

Pages 3, 15

“The majority of (Cheshire) rocks belong to the upper Carboniferous system of the Primary period, as the Keuper and Bunter sandstones belong to the Triassic system of the Secondary period.”

“The centre of the county although called a plain is by no means flat, for it contains the Delamere range, the Peckforton hills with Broxton, and the escarpments of Beeston, Alderley Edge, Runcorn and Frodsham heights, the abrupt sides of which show that at some time they faced the sea.”

Fowler

The Visitors Guide to Runcorn and its Vicinity Pub. 1834

Page 27

“A people called the Ceangi or Cangii, it appears resided in this part of Cheshire, as early as the year 76. They were the servants of the Carnabii, and the attendants upon their cattle. They lived in the northern woods of their county, that skirted the marshy grounds, which then extended for many miles, by Norton, Runcorn and Frodsham, along the shore of the Mersey.”

Furness

Soil Survey Bulletin No. 6 Soils of Cheshire Pub. 1978

Pages 6, 10, 21, 132

“Drainage, except for areas adjacent to the Dee valley, is to the north or north west into the Mersey estuary. The largest river, the Weaver, rises near Peckfortonand from Northwich is navigable and flows north west to the Mersey estuary.

The Mid Cheshire Ridge, from 3 to 9 km (2 to 6 miles) in width extends from Runcorn and Frodsham in the north through Delamere and Tarporley to Malpas in the south. It is a variable region ranging from 250 to 750 feet O.D. and in relief from gently undulating landscapes, barely discernable from the surrounding plain, to very steep wooded and often rocky slopes.

The succeeding Keuper marls and saliferous beds occur under the drift deposits of almost the whole eastern plain from Runcorn and Lymm southwards to the Salop border. The marls consist of approximately 760m (2,500 ft.) of calcareous red silty mudstones separated at two horizons by 60-120 m (200-400 ft.) of interbedded rock salt and mudstone.

A thin patchy cover of till over red Keuper marl gives a complex pattern of reddish soils formed on both solid and drift deposits. It is of minor importance and occurs only in the north of the County east of Runcorn. The finer soils are well suited to grass and the farming pattern is identical to that on the adjoining deeper till soils.”

Greswell

An Account of Runcorn and its Environs Pub. 1803

Page 11

“

The shore at Runcorn and round to Weston Point, is protected by a low ridge of rock, rising almost perpendicularly from the beach.”

Pub. 1964
Pages 7-9, 14, 17

“There is a considerable flat at about 220 ft. which forms Higher Runcorn and the area towards Norton. Out of this Halton rises quite steeply to above 325 ft.

It should be noted that the 50ft. and 100 ft. contours on the south west side of the Mersey estuary do not follow the easterly sweep taken by the present coastline but continue on directly towards the south east. The curve of the estuary towards Widnes and Runcorn is a purely surface phenomenon.

No doubt because of an increase in ice thickness caused by the relative constriction between Higher Runcorn and Frodsham Hill there was considerable over deepening in this district, typical of such glacial conditions. Today the rock surface near the mouth of the river Weaver is 151 ft. below O.D. and near the A 56 road bridge over the Weaver it is as much as 235 ft. below O.D.

Runcorn Gap was probably a meltwater channel between the Weaver and Warrington ice, and thus is of glacial origin, for the pre-glacial Mersey probably had a rock channel rather to the north of Widnes.

Page 9 is a map of the Geomorphological features and a photocopy can be found as ‘illustration 1’ at the end of these extracts.

The inner Mersey estuary from Bootle to Runcorn has an area of nearly 30 square miles and consequently, with every tide, a very large volume of water must pour into it from the Irish Sea and empty out again.”

Page 17 contains, in figure 5, maps of Prehistoric and early medieval settlements and a photocopy can be found as ‘illustration 2’ at the end of these extracts.

Griffiths **Weston Historical Notes and Walk Pub. 1977**
Page 2

“During the first century AD, a race of semi barbarians called Cangi lived in these woods; when they weren’t fighting each other, they fished for salmon etc., and hunted wild boar and wolves. Gradually, as they became more civilised, they became “attendants of cattle” for the Carnabii, a ‘superior’ tribe. “

Halton Borough Council **A Brief History of Runcorn Pub. 1975**
Page 1

“Geologists tell us that thousands of years ago the Mersey was deeper and wider than it is today, and at Runcorn the course ran north of the present one. Then came the Ice Age bringing glaciers from the north, huge masses of clay and boulders were deposited in the Mersey, completely blocking the channel. The river then made for itself a new channel – the one that exists today – to the sea.

