



**Fowler**

**The Visitor Guide to Runcorn and its Vicinity**

**Pub. 1834**

**Pages 27, 28**

Cheshire, it seems, was not so soon subjugated by the Romans, as the more southerly parts of Britain, but after Agricola assumed the command of the Roman troops in the island, he totally conquered the Ceangi. It has also been understood by some of good credit, that there were upon the very shore gotten out of the ground, twenty sows of lead, which were originally designed by the Romans as a monument of triumph, and the record of the victory over the Ceangi. Here, (upon the shore of the Mersey) the pieces were dug up, and here the victory was obtained. These pieces of lead were long in form, but four square. On the upper part whereof in an hollow surface is to be read this inscription.

IMP. DOMIT. AVG. GER. DE  
CEANG

But on the other –

IMP. VESP. VII. T. IMP. V.  
COSS.

**Greswell & Lawton**

**British Landscapes Through Maps 6 –Merseyside**

**Pub. 1964**

**Page 17**

Roman roads linked Chester to Warrington.

**Halton Borough Council**

**Brief History of Runcorn**

**Pub. 1975**

**Page 1**

In the first century AD the Romans, already well established in the south-west, moved north against the aggressive Brigantes tribes, and then west against the Welsh. The XX Legion occupied Cheshire and Chester became a permanent military camp around AD 76. The main Roman route east from Deva, the Roman name for the city (called after the river on which it stands), ran directly through Northwich to Manchester, it is probable that another road led directly to Wilderspool, Warrington, and then over the Mersey to Wigan and the north.

There is no evidence of Roman settlements in the Runcorn area [**note – this predates the discovery and excavation at Halton Brow.** ] but the artefacts that have been found indicate that there must have been some contact with the conquerors.

**Hanshall**

**The History of the County Palatine of Chester Pub. 1811**

**Page 11**

For while I perused these my labours, I understood by some of good credit , that there were upon the very shore gotten out of the ground, twenty sows of lead, long in form, but four square. On the upper part where of in an hollow surface is to be read this inscription.



IMP. DOMIT. AVG. GER. DE  
CEANG

On the reverse was the following :-

IMP. VESP. VII. T. IMP. V.  
COSS.

These relics of the Roman dominion were found on the shore near Runcorn in the time of Camden(1637). The circumstance would seem to indicate that even at the time of the Romans a small port was in existence at of near Runcorn, to which the tablets of lead with their ancient legends had been forwarded for exportation. But the Romans evidently did not settle in the neighbourhood long enough to make their influence felt, and there is no substantial ground upon which their history may be built.

**Ormerod**

**The History of the County Palatine and City of  
Chester Pub. 1882  
Page 156**

Now seeing the learned Mr. Cambden tells us of pieces of lead dug up about the shore near Runcorn, and Haulton, and Rock-savage, with this inscription –  
IMP. DOMIT. AUG. GER. DE CEANG  
why should we doubt any further, but that about these rocky and steep promontories Ptolemy's Cangani had their seat.

**Porteous**

**The Canal Ports Pub. 1977  
Page 57**

Runcorn Gap, the paramount physical feature of the area, was early exploited by travelling man. It is possible that the Romans, with their base on Halton Hill, used Runcorn as a shipping place.

**Stammers**

**Mersey Flats and Flatmen Pub. 1993  
Page 6**

Close by at Norton's Marsh a Roman cargo of lead was dug up in the sixteenth century and at Wilderspool the Romans had iron smelting and other industrial works which were linked to water transport.

**Starkey**

**Schooner Port – Two Centuries of Upper Mersey  
Sail Pub. 1983  
Page 16**

During the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal prehistoric dug-out canoes were unearthed but the earliest evidence of ships on the Mersey's upper reaches appears when William Camden, the great Elizabethan antiquary, recorded the finding of twenty pigs of lead on the river's edge at Norton marsh. The position of the find together with Camden's precise description of the inscribed ingots leaves no doubt that the lead was part of the cargo of a Roman vessel which was trading on the Mersey during the first century of the Roman occupation of Britain.

