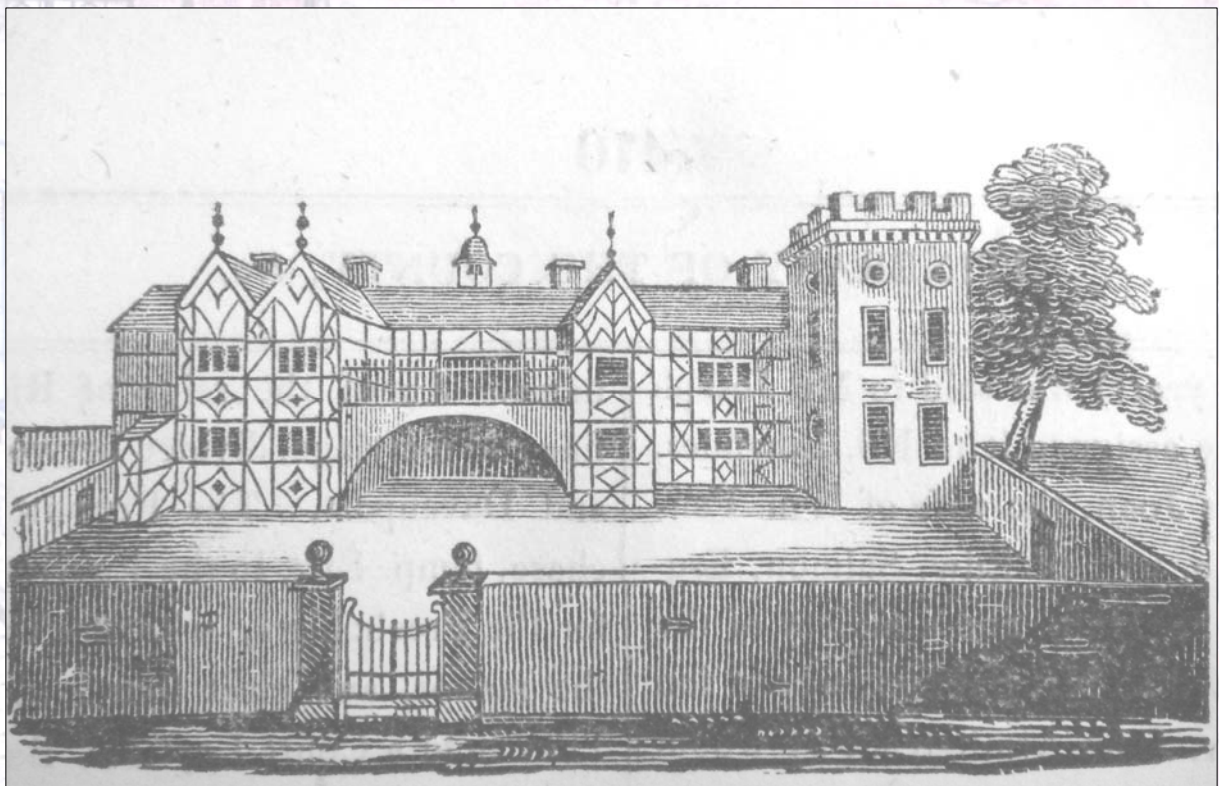


# Leftwich Old Hall, Northwich

## An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment



**MANCHESTER**  
1824

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## *Summary*

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This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site of Leftwich Old Hall, Leftwich, Cheshire (SJ 6640 7190) (CHER 2380/1), carried out by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit and commissioned by the Leftwich Historical Association, Inc. The assessment has been undertaken as a preliminary stage to inform a possible programme of fieldwork.

The study area is believed to lie on the site of Leftwich Old Hall, established by the early 14<sup>th</sup> century when the family name of Leftwich was in use by the lord of the manor. The hall included a stone tower, believed to be of late medieval date, and there is also evidence for a moat, again probably dating to the medieval period. A woodcut shows that the greater part of the hall comprised a timber-framed range, including perhaps a medieval great hall and other elements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This building was demolished between 1776 and 1810 and a farm built on the site, which was in turn demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The assessment has found that the study area has the potential for containing remains of regional and local significance, belonging to the medieval and post-medieval hall and the later farm. The presence and extent of such remains could be confirmed by further work, beginning with a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching.

Depending upon the results, the evaluation could in turn be followed by a programme of open area excavation. This further phase of work has the potential for community involvement. The possible archaeological remains range from complex and, in the case of the moat, deep deposits associated with the hall, to brick footings and floor surfaces belonging to the farm, and as such might be excavated and recorded using a range of archaeological experience, from supervisory professionals to novice volunteers.

## *1. Introduction*

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- 1.1 The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit was commissioned by the Leftwich Historical Association, Inc, to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site of Leftwich Old Hall, Leftwich, Cheshire, as a preliminary stage to inform a possible programme of archaeological fieldwork.<sup>1</sup>

Leftwich Old Hall is of genealogical interest as the ancestral home of the Leftwich family, one of whose members, Ralph Leftwich, emigrated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to Virginia and is the ancestor of later and present-day family members in the United States. The site is also of archaeological interest as one of the major manorial halls of Cheshire, although paradoxically it is also a site which has been largely overlooked in modern works on the county.<sup>2</sup>

- 1.2 The assessment has aimed, as far as is reasonably possible, to identify the nature of the archaeological resource within the study area and to assess its significance. It will inform future work on the site, including the location of evaluation trenches, on-site interpretation and school information packs.
- 1.3 The study area comprised the site of the hall, and the wider surroundings where these enable the hall to be placed into its broader archaeological context. All archaeological periods have been considered.