At the dawn of British history Cheshire was thickly wooded and the population was very sparse, the marshy Gowy Valley and the forest in the Weaver Valley formed natural obstacles to migration and invasion. The richest evidence of prehistoric settlement has been found on the Central Ridge which runs from Helsby to Malpas, this high open ground would be more easily settled. There have also been finds on the Lower Ridge, this extends from Runcorn towards Knutsford. Local finds include a Bronze Age stone axe-hammer at Weston Point, a bronze palstave (a chisel edged implement shaped to fit into a split handle) at Runcorn, and a pre Roman coin at Halton.

At the time of the Roman invasion the people of Cheshire were probably a mixture of the original Bronze Age people and immigrant Iron Age celts. The dominant Celtic tribe in the area was probably the Cornovii, this was the name given to them by the Romans.”

Halton Borough Council Runcorn History Trail Pub. 1978
Page 2

“The basic geological structure of Cheshire is that of a broad shallow basin, between the Welsh mountains and the Pennines. The rocks forming this basin and ridge are of the Triassic age, i.e. about 200 million years old and were formed in hot arid conditions which resulted in the evaporation of the shallow sea which covered Cheshire at that time. The salt crystals from the evaporated sea water were deposited in layers on the sea floor and were the beginnings of the salt fields in and around Northwich. The sand and silts also deposited formed the red sandstones which predominate the area.

Subsequent earth movements caused the layers to warp and crack; along these cracks or faults great blocks of rock were forced up relative to the flanking land, thus forming the Cheshire ridge, still standing out above the plain after millions of years weathering and erosion. There are outcrops at Weston, Runcorn and Halton. Frodsham and Helsby hills are also local examples of this. After this period the county was affected by the advance and retreat of glaciers which generally left a relatively this patchwork of clay and sand covering the solid rocks. “

Higham The Origins of Cheshire Pub. 1993
Pages 10, 21, 27

“North of this moraine littered landscape lies the flat and near flat plain of northern and central Cheshire, draining via the rivers Weaver and Bollin and their tributaries into the Mersey. Although there are occasional outcrops of pre glacial geology, most markedly at and around Halton and at Bowdon, glacial till interspersed with low ridges of fluvioglacial origin cover the bulk of the land surface.

.....Recent discoveries have tended to be located on similar terrain to those already known, merely extending the existing pattern to such ridges of fluviogalcial origin as make up the core of the medieval parishes of Rostherne and Runcorn. On this evidence, the till plains of central Cheshire appear to have seen only low levels of land use and settlement during the Bronze Age.

The geological foundation of the site consists of permo-triassic rocks with a partial overlay of glacial drift. The distribution of the different types of solid rock is largely determined by extensive faulting which has resulted in a north-south outcrop of keuper sandstone in the west and an east-west arrangement of fragmented outcrops of keuper sandstone and waterstones. North and west of these outcrops are extensive deposits of boulder clay and blown sand, with alluvium south of the Mersey between Runcorn and Moore. Most of the south eastern part of the site consists of keuper marl with some boulder clay and glacial sands and gravel. The geological structure of the site presents no major difficulties for the construction of the town.

Shone

**Prehistoric Man in Cheshire Pub. 1911
Pages 10, 11, 13, 37, 42, 68, 95, 98-100**

Finds - Bucklow Hundred –
Weston – stone hammer
Runcorn (Ship Canal) – Palstave
Halton castle – British coin

At the time the Roman Legions arrived in Cheshire the Celtic nation was divided into tribes, more or less powerful. The Cornavii inhabited Cheshire and Shropshire; the Ordovices occupied North Wales with the Cangi on the sea-coast from the Dee to Carnarvon

A perforated stone hammer was recently discovered at Weston Point, near Runcorn, at the Mersey Brine Works.

Page 42 has an illustration of a flint scraper found at Sutton Weaver.

In the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, is a cast of a bronze palstave found near Runcorn in the Ship Canal Works about 1892 (an illustration is shown in Fig. 32 on page 68)

Halton Castle, Runcorn – Sir John Evans, in the supplementary volume to his “Coins of the Ancient Britons”, page 500 states – “Mr. C. Roach Smith informs me that he has seen a MS. note of a coin of this type found at Halton Castle, Runcorn, in 1795. I have no record of any other ancient British coin having been found in Cheshire”

Finds –

Near Runcorn – in Manchester Ship Canal. Palstave. Cast in Grosvenor Museum, Chester.

Sutton Weaver – flint scraper 1 ½” by 1” found by G.A. Dunlop (1906) near towing path, right bank, River Weaver. In Warrington Museum

Weston Point – Perforated stone-hammer, 10 inches by 5 inches and 3 inches thick

The photograph in the introduction shows a striated boulder and a photocopy can be found as “illustration 3” at the end of these extracts.

The photograph on page 1 showing a pre-historic axe-hammer found at Weston Point a photocopy can be found as “illustration 4” at the end of these extracts.