**Starkey**

**Old Runcorn Pub. 1990  
Pages 2-4**

From Deva a network of military roads was constructed throughout what is now |Cheshire .... The road from Chester to Warrington was built to the most convenient crossing place of the Mersey and its route was probably that taken by the modern road which passes through Helsby, Frodsham and Daresbury.

There is also some evidence of shipping on the upper reaches of the Mersey during the first century of the Roman occupation. William Camden, the great Elizabethan antiquary writing in 1590, records the finding of twenty inscribed Roman lead 'sowes' which were unearthed when "pursuing a vein of marl" at the river's edge at Norton. The lead pigs no longer exist but Camden has given a precise description of the ingots. The earliest was dated AD 76 and it bore the stamp DE. CEANG. Which indicates that the lead was mined in the territory of the Deceangli in North Wales. Other ingots had lettering showing they were cast between AD 84 and AD 96.

Camden says that the lead pigs were "long in forme and four square" and in a hollow impressed at the upper end of each was an inscription giving its source. On some the abbreviated inscriptions read :

IMP. DOMIT. AVG. GER.  
DE. CEANG.

On other, IMP. VESP. VII. T. IMP V COSS.

When completed, the full wording reads ;

IMP(ERATORE) DOMIT(IANO) AUG (USTO) GER(MANICO)  
DE CEANG(IS) IMP(ERATORE) VESP (ASIANO) VII T(ITO)  
IMP(ERATORE) V CO(N)S(ULIBU)S

Most probably the lead was part of a cargo of a Roman vessel which was trading to Wilderspool. However, the Cheshire historian, W. Thompson Watkin, suggest the possibility that the lead was destined for a Roman station situated on Halton Hill.

Of course the Roman surveyors would have explored the possibility of making a crossing of the Mersey at the narrows of Runcorn Gap and indeed there is indisputable evidence of Roman occupation in this immediate district. In 1936, the archaeologists J. P. Droop and R. Newstead carried out excavations on a sloping site to the north of Halton Brow about 350 metres below Halton Castle.

They found signs of a Roman settlement and concluded the site was a temporary camp protected by a ditch which had been cut partly through sandstone and partly through clay. The archaeologists were unable to determine the southern limits of the site but they estimated that the ditch probably encircled a camp of about an acre. Pottery finds dated the camp to the late third or early fourth century AD.

The development of Runcorn New Town threatened to destroy the site and in 1967 the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works made funds available for further exploration and the work was undertaken by students from Manchester University.

Mechanical excavation was carried out in an attempt to discover the full extent of the ditch discovered in 1936. That part of the ditch which had been cut through sandstone was found to be V-shaped in form and it had been lined with puddled clay. The ditch was found to enclose an area considerably larger than that supposed by Newstead and Droop. The new excavation proved that the encampment was in excess of three and a half acres but its southern boundary could not be located and it was concluded that it lies under the houses on the north side of Halton Brow or under the road itself. The new dig yielded few artefacts but two small fragments of second century Samian ware and a quern stone were discovered.

The 1967 excavations proved the site was occupied much earlier than had previously been believed. Because of the length of the occupation, the site must have been more than a temporary military camp. The asymmetrical shape, the unmilitary nature of the ditch and the lack of ramparts and gates, suggest that the Halton brow site was an agricultural settlement similar to one found at Tallington in Lincolnshire. The Roman Camp at Halton Brow has been built over and the ground is now occupied by the houses and flats of Caesar's Close, Roman Close, and Centurion Way.