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1 The assessment was carried out by Dr Peter Arrowsmith, UMAU. Thanks to Dow Nichol, Leftwich Historical Association, Inc; Dr Jill Collens, Project Leader - Historic Environment, and Rob Edwards, Historic Environment Record Officer, Cheshire County Council Environmental Planning; Derek Whitfield; Mrs Celia Wootton; Frances McIntosh, Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer, National Museums Liverpool; and the staff of Northwich Library.

2 The hall is omitted in the standard published accounts of country houses in Cheshire (Figueiredo & Treuherz 1988) and the North-West (Robinson 1991). It is also not mentioned in standard countrywide works on medieval fortified sites (King 1983) and medieval great houses (Emery 2000).

## *2. Methodology Statement*

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2.1 The assessment consisted of a desk-top study and a site inspection. The following sources have been consulted for the desk-based study:

- Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER)
- Printed and manuscript maps
- Place-name and field-name evidence
- Published and unpublished documentary sources
- Aerial photographs
- Other photographs and illustrations
- Previous archaeological investigations

Archives consulted have included:

- Cheshire Record Office
- Northwich Library
- National Monuments Record Aerial Photography Collection
- The British Library

2.2 The site inspection aimed to relate findings of the desk-based study to the existing topography and land-use and to recover evidence not available from the desk-based sources.

2.3 Dr Jill Collens, archaeological curator for Cheshire, has been consulted on the findings of the assessment.

### 3. The Setting

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#### 3.1 Location and Land-use

- 3.1.1 The site of Leftwich Old Hall (SJ 6640 7190) (CHER 2380/1) lies on the south side of the residential area of Leftwich, a suburb of the town of Northwich (**III. 1**). The study area for this assessment is bounded by Fairfield Road on the north, Ellesmere Road on the west, Belgrave Road on the south, and Richmond Drive on the south-east. On the north-east the study area also includes an area flanked on three sides by housing set back from Richmond Drive (**III. 14**).

The northern part of the study area is owned by Vale Royal Borough Council and the southern part by the Church of England.

- 3.1.2 The study area largely comprises open grassy areas (**IIIs. 27-34**) which on the south include the site of the Church of England chapel of the Farm of the Good Shepherd. This has been recently demolished, leaving brick and cement footings which are approached by a curving tarmac footpath from Ellesmere Road. At the time of the site visit, the footings of the chapel were partly covered by two storage containers (**III. 35**).

By Ellesmere Road the south side of the tarmac footpath is flanked by a kerb of sandstone blocks, partly overgrown (**III. 36**). A sandstone block, measuring 16in by 14in by 12in deep, is reported to lie just below the turf roughly 3yds to the north of that footpath and roughly 5yds to the east of the edge of the footpath on Ellesmere Road (**III. 37**).<sup>3</sup>

On the west side of Richmond Drive the remains of a base mark the site of a stone monument commemorating the Old Hall. Made of granite from Mt Airey, North Carolina, this was erected in 1992 by 'American Leftwich families and other Leftwich descendants'.

There are mature trees in the north of the study area, and younger trees on its western and southern boundaries. The vegetation cover in the north and east of the study area is well-kept grassland, with rough grassland in the west and south.

Just to the north of the line of the boundary between the Vale Royal Borough Council and Church of England land and centrally placed in the study area is a service access cover.

#### 3.2 Geology

- 3.2.1 The solid geology of the study area, as mapped by the OS Geological Survey, comprises strata of the Northwich Halite Formation.
- 3.2.2 As mapped by the OS Geological Survey, the superficial geology comprises glacially deposited Boulder Clay.

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3 Derek Whitfield, personal communication.

### 3.3 Topography

- 3.3.1 The study area lies on elevated ground between the valleys of the River Weaver on the west and the River Dane on the east and despite the surrounding built-up area of housing it still presents a commanding view northwards towards the town of Northwich (**III. 29**). OS mapping shows the study area lying between the 35m and 40m contours, with higher ground above 40m lying immediately to the south, between Belgrave Road and Old Hall Road (**III. 1**).
- 3.3.2 The southern part of the study area is fairly flat, though with a perceptible rise from north to south and with other localised variations in height. The northern part of the study area shows a sharper fall from south to north (**III. 27 & 28**), so that ground level on the northern boundary on Fairfield Road lies c 1.5-2m below the level of the site of the Farm of the Good Shepherd. This change of slope roughly coincides with the east west boundary between the Vale Royal Borough Council and Church of England land shown on modern OS mapping (**III. 26, 31 & 32**). Although at present this boundary has no physical demarcation, it is partly traceable on the ground as a slight linear depression.

## 4. *Archaeological and Historical Background*

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### 4.1 **Pre-Medieval**

- 4.1.1 Only a handful of prehistoric finds are recorded from the Northwich area<sup>4</sup> and none are known from the study area. Within the North-West the evidence for prehistoric activity is often sporadic and based on chance finds, but this evidence does point to settlement and other activity being concentrated on sands and gravels, particularly close to watercourses or wetlands, rather than on the heavier more impermeable boulder clays which form the drift geology of much of the region and are present within the study area itself.