With the last retreat of the Ice Age over ten thousand years ago, the bleak Arctic conditions in prehistoric Britain began to change and the polar landscape of Cheshire was during the passage of thousands of years, gradually transformed from icy tundra into a region of densely forest with areas of peat-moss and marsh. Oaks predominated, with the pendunculate oak thriving across most of the county whilst the durmast oak flourished on the well drained soils. The wych elm, the ash and the lime also proliferated, whilst everywhere scrublands of hazel became established.

The glaciers left deposits of debris across the landscape. Boulders, some of great size, had been carried by the ice from the mountains of Scotland and northern England. Smoothed and rounded by the movement and pressure of the ice, the granite boulders were left lying on the sandstone beds of north Cheshire. These alien stones, sometimes called “erratics” were deposited hundreds of miles away from their natural sites. Some of these striated boulders have been found in Runcorn and without doubt are the oldest items of historical interest in the district. One great white stone was until recently (1990) a feature of the gardens at the new Town shopping centre and other, smaller stones, some almost black in colour had been set into the ground to serve as fenders to protect gateposts and walls from damage caused by cart wheels.

The earliest man made objects found locally date from the period about 5,000 – 3,500 years BC. Flint tools have been discovered at Frodsham and struck flakes of flint have been found on Halton hill and in Norton village. During the archaeological excavations carried out in Norton village in the 1970s, a quantity of waste flints, together with one or two which had been worked to produce serrated blades were discovered. As flints do not occur naturally in any of Cheshire’s rocks but are associated with the chalk land in the south and east of England, it is certain that either the finished tools or the raw flints were imported into the county. Small quantities of flint were carried by the glacial ice from Northern Ireland and some flint tools which have been found in Wirral have their origin in Ireland. This suggests that prehistoric man had developed trade routes and communications far more complex than has previously been believed. Neolithic pottery shards of a type found in Cumbria have been excavated in Norton village.

The flint tools prove the presence of a primitive people who had not learned to cultivate the land but who relied on their fishing and hunting skills in order to provide their food and clothing. Some years ago a massive perforated axe-hammer of a later period was found at Weston Point. This polished tool or weapon was fashioned from sheared dolomite, an igneous rock which is to be found at Langdale Pike in Cumbria and at Penmaenmawr. A few years ago a similar axe-hammer was found at Dutton.

From the Bronze Age we have a single item. A socketted bronze axe was found at Runcorn in 1892 during the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. The looped axe or palstave belongs to the middle bronze period and a suggested date is about 1000 BC.

The only other evidence of Iron Age man yet found in this immediate district is a late Celtic or Brigantian coin found near Halton castle.

Sylvester & Nulty The Historical Atlas of Cheshire

This book, as the name suggests, is a series of maps of which the following are relevant :-

Vegetation 5500-2500 BC	Oak woodland with pendunculate oak predominating mixed with oak woodland with sessile oak predominating
Prehistoric	Bronze axe, stone hammer and pre-Roman coins finds

**Thompson Roman Cheshire Pub. 1965
Page 3**

One other minor feature remains to be noticed, a ridge of higher ground between the Bollin and the Weaver, extending from Runcorn in the west to Knutsford in the east; with its sandstone outcrops, gravel spreads and loamy soils, this formed a fairly open belt of ground between the Mersey and the Pennine slopes.

The Mersey must have presented a formidable barrier to communication between the lands to the north and south in prehistoric times. Its valley is wide and flat and was filled with swamps and thick woodland except where sand and gravel terraces provided a foothold for human occupation.

**Varley Cheshire Before the Romans Pub. 1964
Pages 3, 4, 13, 14.**

West of what is called the Central Ridge of Cheshire, a belt of uplands running from Runcorn to Malpas, the basin is floored with Bunter Sandstones and Pebbles Beds. All are rocks derived from the destruction of adjacent land area in conditions of great heat, little rainfall, high evaporation and little or no life. All have the characteristic staining of various oxides of iron, red or yellow. Some yield building stone or even sand, but the Pebble Beds in particular are resistant to weathering, providing good building stone locally, and are water bearing; a fact of which the Romans at least made use.

Fig. 1 on page 13 is reproduced as “illustration 5” at the end of these extracts.

The Weston – Knutsford Plateau – This belt of land above 200 feet separates the Weaver and Bollin basins, and, like all the other uplands in Cheshire, it is mixed in character. It comprises lightly wooded sandstone outcrops as at Weston and Halton, and even more open gravel spreads and light loamy soils not unlike those of the summit of the Central Plateau. It is important in that it constitutes a bridge of more open land connecting the Mersey estuary with the gravel terraces of the Pennine slope.