Undoubtedly Roman soldiers encamped on Halton Hill. From this elevated position it would be possible to observe movement over a wide area of Merseyside. There is a late seventeenth century reference to 'Roan' remains on Halton Hill and also to a military road leading to them. In 1699 a Mr. Stones investigated the area around Halton Castle and he came to the conclusion that "*The castle is situated at one angle of the [Roman] station .... And from this angle, both the line of the Roman vallum and its corresponding fosse, have been continued with their usual regularity in the form of a parallelogram to the extent of nearly forty statute acres*" Stones admits that "*only obscure and imperfect traces could be discerned*" and we are not told in which angle of the Roman camp the Norman castle was placed. No vestige of Roman building is apparent today but if Stones' dimensions are correct and the site did cover forty acres, then there is no doubt that the station was more than a temporary earthwork. Stones' unscientific observations with their inconclusive comments cannot be accepted with any degree of certainty but it is possible that at some future date archaeological exploration could enhance our knowledge of activity on Halton Hill during the period of Roman occupation.

Throughout all English counties accounts of ancient trackways and roads, allegedly Roman, are numerous. The origins of most so-called Roman roads date from the medieval period and later. Few can be traced back to the occupation. One such 'Roman' road was unearthed in Runcorn a hundred years ago.

In 1884 a paved road was discovered half a metre under the surface of a field at the south end of the Big Pool. A length of roadway was exposed to reveal a three metre wide causeway paved with boulders and having a convex surface. The line of the road pointed towards Weston village, up what was known as Sprinch Valley or Pool Valley. In the eighteenth century, during the construction of the Bridgewater Canal an embankment had been built across the small stream which flowed down the valley and caused the formation of the pool. Investigation by probing to a depth of 1.5 metres proved that the road dipped towards the pool. Thomas Watkin decided that the discovery merited a mention in his 'Roman Cheshire'. He believed the causeway was ancient in origin and that it had been in use until the canal was built. He thought 'it best to put the fact on record ... though it is doubtful whether Roman'. Watkin was puzzled. He could not account for such a well made surface on such a minor country lane. The local newspapers of the time however expressed no doubts. They emphatically pronounced the find to be the remains of a Roman road. But firm evidence of Roman commercial and military activity in the immediate district is non-existent. Watkin, in his Roman Lancashire, does mention a ferry or ford from Ditton to Runcorn which communicated with the Roman camp on Halton Hill but he gives no authority for its existence. Of the Roman occupation in what is now Runcorn and Halton there is little more to add. There have been a few random finds. In 1907 a Mr. Roederer exhibited a Roman coin of the Emperor Domitian at a meeting of the Cheshire Antiquarian Society. The coin had been found nine metres below the sand of the river bed during the excavations near to the Runcorn railway bridge and a four century coin of the Emperor Constantine was found by a schoolboy in a field in Weston in 1950. In recent years groups using metal detecting equipment have been active in the district and although definite evidence is not yet available there have been reports that Roman artefacts have been discovered at Dutton.

**Sylvester & Nulty**

**The Historical Atlas of Cheshire Pub. 1958  
revised 2004**

As the title implies these are a series of maps of Cheshire relating to various topics.

For the Roman period the reference is "a single coin and pig of lead found. No road shown"

**Thompson**

**Roman Cheshire Pub. 1965  
Pages 20, 101, 102, 106.**

The discovery of lead ingots at Chester from the territory of the Deceangli suggests they were shipped up the Dee estuary, while a similar discovery near Runcorn, on the Mersey, indicates an even wider distribution.

Farther west, Halton castle near Runcorn was suggested as a possible military site as long ago as 1669 but on no very strong grounds. One very interesting discovery in the area, which may have encouraged the idea, was of twenty pigs of lead found, according to the Elizabethan antiquary Camden, on the banks of the Mersey. Camden records two stamped inscriptions :-

IMP. VESP. VII. T. IMP V COSS. and  
IMP. DOMIT. AVG. GER. DE. CEANG. Of AD 76 and AD 84-96 respectively.