At No 113 Granville Road, c 60m south-west of the study area (at SJ 6628 7180), fragments of 'vitrified' dark reddish brown clay were found while digging out tree roots. Two fragments were seen by Frances McIntosh, Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer, and are described as comprising a triangular piece, 53mm wide and 18mm in thickness, and a subrectangular piece, 56mm long, 52mm wide and 17mm in thickness, which joined together to form one piece. The clay contained inclusions in the form of pieces of quartz, c 2mm in size. The high level of vitrification of the clay suggests that it was used in a high temperature industrial activity such as metalworking or glassmaking, while the fact that the clay was vitrified on both sides suggests that it was used in a furnace as a form of support, rather than being part of a furnace wall where vitrification would have occurred on one side only. The date of the pieces is unknown and might be of any period from the Iron Age onwards.<sup>5</sup> Other and larger pieces are in possession of the finder, Mrs Wootton.<sup>6</sup>

- 4.1.2 Northwich was the site of a Roman fort located on the Roman road between Chester and York, c 2km west of the junction with King Street, the north-south road between Warrington and Middlewich. Excavation has shown that the fort was first occupied in about AD 70 and finally abandoned in about AD 140. This work has also uncovered evidence of a possible military annex to the fort and of a possible *vicus* or civilian settlement, along with evidence for the exploitation of the local brine springs during the Roman period.<sup>7</sup>

No Roman finds are known from the study area or the immediate locality. The Leftwich tithe award gives Pavement Field as the name of a field c 0.5km to the south-west of the study area, at SJ 6600 7145. The name may be indicative of a Roman road<sup>8</sup> but its likely alignment is uncertain.

### 4.2 **The Manor of Leftwich and the Owners and Occupants of Leftwich Old Hall**

- 4.2.1 Historically Leftwich Old Hall lay within the township of Leftwich, one of eleven townships within the parish of Davenham.

Leftwich has an Old English place-name, of which the first element is the feminine personal name 'Leoftæt' and the second element is 'wic', a salt-making site.<sup>9</sup> The location of that early site, which

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4 Shaw & Clark 2003, 3.

5 Frances McIntosh, Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer, National Museums Liverpool, personal communication. I am grateful to Derek Whitfield to drawing my attention to this find.

6 Mrs Celia Wootton, personal communication.

7 Shaw & Clark 2003, 3-5.

8 CHER 721.

9 Dodgson 1970, 206.



would have been located at a brine spring or salt marsh, is unknown but in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the Leftwich Eyes Saltworks were established in the township on fields to the south of the River Dane at approximately SJ 658 735.<sup>10</sup> Leftwich is named simply as 'Wice' in the Domesday survey of 1086, which reports that in 1066, prior to the Norman Conquest, it was held by Osmaer and Alsige as two manors. Osmaer is named as the holder of ten estates in pre-Norman Cheshire and the rarity of the name suggests that the same individual is meant in each case. Although these estates were fairly widely dispersed in the county, they included a block in Davenham parish which comprised Shipbrook, Leftwich and Davenham and which may have represented the core of Osmaer's lands with his head manor possibly at Shipbrook. Alsige was a minor landowner in Cheshire. In addition to his estate at Leftwich he held one of two manors at Wharton, also in Davenham parish.<sup>11</sup>

- 4.2.2 Following the Norman takeover of Cheshire in 1069-70, Leftwich formed part of the landholdings of Richard de Vernon, one of several major landowners or barons established under the earldom of Chester. Of de Vernon's fourteen manors listed in 1086 in Domesday, seven formed a group around his head manor of Shipbrook, among these being Leftwich.<sup>12</sup> By 1086 these landholdings also included a church at Davenham and the dedication of this church to St Wilfred implies that it was an Anglo-Saxon foundation.<sup>13</sup> Along with the earl, the Cheshire barons were the principal castle builders of medieval Cheshire. As a general rule, a castle graced the head manor of their respective baronies, and a castle might also be erected elsewhere within the barony, sited for example in a hunting area. A castle at Shipbrook is believed to have been sited at Castle Hill, where its remains are said to have been finally removed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century'.<sup>14</sup>

From Richard de Vernon the barony of Shipbrook descended through the male line until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, when Warin de Vernon died leaving no children and the barony was claimed by his uncle Ralph Vernon, rector of Hanwell. Warin, however, had three sisters and Ralph Vernon's succession was contested. The dispute was settled by an arrangement under which Ralph retained half of the barony. As well as the head manor of Shipbrook, Ralph's share included two thirds of the manor of Leftwich but the other third was given to Warin's sister Maud, the wife of Richard de Wilbraham. The couple had a daughter, also named Maud, who married Robert de Wynnynton, and from whom this third share of Leftwich descended to her son Richard de Leftwyk. This Richard, who died in or before 1309-10, is the first known individual to bear the name of Leftwich. From him the Leftwich estate descended through the male line for over three hundred years, until the time of Ralph Leftwich in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. His son Robert Leftwich predeceased him and Ralph named as his heir Robert's daughter Elizabeth. She was the wife of William Oldfield, a younger son of Philip Oldfield of Bradwall, and the estate now passed to the Oldfield family.<sup>15</sup>

Its subsequent ownership was recounted by the Reverend Samuel Lysons and Daniel Lysons in the *Magna Britannia* of 1810:

'in the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Elizabeth daughter (*sic*) and heir of Ralph Leftwich married William Oldfield, whose descendant Mrs. Jane Oldfield, sister and coheir of Bowyer Oldfield Esq. the last male heir of the family, sold Leftwich about the year 1736 to the father of Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft Esq, of whom it was purchased about the year 1790 by the Hon. Booth Grey, father of

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10 Twigg nd.

