

Cheshire Historic Environment Record Monument Full Report



HER Number

1973 - MCH1407

Site Name

Moated site 180m West of Fir Tree Farm

Record Type

Monument

Medieval Moated site consists of earthwork platform 63m by 47m, defined within a dry moat 15m wide and up to 1.5m deep, with a possible entrance causeway across the south-east arm. Still considerable bank and ditch on the west and south, but much spread by continuous ploughing.

This medieval moated site 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.

In 2015 a geophysical survey of the moat and its surrounding area detected the ditch of the moat and also anomalies within the moat which may represent buried building remains. An archaeological evaluation in 2019 took place on land to the west of Wrexham Road, just to the south-east of the moat. The excavation recovered a small amount of medieval pottery, along with a glazed floor tile which may indicate the presence of a high status building close by, potentially significant given the proximity of the moat.

Moated Sites are characterised by a waterlogged ditch that encloses a platform of land where buildings were built though they were also used for horticulture e.g. orchards. They were most popular in medieval times though not necessarily for the defensive advantages of being on an island as they were also seen as a sign of prestige. There are approximately 6000 across England with over 200 moated sites in Cheshire alone.

Monument Types and Dates

MOAT (Medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD)

Evidence

EARTHWORK

Description and Sources

Description - None recorded

<1> **Ordnance Survey**, 1870-1982, *Ordnance Survey Archaeological Record Card, SJ36SE5 1959* (Index). SCH2487.

Moat 15m wide on average and a maximum of 1.5m deep. The only trace of an entrance is on the south side where the ditch is only 0.7m deep and is possibly the remains of a causeway. The moat is dry throughout its length and grass covered. There are no visible traces of any buildings within the enclosed area. Site has been mutilated by the plough.

<2> **English Heritage**, Various, *Old/Original Schedule Entry (Scheduled Ancient Monuments Description), No. CH88* (Scheduling Record). SCH4606.

Still considerable bank and ditch on the west and south, but much spread by continuous ploughing. Bank appears to be 15-20m wide with gradual slope down to moat now c.5-6m wide and c.1m deep. Sides c.70m long. Platform level. Slight rise in ground surface on side of moat mid south side, may mark line of former causeway. Site in poor condition. South corner of ditch has very deep tractor ruts. Ditch has been ploughed and an attempt has been made to plant potatoes. A small excavation

was carried c.10 years ago, during one afternoon, but precise location and details are lacking.

<2> **English Heritage**, Various, *Schedule Entry (Scheduled Ancient Monuments Amendment), 13451* (Scheduling Record). SCH2950.

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.

<3> **Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME)**, 1988, *Marlston-cum-Lache (SJ36SE5) : Moat* (Report). SCH2119.

Full description and accurate plan undertaken by RCHM(E) Keele Office in 1988

"The date and function of the moat are uncertain. Dodgson suggests that it may have been the site of the manor house of Marlston....This manor's history of tenure is not clearcut, but it apparently (with Lache) formed part of the property of St. Marys nunnery in Chester: after the Dissolution it was bought by the Breretons of Handford and by the end of the 17th century came into the Mainwaring family, in contrast with Lache which was sold to the Manleys of Lache Hall..... The moated site is not depicted or shown as occupied on early maps. The present Moat Farm appears to be early 19th century date"

"....The moat lies in improved pasture: it is generally in a fairly good state of preservation, despite lacking any fine detail from its having been overploughed first by ridge-and-furrow and then subsequently by modern agricultural operations to flatten the ridge and furrow and to improve the pasture by underdraining.....It is straight-sided and rectangular in shape, with overall dimensions of 73 x 88m with the island having maximum dimensions of 47 x 63m. The island is not raised above the surrounding ground surface...The arms of the moat are now dry and almost intact except for the external lips of the NW and NE sides which have been recut as dykes for land drainage and also carry hedgerows"

<4> **Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME)**, 1988, *Plan, Moated site 180m W of Fir Tree Farm- 1:1250* (Graphic Material). SCH2650.

Full description and accurate plan undertaken by RCHM(E) Keele Office.

<5> **Dodgson J McN**, 1970-2, 1981, *The Place-Names of Cheshire, Vol 4 p 164* (Book). SCH3228.

Moat Cottages & Farm..named from a moat near the farm, perhaps the site of a manor house of Marlston"

<6> **Ormerod, G.**, 1882, *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester, Vol 2 p.822-3* (Book). SCH1389.

(Details of the historical ownership of Lache and Marlston) summarised in source 3.

<7> **GSB Prospection Ltd**, 2015, *Geophysical Survey Report G1591: Land off Wrexham Road, Chester, R4038* (Client Report). SCH8274.

In 2015 a geophysical survey of the moat and its surrounding area detected the ditch of the moat and also anomalies within the moat which may represent buried building remains.

<8> **CgMs Consulting**, 2017, *Land at Wrexham Road, Chester. Environmental Statement, Chapter J: Cultural Heritage Archaeology, R4045* (Client Report). SCH8285.