These were clearly the products of the Flintshire lead mines but there is less certainty about their loss, i.e. whether as a result of shipwreck on the way up the Mersey or brought overland from Chester to be taken by water and then abandoned. The discrepancy of date may, as the late Miss M.V. Taylor suggested, indicate that they were collected and brought here in the Middle Ages en route for building operations at Vale Royal Abbey near Northwich. However, the discovery in 1936 of Roman pottery at Halton Brow, half a mile north west of Halton Castle, led the late Professors Newstead and Droop to carry out exploratory excavation there, from which they concluded that there had been a rectangular ditched enclosure of perhaps one acre in area. of a temporary nature and late third or fourth century date, and conceivably of military origin..

One of the defects of the siting of the Legionary fortress at Chester was that it was not particularly suitable to coastal defence and, in particular, to surveillance of the Mersey estuary; it may not be too fanciful to see in the possible military site at Halton Brow a small fortlet better adapted to this purpose.

**Victoria County History**

**Cheshire Vol. I Pub. 1987**

**Pages 116, 120, 186, 188, 213, 215, 221, 234.**

Page 116 is a map of Cheshire showing the Roman military sites and a small note of the pigs of lead.

A site at Halton Brow had a V-shaped ditch on three sides; a size of 61m. by c64m. was estimated, giving an area of under half a hectare. No internal structures were found and very little dating material; occupation was dated to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century. In further investigation undertaken when the site was threatened by house building, the single ditch was found to have enclosed an irregular pentagon 106 m. by 73 m.; there was no sign of a bank or rampart, and it seems unlikely that the site was military as was originally thought. A small amount of pottery was dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. The old belief that Halton Castle occupied one corner of a larger Roman site, of which the defences "in the form of a parallelogram" were still thought to be visible in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, seems to have no basis in fact.

**Page 130 is a map of Roman Cheshire from the Hadrianic period and is reproduced as Illustration 1 at the end of these extracts.**

Two other sites that have yielded apparently Roman structures are Daresbury and Frodsham. .... A Denarius of Hadrian was found at Daresbury. .... Crop marks of a field system apparently of iron Age or Roman ... have been recorded from the air at ... Frodsham, although their date is not known.

The site at Halton was at first thought to be military and of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but doubt has been cast on the interpretation, and it seems more likely that the pentagonal ditched enclosure was part of a farming settlement.

Vessels carried pottery from Wilderspool to forts in the north and in north Wales, and the discovery of twenty lead pigs on the foreshore near Runcorn indicates another cargo, possibly bound for Wilderspool, where lead working is believed to have taken place. Some of the ingots certainly, and the remainder probably, consisted of Deceanglian lead. Some can be dated to AD 76, others to the period AD 84-96.

Chester – Wilderspool - It seems likely that a road linked to legionary fortress with Wilderspool and the river crossing there. While there are convincing road lines as far as bridge Trafford, and from Preston on the Hill to Wilderspool, the intervening terrain is such that straight alignments were hardly possible, and the road line has not been identified; that it existed is suggested by the cluster of finds in the Frodsham area.

#### LIST OF FINDS :-

Aston by Sutton or Aston Grange (findspot not known) - Ten coins ranging in date from Augustus to Constantine II.

Daresbury - (a) Roman concrete or mortar revealed during alteration to the church in 1872  
(b) Denarius of Hadrian

Halton - (a) Halton Brow – Supposed late Roman military site, found 1936. further work, 1967, showed that a single ditch enclosed an irregular enclosure c. 106 m. by 73 m., perhaps belonging to a farm  
(b) Halton Castle thought to occupy one corner of a Roman site of some 40 ac.

Norton - Norton Priory – two sherds of samian

Runcorn - (a) Twenty lead ingots, some dateable AD 76 and others to AD 84-96 found on the foreshore

Sutton - Roman masonry and pavement reported.