11 Harris 1987, 323, 325, 352.

12 Harris 1987, 311, 352.

13 Harris 1987, 269, 352.

14 Ormerod 1819, 253.

15 Ormerod 1882, 270-3.

Booth Grey Esq. the present proprietor'.<sup>16</sup>

Probate evidence shows that Bowyer Oldfield died in 1730/1, and that his sister Jane died a spinster in 1737/8, bequeathing her estates in Leftwich and elsewhere to Thomas Ravenscroft of Pickhill in Denbighshire.<sup>17</sup>

George Ormerod's history of Cheshire, first published in 1819 and revised by Thomas Helsby in 1882, adds further details, noting that:

'the antient estate of the Leftwiches in this township passed by sale to the family of Ravenscroft, and was again sold by Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft, esq. to the late honourable Booth Grey. Leftwich Hall, and the greater part of the lands so purchased, were sold by his son, the present Booth Grey, esq, of Ashton Heys, to the late William Harper, esq. and are now vested in John Hosken Harper, esq.'<sup>18</sup>

- 4.2.3 Thomas Ravenscroft seems to have taken up residence at Leftwich Hall, since a memorial in Davenham church commemorated 'Thomas Ravenscroft Esq. late of Leftwich, in this Parish, who died in the year, 1776 aged 66'.<sup>19</sup> There are also references to 'Thomas Ravenscroft of Leftwich, Esquire' in 1756 and 1768.<sup>20</sup> His son Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft, on the other hand, is reported to have bought Davenham Lodge in the neighbouring township of Davenham, which after his death in 1795 was sold to William Harper of Liverpool.<sup>21</sup> A documentary reference to 'Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft of Davenham, Esquire' in 1790 implies that he had moved into the Davenham residence by that date.<sup>22</sup> He rebuilt Davenham Lodge as a Neoclassical house, which replaced an earlier timber-framed building.<sup>23</sup>

In purchasing Leftwich Old Hall William Harper was adding to his local estates, which also included the manor and barony of Shipbrook. On his death in 1815 these estates passed to his son-in-law, John Hosken Harper. He was succeeded by his son in 1865, on whose death in 1872 the estates passed to his nephew, Lieutenant Colonel France-Hayhurst, of Bostock Hall.<sup>24</sup>

- 4.2.4 The acquisition of Leftwich Old Hall by Thomas Highlord Ravenscroft appears to mark the transition from the site being the home of owner-occupants to it being leased to tenants. The earliest evidence for these is provided by the Land Tax assessments for Leftwich for the period 1781-1831<sup>25</sup> (**Table 1**). Although the Old Hall is not mentioned by name in the assessments it can be identified as the largest of the premises for which the owner is first listed as Thomas Ravenscroft Esq and from 1791 as the Hon Booth Grey. The connection with the Booth Greys continued until about 1814 when the owner is listed as the late Booth Grey Esq. Throughout the period 1781-1814 the occupant is named as John Lightfoot.

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16 Lysons & Lysons 1810, 648.

17 CRO WS Bowyer Oldfield of Leftwich, Esq, 1731; CRO WS Jane Oldfield of Leftwich, spinster, 1737.

18 Ormerod 1882, 272.

19 Ormerod 1882, 244.

20 CRO DDX 8/9, 10; British Library IOR/L/L/2/583.

21 Ormerod 1882, 238.

22 British Library IOR/L/L/2/586.

23 Figueiredo & Treuherz 1988, 227.

24 Ormerod 1882, 238, 251, 272.

25 CRO mf 208/41. Although the Land Tax was introduced in 1693, surviving returns date principally from the period 1780-1832, when copies of the assessments were lodged with the county government to provide evidence of an individual's right to vote.

**Table 1:** Owners and occupants of Leftwich Hall 1781-1831 from Land Tax assessments.

<i>Years</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Occupant</i>	<i>Description</i>
1781-1789	Thomas Ravenscroft	John Lightfoot	House & Land (1784), Farm & Land (1787-1789)
1790	T H Ravenscroft	John Lightfoot	Farm & Land
1791-1801	Hon Booth Grey	John Lightfoot	Farm & Land (1800), Farm (1801)
1802-1805	Late Hon Booth Grey	John Lightfoot	Farm
1806-1814	Booth Grey Esq	John Lightfoot	Farm
1815	John Lightfoot & William Harper Esq	John Lightfoot & Richard Earl	-
1816-1825	John Hoskin Harper & John Lightfoot	John Lightfoot & Richard Earl	-
1826-1827	Late Lightfoot's	Late Lightfoot's	Farm
1828	Late John Lightfoot	Lightfoot	Farm
1829-1830	Late John Lightfoot	Thomas Lightfoot	Farm
1831	Thomas Lightfoot	Thomas Lightfoot	-

**Table 2:** Details of Leftwich Old Hall in the 1841 Leftwich tithe award.

Owner	Occupier	Field No	Description	Use
John Hoskin Harper, Esquire	Thomas Dean	345	House Buildings & Yard	
		318	Winnington Moss	
		319	Intake	Pasture
		322	Lower Winnington	Pasture
		323	Black Butts	Meadow
		331	Welch Bank Meadow	
		332	Ditto	Meadow
		334	Wood Road	
		335	Wood Meadow	
		337a	Bully Meadow	Meadow
		338	Park	Pasture
		339	Pigeon House Field	Pasture
		340	Stable Field	Arable
		341	Lower Field	Pasture
		342	Long Field	Arable
		343	Mote Field	Pasture
		344	Slack Yard	
		346	Garden	
		347	Orchard	
		348	Brickiln Field	Pasture
		349	Hick Hill	Arable
		350	Ridding	Pasture
		351	Barn Field	Pasture
		352	Higher Winnington	Pasture
		353	Intake	Pasture
		355	Wood	
		356	Wrenches Field	
		357	Part of Top Coppice Loons	Pasture
358	Lower Part of ditto	Arable		
549	Part of New Lane Moss	Pasture		
331a	Part of River			

