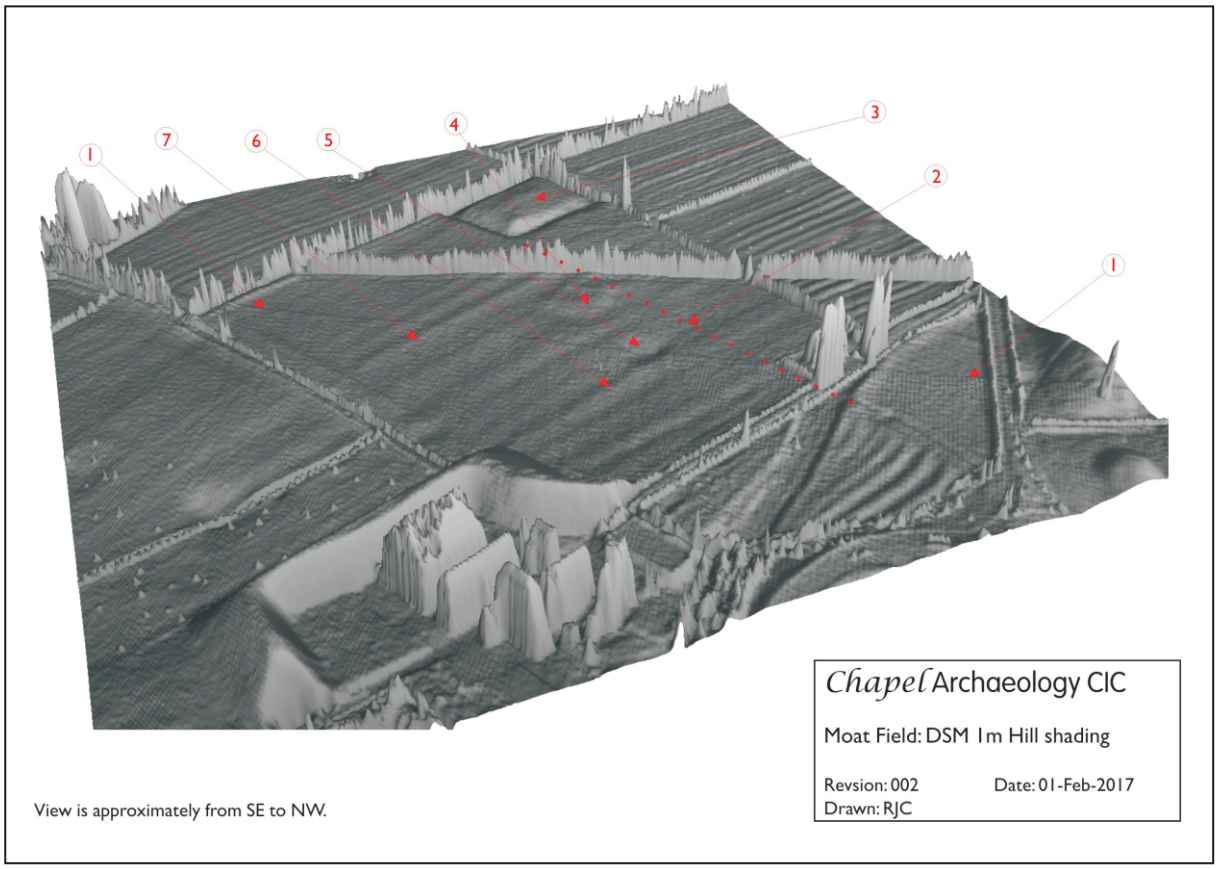


Figure 7: Detailed 3D LiDAR image of Moat Field

lines (Items 6 and 7) that seem to be equally spaced and may be the remains of ancient plot boundaries. The moated enclosure (Item 3) is very visible and the dotted line (Item 2) could be a track between the moated enclosure and the Chester to Wrexham road. This may be the causeway referred to in the HER[17].

Item 4, which is less clear on the 2D image (Figure 6), which seems to be a small circular feature surrounded by a ditch, may be the remnants of an earlier pond. It is not shown on the 1845 tithe map (although the one in Old House field is) but is recorded on the 1869 (surveyed) OS 25" map[5] (Figure 8) and the OS 6" 1938 (surveyed) map[5]. Item 5 seems to be a small circular depression, which is not recorded on any earlier maps. Field work may be able to determine its history and purpose. Figure 8 also shows the track that led from Lache lane (via what is now Greenacre Road) to Two Mile House (later Moat Farm).