Foote Gower apparently refers to this road when he says that a military way proceeded from an encampment (which he supposes existed) in Dunham Park and was “continued through the parish of Limme, and the townships of Bradley, Stretton and Daresbury, to Halton Castle”. He does not give his authority for the termination at either end of the road, and I strongly suspect he has drawn upon his imagination, for having stated that there was a Roman camp at Halton, he wished to make out some line of communication with it. There seems to be no existing traces of this road unless it be the one to Wilderspool, and this certainly does not go by Daresbury and Halton.

Mr. John Weston, in the Manchester Guardian, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1885, states that a Roman road went from Eddisbury Castle to Halton. I cannot, however, detect it. Numerous forest tracks emanated from Eddisbury in various directions, perhaps one of these is the road referred to.

In November, 1884, a road, styled by some of the Warrington newspapers a Roman road, was found in a field at the south end on the “Big Pool” at Runcorn, about 18 inches under the surface, dipping towards the pool; and at its edge, found by probing to be 4 feet below the sod. Where laid bare it was 10 feet wide, and paved with boulders. It was pointing up to Weston, up what was known as the “Sprinch Valley”, or “Pool Valley”, which is crossed by an embankment, thrown up when the Bridgewater canal was made in the last century. This embankment dammed up a small stream which flowed down the valley, and caused the formation of the pool. The other portion of the valley has been filled, within recollection, by rubbish, and is now built upon. The road has evidently been in use until the canal was made, and seems, by its form, ancient, but doubtful whether Roman. It is, however, best to put the fact on record, as it is singular to find what must have been a century since a country lane, paved with boulders, and having a convex surface.

Another Roman post on the Mersey, though I believe only a temporary one, and abandoned at an early date, was at Halton, near Runcorn. The attention of archaeologists was first attracted to this place as far back as the reign of Elizabeth. In the third edition of Camden’s Britannia (1590), p. 488, it is stated that at Halton there were found upon the very sea shore twenty pigs of lead, long in form, but “four square”, on some of which were to be read on the upper part in a hollow square –

IMP. DOMIT. AVG. GER. DE  
CEANG

but on others -

IMP. VESP. VII. T. IMP. V.  
COSS.

No other particulars of the discovery are given, but Foote Gower says : - This discovery was made by accidentally “pursuing a vein of marl near Runcorn, at the upper end of the estuary of the Mersey, an incident that has been omitted by Camden”.

Taking these inscriptions according to date, the last is the earliest, and corresponds to AD 76, or two years later than those found at Chester. Its reading is simply –  
IMP(ERATORE) VESP (ASIANO) VII T(ITO) IMP(ERATORE) V  
CO(N)S(ULIBU)S

The second, as the number of the consulate is not given may be at any time between AD 84 and 96, for Domitian did not receive the title of Germanicus until the former year. The reading of this is –  
IMP(ERATORE) DOMIT(IANO) AUG (USTO) GER(MANICO)  
DE CEANG(IS)

As there is “no smoke without fire”, so the discovery of such a number of blocks of lead could hardly have been made, unless there was a Roman station somewhere in the neighbourhood.

Accordingly we find some reference to this in the Foote Gower MSS, where after an account of the Roman road from Dunham Park to Halton Castle it is said of the latter place :- .....The extent and strength of this [Norman] castle was in proportion to the extensive barony, ..... And of course we need not wonder at the changes it must have effected in the original plan of the Roman works. It was situated, as is frequently the case, at one angle of the station, with the view that the former defences which had been raised with such art and judgement, might equally serve for the external security of the Norman fortress. And from this angle, both the line of the Roman vallum and its corresponding fosse, have been continued with their usual regularity, in the form of a parallelogram, to the extent of nearly forty statute acres.

We are not told in which angle of the Roman camp the Norman Castle was placed; but no vestiges of the former seem apparent now, though two centuries may well have obliterated them. Its size, 40 acres, if this be correct, forbids the idea that it was more than a temporary earthwork. At the same time there is little doubt but that at this point, where the Mersey contracts, a small port would be placed, and these pigs of lead were probably lost during the process of shipping them.