The period covered by the Land Tax assessments includes at least three generations of occupancy by the Lightfoot family. A John Lightfoot the elder of Leftwich, yeoman, died in 1812 and in his will of that year bequeathed his freehold, leasehold and personal estates to his son John Lightfoot

‘with whom I now reside’.<sup>26</sup> A second John Lightfoot of Leftwich died in 1825. His will, compiled in the previous year, lists five children, then all under the age of 21, including Thomas who was possibly the Thomas Lightfoot named as the occupant of the farm in the later Land Tax assessments.<sup>27</sup>

The Leftwich tithe award of 1841 again names John Hoskin (*sic*) Harper as owner and gives the tenant as Thomas Dean (**Table 2**). He continued to live here until the early 1870s and for part of this period had a dual occupation. Thus the census of 1841 describes him as a farmer and stone mason, a trade directory of 1850 lists him as a farmer and a contractor and builder,<sup>28</sup> while the census of 1851 describes him as a farmer employing two labourers and as a contractor employing 86 men. In the censuses of 1861 and 1871, however, he is described simply as a farmer. Among the servants in 1861 were a dairy maid and 15-year old cow boy, and in 1871 a dairy maid and cow man. By 1874 the Dean family had moved out and the farm was now occupied by Joseph Barlow, who is listed in a trade directory of that year as a grazier and farmer at the Old Hall and as a butcher at 6 Castle Street, Northwich.<sup>29</sup> Barlow was still the occupant in 1881, when the census also describes him as a farmer and butcher. By 1891, however, the farm had been taken over by Richard Leech, whose name also appears in the census of 1901. The Leech or Leach family continued to hold the farm until the end of its working life in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup>

### 4.3 Site Development

#### 4.3.1 *Published Descriptions*

The earliest known certain reference to Leftwich Old Hall occurs in the description of Cheshire compiled in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by William Webb. After mentioning the ancestral seat of the Holfords in Davenham township, Webb turned to Leftwich Hall but in his typical fashion provides a brief reference to the building and a summary mention of the family:

‘Betwixt this and the Northwich (*sic*) lies the township, with a fair house and demesne; whereof the owner Ralph Leftwich, esquire, hath continued the same name of the place of great antiquity; yet now by the heir-general of his heir, is like to pass into another name; to wit, William Oldfield, esquire; which house hath also a chapel and burial place in the same church [ie Davenham]’.<sup>31</sup>

An earlier reference to a house belonging to the Leftwich family occurs in c 1494 when Richard Leftwich, the head of the family, was among those who had a house or houses totally destroyed by Randall Hassall who carried off the timber.<sup>32</sup> This has sometimes been taken to refer to Leftwich Old Hall but it is perhaps more likely to relate to a more modest property on the family’s Cheshire estates, much of which would have been leased to poorer tenants.<sup>33</sup>

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26 CRO WS John Lightfoot the elder of Leftwich, yeoman, 1812.

27 CRO WS John Lightfoot of Leftwich, yeoman, 1825.

28 Bagshaw 1850, 462, 464.

29 Morris & Co 1874, 525.

30 <http://www.leftwich.org/gallery/LeftwichHallFarm/imagepages/image5.html>.

31 Ormerod 1882, 8.

32 Ormerod 1882, 271.

33 In 1594, for example, a later Ralph Leftwich granted Edward Venables, ‘a verie poore man’, permission to erect a cottage on his demesne land (Beck 1969, 32).

Other references to Leftwich Old Hall postdate its demolition. The earliest of these is found in the *Magna Britannia* of 1810 and as such also provides the latest possible date for that demolition:

‘The old hall of this manor has been taken down and a farmhouse built on the site’.<sup>34</sup>

In his history of Cheshire, published in 1819, George Ormerod, as well as noting the replacement of the hall with a farmhouse, gave a description of the old building:

‘The antient hall has been taken down, and its site is occupied by a modern farmhouse, pleasantly situated on rising ground at a short distance from the church of Davenham and the bank of the Dane. The former mansion was a quadrangular building of timber and plaister, at one corner of which was a square stone tower, with machicolated battlements, the original fabric of which appeared to be of considerable antiquity’.<sup>35</sup>

At the same period J H Hanshall’s history of Cheshire, after drawing on the *Magna Britannia*’s account of the ownership of Leftwich, added that,

‘A farm-house occupies the site of the ancient Hall of Leftwich’.<sup>36</sup>

It has been supposed that Ormerod’s account was derived from his own observation of the building when it was still standing.<sup>37</sup> Although born in Manchester in 1785, Ormerod was educated for a while in Chester and had commenced his research into the history of Cheshire by 1808-9,<sup>38</sup> making it possible for him to have seen the building before 1810, the latest date at which it could have been standing. However, while his reference to the topography of the site is suggestive of first-hand experience, it is possible that his description of the building was based on an illustration of the site, perhaps a woodcut which was reproduced by Hanshall (III. 15).