The moat was considered in an Environmental Impact Assessment in May 2017 as part of a continuing programme of study in advance of a residential development. It was considered appropriate to make provision for an area of set aside around the moat to safe-guard surviving earthworks and potential sub-surface remains.

J.4.19

"At Domesday, Marlston cum Lache comprised two distinct manors, Lache and Merlstone, both had land for half a plough, suggesting that, as in the prehistoric period, arable agriculture was not extensive on the heavy Boulder Claylands. The manor house of Lache is thought to have occupied the site of the 19th century Lache Hall, but this has now been cleared and the area developed. However, the manor house of Marlston may be represented by the moated enclosure in the southern central part of the site (HER 1973). This moated manor house, designated as a Scheduled Monument, comprises an earthwork platform 63m by 47m, defined within a dry moat 15m wide and up to 1.5m deep, with a possible entrance causeway across the south-east arm. The recent Geophysical Survey (Appendix J2) located anomalies within the moat that were tentatively interpreted as the remains of a possible building. In addition, aerial photographs taken in 1947 indicated ridge and furrow cultivation crossed the moat from the adjacent field, which were also seen in the results of the Geophysical Survey. It is therefore suggested that the manor house was abandoned and demolished in the Medieval period and the site ploughed in the early Post-Medieval period. "

<9> **Northern Archaeological Associates**, 2020, *Archaeological Investigation Report: Wrexham Road, Chester, R4427* (Client Report). SCH8865.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 2019 on land to the west of Wrexham Road, just to the south-east of the moat. The excavation recovered a small amount of medieval pottery, along with a glazed floor tile which may indicate the presence of a high status building close by, potentially significant given the proximity of the moat.

The fragment of medieval tile was recovered from the fill of a paleochannel that also included Roman, post-medieval and modern material. Two tiles with the identical stamp are held at the British Museum, acquired from the collector the Duke of Rutland in the 1940's. As they are complete, the entire design can be seen, which also includes diagonal lines and trefoils in the corners. They are supposed to be from Lilleshall Abbey, established by 1148, approximately 50 miles away from Wrexham Road.

Sources

- (1) Index: Ordnance Survey. 1870-1982. Ordnance Survey Archaeological Record Card. SJ36SE5 1959
- (2) Scheduling Record: English Heritage. Various. Old/Original Schedule Entry (Scheduled Ancient Monuments Description). No. CH88
- (2) Scheduling Record: English Heritage. Various. Schedule Entry (Scheduled Ancient Monuments Amendment). 13451
- (3) Report: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME). 1988. Marlston-cum-Lache (SJ36SE5) : Moat.
- (4) Graphic Material: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME). 1988. Plan, Moated site 180m W of Fir Tree Farm- 1:1250.
- (5) Book: Dodgson J McN. 1970-2, 1981. The Place-Names of Cheshire. Vol 4 p 164
- (6) Book: Ormerod, G.. 1882. The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester. Vol 2 p.822-3
- (7) Client Report: GSB Prospection Ltd. 2015. Geophysical Survey Report G1591: Land off Wrexham Road, Chester. R4038. R4038
- (8) Client Report: CgMs Consulting. 2017. Land at Wrexham Road, Chester. Environmental Statement, Chapter J: Cultural Heritage Archaeology. R4045. R4045
- (9) Client Report: Northern Archaeological Associates. 2020. Archaeological Investigation Report: Wrexham Road, Chester. R4427. R4427

Associated resources - None recorded

Location

National Grid Reference

Centred SJ 392 634 (118m by 109m) SJ36SE Dispersed Accuracy: Central Point

Administrative Areas

Civil Parish MARLSTON CUM LACHE, CHESTER, CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER
Historic MARLSTON CUM LACH, CHESTER ST MARY ON THE HILL, CHESHIRE
Township/Parish/County
Ceremonial County CHESHIRE

Address/Historic Names - None recorded

Designations, Statuses and Scorings

Associated Designations

Scheduled Monument - 1011882 Moated Site 180M W of Fir Tree Farm Active DCH162

Other Statuses and Cross-References

County Treasures Record - 6/A-019 Active
Historic Environment Record - 1973 Active

Ratings and Scorings

MPP Amenity Value 33
MPP Diversity (features) 1
MPP Documentation (archaeological) 4
MPP Documentation (historical) 1
MPP Group Value (association) 4
MPP Group Value (clustering) 9
Monument Class 1
MPP Potential 9
MPP Survival 4
MPP Total Score SAM 88.

Related Monuments

2097/1 Manors of Leche and Merlestone Geographical

Finds - None recorded

Associated Events/Activities

ECH2696 (Event - Survey)
ECH6394 Geophysical Survey Report G1591: Land off Wrexham Road, Chester (Event - Survey. Ref: G1591)

ECH6401 Land at Wrexham Road, Chester. Environmental Statement, Chapter J: Cultural Heritage Archaeology (Event - Interpretation. Ref: 13560531 v3)

ECH6829 Archaeological Investigation Report: Wrexham Road, Chester (Event - Intervention. Ref: NAA 20-33)