**Whimperley**

**Widnes Through the Ages Pub.1991  
Pages 7, 8.**

There is evidence too that the Romans built a villa in the Runcorn area and the museum collection at Warrington contains several Roman pigs of lead that were found on Runcorn Marsh. These pigs are believed to have been washed ashore from a Roman vessel during a ship-wreck or a storm and are a further reminder of the river trafficking that went on in those early times.

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 sowes 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 the following inscription, commemorative of a victory over the Cangii :-

On the one side - IMP. DOMIT. AVG. GER. DE  
CEANG

and on the other -

IMP. VESP. VII. T. IMP. V.  
COSS.

## **SOCIETY TRANSACTIONS –**

### **Chester Archaeological and Historic**

**Vol. 1            Pub. 1887        Traffic between Deva and the Coast of North Wales in  
Roman Times  
Pages 83, 84**

The traffic in lead from Flint was not limited to Chester, since Camden tells us, that in his day “20 sows pf lead” were found at Halton on the banks of the Mersey. As they all bear the stamp of being the tribute of the Cangi, and as Sandonium was, so far as we know, the only smelting place for lead hereabouts utilised by the Romans, we may infer with considerable probability that they were produced at Sandonium.

Another pig of lead of the same DE CANGI type was found on the line of the Roman street across Hints Common in Staffordshire. And again we have the twenty pieces mentioned by Camden as occurring on the shore near Runcorn. These facts show the dispersion of lead, along four distinct lines of trade routes from the smelting station at Sandonium.

**Vol. 58            Pub. 1975        Excavations at Halton Brow, Runcorn, 1967**

**Copy at the end of this section.**

### **Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society**

**Vol. 12            Pub. 1895        Ancient Fords, ferries and Bridges in Lancashire  
Page 8**

Passing up the river we come next to Runcorn Gap. Here the river is or was fordable at low water. Thompson Watkin in his “Roman Lancashire” (p.88) speaks of a trajectus from Ditton or Widnes to Runcorn, to communicate with the Roman camp at Halton, but gives no authority for its existence, and in “Roman Cheshire” he makes no reference whatever to it.

### **Cheshire Historian**

**Vol. 3            Pub. 1953        Roman Roads of Cheshire  
Pages 17 - 19**

The siting of the main roads crossing the county was governed by the river Mersey. The bridgehead was at Wilderspool, near Warrington, and there are probably at least three roads meeting at this point; one for Chester, another for Whitchurch and a third from Northwich.

Page 18 contains a diagrammatic map of the Roman roads in Cheshire.

The only structural remains .... are at :-  
Halton – ditches and 3<sup>rd</sup> century pottery.

## Palatine Notebook

Vol. 2            Pub. 1882      Roman Camp at Halton  
Page 87

In the Foote Gower MSS, relating to Cheshire, preserved in the Bodleian Library, it is stated that a Roman road ran from in Dunham Park and “ has been continued through the parish of Limme, and the townships of Bradley, Stretton and Daresbury, to Halton Castle”. We are then told that the Rev. Mr. Stones investigated the Roman remains at Halton and the military road to it from Dunham about the year 1699. halton Castle it is said was situated in the angle of a Roman camp, but which angle is not stated.

*.... And from this angle, both the line of the Roman vallum and its corresponding fosse, have been continued with their usual regularity in the form of a parallelogram to the extent of nearly forty statute acres”. It is not, however, to be imagined that they were either of them at this time in any such state of preservation as strictly to deserve the military titles by which we have presumed to distinguish them, since it was only the obscure and imperfect traces which could be discerned. ....*

Can any traces, however faint, of this camp now be found ? The dimensions given (forty acres) can hardly be correct, unless the camp was merely temporary. It is, however, highly probable from the discovery (recorded by Camden) of a number of pigs of lead of Vespasian and Domitian (varying in their date from AD 76 to AD 96) on the “sea shore” at Halton some three hundred years ago, that the Romans had a small station and port in this neighbourhood.