What does seem likely is that Ormerod’s account was in turn the source for a later summary description by Raines:

‘Leftwich Hall, a quadrangular building of timber and plaster, with a square stone tower having machicolated battlements, has been taken down’.<sup>39</sup>

A few years later the description of Leftwich in Bagshaw’s trade directory of Cheshire noted that,

‘The Hall, a fine old mansion of wood and plaster, has been taken down some time, and a good residence, called the Old Hall, in the occupancy of Mr. Thomas Dean, stands near the site’.<sup>40</sup>

This description of the farmhouse as standing ‘near’ the site of the Old Hall differs from that of earlier trade directories which probably draw on the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Cheshire histories in stating

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34 Lysons & Lysons 1810, 648.

35 Ormerod 1882, 272.

36 Hanshall 1817-23, 576.

37 Whitfield 1994, 71-2.

38 Hess 1989.

39 Raines 1845, 244 n 8.

40 Bagshaw 1850, 460.

that 'a farm house now occupies the site of the ancient hall'.<sup>41</sup>

In 1880 the site of the hall was visited by the artist George Robert Leftwich, whose account was later published by Walter Lee Hopkins.<sup>42</sup>

' LEFTWICH HALL was situated about one mile from Leftwich, Cheshire. It stood on a hill in the midst of the park, about 500 yards from the high road and 300 yards on the other side from the River Dane; from the hill is a fine view of the hills of Derbyshire...

The picture I have painted was partly taken from a slight pen and ink sketch in the possession of Mr. Thomas Dean, tenant of Leftwich Hall Farm from 1827 to 1879, and from surveys and sketches I took in 1880 when all that remained of the Hall and castle was the stone covered ground and parts of the moat, one of which was 100 feet by 40 feet and 8 feet deep, another 80 feet by 80 feet and not so deep. In the park were some beech trees about fifteen feet circumference in the boles, all that was left of an old avenue. I showed the clerk of Northwich Castle Church, which is about two miles from the Hall, the view I made from the sketch survey and he recognized it with great pleasure, as he had lived there all his life; he was an old man. He told me that a Mr. Thorley, in a fit of jealousy of one of the ladies at LEFTWICH HALL who had jilted him, cut her throat at the foot of the grand staircase. The Clerk thought her name was Ravenscroft and believed Thorley was hanged at Chester'.

This account appears to have been compiled to provide background information on an oil painting of Leftwich Old Hall by George Robert Leftwich (III. 17).

#### 4.3.2 *Primary Sources*

Primary documentary material relating to the development of the hall is scant. For the 16<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, information on the layout of some halls and lesser dwellings is provided by the probate documents of their occupants. These documents, chiefly comprising wills and inventories of the goods of the deceased, can name individual rooms and, in the case of inventories, even allow the modern reader to follow the route of the appraisers as they moved through a property. In the case of the occupants of Leftwich Old Hall, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century at least two heads of the Oldfield family died intestate, one being William Oldfield's son and heir Leftwich Oldfield who died in 1670 and the other being his own son also named Leftwich Oldfield who died in 1692.<sup>43</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century there are surviving wills for the third Leftwich Oldfield, who died in 1723, and of Jane Oldfield, who died in 1737/8.<sup>44</sup> Of these the first provides a single reference to a room within the hall, in that Leftwich Oldfield bequeathed to his 'Dear Wife the Furniture of her own Bed-Chamber and such other goods as she shall have a mind to'. For the earlier period, there is the will and inventory of Margaret Leftwich, widow, of 1576 which survives as a damaged copy. While this document lists her livestock and household goods it does not appear to name any parts of the hall.<sup>45</sup> In 1641 the will of William Leftwich of Northwich shows that the family still held three parcels of land in Leftwich. Among these was 'the Hall Orchard', presumably sited adjacent to Leftwich Old

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41 Pigot & Co 1828-9, 47 & 1834.

42 Hopkins 1931, xv-xvi.

43 CRO DOL 114.

44 CRO WS Leftwich Oldfield of Leftwich, Esq, 1723; CRO WS Jane Oldfield of Leftwich, spinster, 1737.

45 CRO WC Margaret Leftwich of Leftwich, widow, 1576.

Hall.<sup>46</sup>

The hall is named in a document of 1674 in which the second Leftwich Oldfield instructed that in the event of his death his wife Alice was to be provided with an annual income of £180 from the rent of

‘all and singular that the capitall messuage of him the said Leftwich Oldfield called the hall of Leftwich with itt appurtenances in Leftwich aforesaid in the possession of same Leftwich Oldfield and Thomas Richardson alias Greeneway and out of all those messuages in Leftwich aforesaid in the severall possession of Robert Nickson and Richard Picton and their assignees and out of all edifices buildings dovehouses courts curtillages demeasnes and demesne lands and grounds or reputed to being demesne lands and grounds to the said capitall messuage and other the messuages aforesaid’.<sup>47</sup>

As is often the case with deeds, the hall and its associated buildings are described in generalized terms but the reference to ‘dovehouses’ does introduce an element of the specific and may relate to a particular building or buildings then standing at the site.

For the late 17<sup>th</sup> century some information on the hall can be gleaned from the Hearth Tax returns for Leftwich from the 1660s and 1670s. These are tax assessments based on the number of hearths or fireplaces in each household and provide a rough assessment of size and status of buildings.<sup>48</sup> In 1664 Leftwich Oldfield was assessed for six hearths, and in 1673-4 ‘Mr Oldfield’ for seven hearths.<sup>49</sup> These are relatively low figures, in keeping, for example, with a house with a central great hall and modest cross-wings.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century George Robert Leftwich referred to the ‘grand staircase’ in the hall as the scene of the murder of a member of the Ravenscroft family by a Mr Thorley (see above, 4.3.1). The detail of the staircase, however, seems to have been added to the story for dramatic effect. A 30-year old nurseryman named Samuel Thorley from Northwich was executed at Chester for cutting the throat of his girlfriend in Leftwich but this was in 1834,<sup>50</sup> long after the demolition of the Old Hall.