**Varley & Jackson Prehistoric Cheshire Pub.1940
Pages 4,5,12, Figs. 24-27**

In the western half of Cheshire these(rocks) consist of the Lower Mottled Sandstone, a variegated sandstone streaked with red and yellow; the Bunter Pebble Beds, a harder sandstone containing rounded white pebbles of quartzite; and the Upper Mottled sandstone, hardly to be distinguished from the Lower.

Whimperley

**Halton Castle – An Introduction and Visitors Handbook
Pub. 1979
Page 4**

Real settlement of this part of Cheshire would seem to be dated from the Bronze Age – indicated by tumuli (burial mounds) – circa 1750-1550 BC, although there is some evidence of Neolithic habitation (e.g. flints from Helsby). Bronze implements have been found on the Central Ridge and also at Runcorn, namely an axe-hammer at Weston Point. The fact that the landscape consisted chiefly of marshy valleys and thick woodland, thus hindering easy settlement, is the principal reason why both Neolithic and Bronze Age peoples would have chosen hill sites. Certainly the discovery of a later Iron Age habitation at Helsby would give additional weight to the possibility that Halton was also used during this period.

Williams Mortimer

**The History of the Hundred of Wirral Pub. 1847
Pages 4, 5.**

Two of these nations were settled in Cheshire, - one, the Cangii, a tribe of little importance, and of whom still less is known; the other, the Carnavii, or Carnabii which subsequently extended itself into a large portion of the neighbouring country.

The Cangii, “a nation that has been so long and so much sought for”, Camden supposes, were also situated in Cheshire, and he supports his opinion by reference to some “twenty sows of Lead” that had been found on the shores of the Mersey near Runcorn and Rocksavage. Others, similar to these, had been previously found on the shores of the Dee; and they all bear an inscription commemorative of a [Roman] victory over the Cangii.

SOCIETY TRANSACTIONS –

Chester Archaeological and Historic

**Vol. 29 Pub. 1932 Early Man in the Cheshire Plain
Page 56**

[Perforated hammers] ... it is possible that the perforated stone hammers of Cheshire represent the lines of route by which the Beaker folk reached Wales from the Pennines. In this connection it is worth while making a special note of their distribution (a) along the Mersey Valley; (b) across country from the Bollin to join the above near Runcorn; (c) in the Beeston Gap; (d) near the entrance to the Vale of Llangollen.

**Vol. 58 Pub. 1975 Excavations at Halton Brow
Pages 85, 88, 89**

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**Vol. 60 Pub. 1977 Excavations at the Medieval Village of Norton
Pages 61, 62, 80**

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Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

**Vol. 55/56 Pub. 1905 Stone axe found at Weston Point
Pages 326, 327.**

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Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society

**Vol. 50 Pub. 1934/35 The Prehistoric Archaeology of Cheshire
Pages 68, 85**

Palaeolithic Age - The remains of reindeer, wild ox and several small Arctic rodents have been found.... And there are records of mammoth and other remains being found near Runcorn

During the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal a looped palstave, about 5 ½ inches long, was recovered near Runcorn about 1892.

**Vol. 53 Pub. 1938 A Preliminary Survey of the Bridestones, Congleton and
Related Monuments
Page 17**

Plate I on page 17 is a map showing the routeway, sites and finds of the Megalithic period in East Cheshire and South Lancashire. The relevance is the routeway over the Knutsford Ridge ending at Runcorn.

Papers presented to Societies or other learned institutions

**“Notes of Footprints from the Keuper Part I” - paper by F. T. Maidwell
1911 Liverpool Geological Society**

**“Notes of Footprints from the Keuper Part II” – paper by F. T. Maidwell
1914 Liverpool Geological Society**

**“Notes on Footprints from the Trias” – paper by G. A. Dunlop with contributions by
Beasley, Maidwell and Sollas;
1879 Liverpool Geological Society**

**“Intertidal Sediment and Trace Fossils from the Waterstones, Scythian, Anisian at
Daresbury, Cheshire” - paper by R. J. Ireland, J. E. Pollard, R. J. Stell, and D. B.
Thompson
1977 Yorkshire Geological Society**

**“The Runcorn Quarries and the Footprint Finds of the 1940s” – paper by Geoffrey
Tresise
1994. Geologists Association**

Local newspaper reports of finds –

“Dinosaurs leave their mark on nature park” - Runcorn World 12th August, 1999

“Ancient reptile on Runcorn Hill” – Runcorn Weekly News 20th August, 1999

“Boulder from ice Age had disappeared” - Runcorn Weekly News 1st March, 2001

Update –

A small scale excavation at Norton Priory in September, 2013 found a flint from Neolithic times and some bones, yet to be dated. This puts back by 5,000 years the occupation of the Priory site.