Figure 8: Section of OS 25" map surveyed 1869
Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

4.3 Roman Activity

An archaeological 'watching brief'[28] during the construction of part of the Chester Business Park records the presence of a Roman road on a site approximately 500m away to the south–west of Moat Farm. This is identified as part of the Roman infrastructure underlying the modern Chester to Wrexham road. Any route branching off this road towards North Wales would have been further south. Both Burdett's and Greenwood's maps indicate the extent of 'The Lache Eye/Eyes', a large area of marshland to the west of Lache Lane. This is not an area across which the Romans would have attempted to construct a road. Figure 9 below shows the extent of the Lache Eye according to Burdett in 1777. This is after the canalisation of the River Dee in the 1737 and it is likely the area was bigger in Roman times.

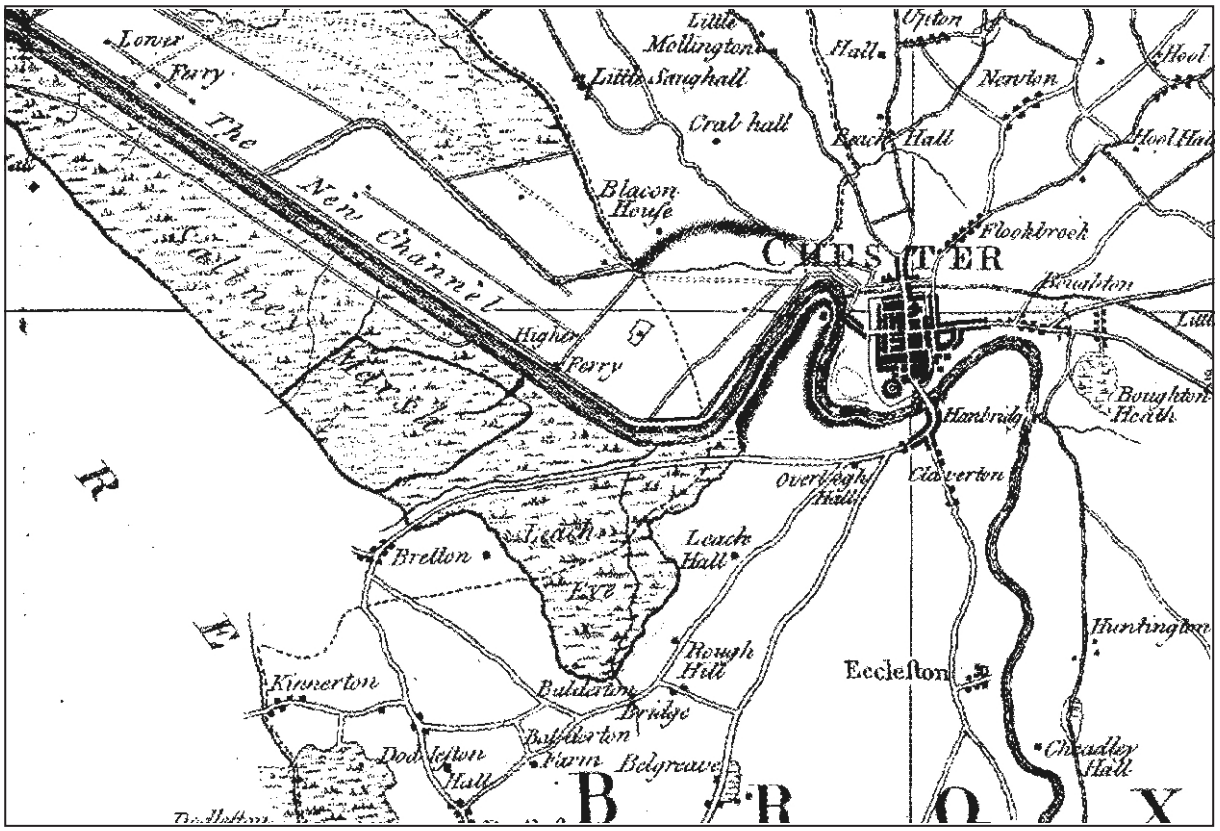


Figure 9. Section of Burdett's map, 1777. [CALS 12/16]

5. Conclusions

Ignoring the SAM and its immediate surroundings, the site only shows the signs of long-standing agricultural use. We are sure the occasional item of archaeological interest will be found during construction and there is always the possibility of a significant chance find. However, from the evidence above, it is unlikely that any major archaeological features will be found.

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