#### 4.3.3 *Cartographic Evidence*

Leftwich Old Hall appears on the map of Cheshire by Christopher Saxton in 1577 (**III. 2**) and by John Speed in 1610 (**III. 3**), itself derived from Saxton’s map. In both cases it is named simply as ‘Leftwich’. Its inclusion reflects its status as a residence of the gentry but the scale and conventions of these maps mean that they provide no information about the physical makeup of the site. After the time of Saxton, the next first-hand survey of the county was carried out two hundred years later, by Peter Burdett.<sup>51</sup> His map was surveyed in the early 1770s and published in 1777, and therefore predates the demolition of the Old Hall. Following his usual convention for buildings, Burdett depicts the site as a simple square, with no indication of its actual form (**III. 4**). However, he does

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46 CRO WS Will and inventory of William Leftwich of Leftwich, gentleman, 1641. I am grateful to Derek Whitfield for drawing my attention to this reference.

47 CRO DOL 40. Thomas Richardson has not been otherwise identified.

48 The Hearth Tax was introduced in 1662 and abolished in 1689. Only returns for selective years have survived.

49 CRO mf 13/2; Lawton 1979, 246.

50 Yarwood 2007, 78.

51 Harley & Laxton 1974.

show that access to the site was via a routeway leading south-eastwards from London Road.

Subsequent surveys of the county, by Christopher Greenwood in 1819, William Swire and W F Hutchings in 1828-9 and Andrew Bryant in 1829-31, all postdate the demolition of the Old Hall and the site which they name as Leftwich Hall is thus the later farm, preserving the name of its predecessor (**Figs 5-7**). As on Burdett's map the site is shown as accessed by a south-eastward route from the main road. They also show the main part of the access routeway as bordered with trees, a feature suggestive of a deliberate planting to create an avenue approach to the Old Hall. It was possibly the remains of this avenue which George Robert Leftwich in the 1880s described as comprising 'some beech trees about fifteen feet circumference in the boles'.

At the farm site itself, each of the three early 19<sup>th</sup>-century county maps shows two or three buildings. Their particular arrangement differs on each map but, allowing for the relatively small scale of these maps (which is respectively 1inch, ¾ inch and 1¼ inches to 1 mile), all may be intended to indicate the same general arrangement, that is a farmhouse and one or more detached outbuildings set around a yard.

Detailed mapping of the site effectively begins in the late 1830s and early 1840s and shows precisely such an arrangement. The Leftwich tithe map of 1841 (**III. 10**) shows the farmhouse, distinguished in pink after the common fashion of such maps, as situated on the west of the site and having an L-shaped plan with an extension on the south. The outbuildings were situated to the east of the house and were grouped around a rectangular yard. A narrow range ran along the north side of this yard and adjoined a second range along the east side. A third, L-shaped, range occupied the yard's south-west corner, and was flanked on the west by a narrow range and rectangular enclosure, suggestive of a pigsty.

The tithe map shows access to the farm as via a straight trackway leading south-eastwards to enter the farmyard at its north-west corner. Apart from on the east, where it faced the yard, the farmhouse was surrounded by an enclosed garden. The greater part of this lay on the south, where it was in turn adjoined by an orchard.

The tithe apportionment names the field to the west of the farmhouse and orchard as Barn Field, a name which implies that a barn was once located in or adjacent to this field. Two other fields with names derived from buildings are located to the north-east of the farm site, one being Stable Field, and the other, adjoining this, Pigeon House Field. On the tithe map, no buildings are shown within the fields themselves. Pigeon House Field presumably takes its name from a lost dovecote which is likely to have been associated with the Old Hall. Both Stable Field and Barn Field might possibly have been named after buildings at the later farm, but in that case the association is not precise in that Barn Field was separated from the nearest outbuilding by the garden, while Stable Field lay some distance from the farmstead and was separated from it by another field, Mote Field. The name of that last field is itself suggestive as it implies the presence of a moat,<sup>52</sup> and the south-west corner of the field is in fact shown with a water-filled feature in the form of a sizeable pond. To the south of Mote Field and east of the farm buildings and orchard the tithe award shows Brick Kiln Field. This is also a significant name in that it implies the presence of a brick kiln within this area. More will be said below on the possible ramifications of these various field-names.

The arrangement of buildings shown on the tithe map is also recognizable on the 2in to 1 mile field survey mapping compiled by the Ordnance Survey (**III. 8**),<sup>53</sup> which formed the basis of the first

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52 Dodgson 1970, 206.

53 While parts of Cheshire were surveyed between 1817 and 1837, others were first surveyed in 1839 among



published OS sheet to depict the Old Hall, produced at the scale of 1in to 1 mile (**III. 9**).

Turning to later cartographic evidence, the general arrangement of the farm buildings shown on the tithe map, with a number of additions and alterations, is also evident on OS mapping into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1:2500 map of 1873 (**III. 11**) shows the south-west outbuilding as having a more irregular arrangement, while a detached building was now located, at a right angle to this outbuilding, by its south-east corner. The small rectangular enclosure is shown with two internal divisions, creating three pens, a detail which strengthens the interpretation of the building as a pigsty. A pond is again shown to the north-east of the farm buildings. To the west of this is an irregular enclosure, planted with trees. Its absence on the earlier tithe map strongly implies that this feature had been created in the interim.

The OS map of 1897 (**III. 12**) shows some modification of the earlier outbuildings. The two on the south-west side of the yard had been enlarged or rebuilt as a single L-shaped block. As in the previous arrangement, this included a probable pigsty on the west side. In addition steps are shown at the south end of this L-shaped block, implying the presence of an upper storey. By the same date the range on the east side of the yard had been extended to the rear. A detached L-shaped range had also been added to the north of the yard and a large open-sided block, presumably a Dutch barn, erected to the south-east.

The same building arrangement is depicted on mapping of 1908 (**III. 13**), which also indicates a well next to the western wall of the south-west outbuilding. To the north-east of the farm buildings the pond had now been reduced to roughly half its former size and given a more regular, rectangular shape.

Mapping of 1971 (**III. 14**) shows the farmhouse still standing and now abutted on the east by the chapel of the Farm of the Good Shepherd. By this date the site was surrounded by the housing estate, the outbuildings had been demolished and the pond is no longer shown. The farmhouse was demolished in 1972-3.<sup>54</sup>

#### 4.3.4 *Illustrative Material and Photographs*

The principal evidence for the appearance of the Old Hall is provided by a woodcut published in Hanshall's history of Cheshire, published between 1817 and 1823 (**III. 15**). It shows a timber-framed building, two storeys in height, with a taller, battlemented tower adjoining one end, the whole being fronted by a walled courtyard.

The tower appears to be shown as three storeys in height, with the battlements carried on projecting corbels. The two external faces shown on the woodcut have a mixture of tall rectangular and smaller round windows. These windows have a very unmedieval appearance but the castellated superstructure of the building is consistent with a late medieval date.

The timber-framed building, which abutted the rear of the tower, is shown as comprising an elongated main range with two projecting gabled wings. These flank a section of the main range with a central cupola below which seems to be shown a bell. This section also seems to be shown with a large central rectangular window. Of the two projecting wings, that on the left-hand side is

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these being the area of the OS 1in to 1 mile sheet 80 which includes the Old Hall. The 1839 survey was revised in 1840 as part of the 'Hill Sketches'; these show variations in topography which were reproduced on the published 1in to 1 mile map.

54 Derek Whitfield, personal communication.

shown as two bays wide, each bay having a three-light mullioned window on each floor and each with a gable crowned by a tall finial. The right-hand gable is of a single bay, with a window on each floor, and again with a finial on the gable. The main range continues beyond the left-hand wing, and either from this continuation or from the wing itself a small single-storey building projects alongside the courtyard wall. Beyond the right-hand wing a further continuation of the main range extends to the tower and is shown with a three-light mullioned window on each floor. Towards the tower, this continuation includes a chimney stack above the ridge of the roof. Another stack is shown on the same ridge where the main range is abutted by the right-hand wing and two others where it is abutted by the left-hand wing of two bays.

The depiction of the timber framing shows clear artistic licence but contains a number of recognizable elements. The front elevation of the two wings and of the right-hand continuation of the main range includes angled braces and lozenges, features suggestive of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century date.<sup>55</sup> The central section of the main range, on the other hand, is shown with framing of closely set posts, suggestive of the late medieval period.

Perhaps the most curious feature of the building shown on the woodcut is a great arch spanning the opening between the two wings and rising to first-floor level where it is surmounted by a line of railings. As an architectural feature this arch is most unconvincing and it is possible that this is a misrepresentation of a gateway or entrance screen.

The courtyard is shown with a main gateway set in the wall opposite the building and directly facing the arch. It is flanked by square posts capped with ball finials, suggestive of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century date. A doorway is shown in each of the side walls of the courtyard.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the Old Hall was the subject of an oil painting by the artist George Robert Leftwich (fl. 1875-80)<sup>56</sup> which came up for auction in 2007 (**III. 17**). This is presumably the painting which according to Leftwich's own account 'was partly taken from a slight pen and ink sketch in the possession of Mr. Thomas Dean, tenant of Leftwich Hall Farm from 1827 to 1879, and from surveys and sketches I took in 1880'. Leftwich's painting shows the same main elevation as the woodcut but viewed from a slight angle. It agrees with that earlier illustration in terms of the general components of the buildings but differs on two major points. The first is that in place of the central arch Leftwich shows a castellated stone screen with three separate openings, the central one being crowned by a gable. The effect is suggestive of the Gothic Revival of the mid- to late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The second point of disagreement is that Leftwich shows the site as moated, with access across the moat provided by a stone bridge of at least three arches flanked by cutwaters and with at least part of inner face of the moat revetted with stone. A drawing of the hall later published by Hopkins alongside Leftwich's account appears to have been based on this painting (**III. 18**).

There is also a watercolour of the Old Hall by Henry Thomas Leftwich (d 1894) (**III. 16**). This painting, which is held at Northwich Library, shows the site from the same angle as George Robert Leftwich's painting but in other respects is closer to the woodcut.<sup>57</sup> Thus the building is shown fronted by a walled yard, with no suggestion of a moat, and the single arch and not the Gothic screen is shown spanning the space between the two projecting wings. The chimney arrangement more closely resembles that on the woodcut, as does the window arrangement in the tower, although the watercolour also shows hoodmoulds above the rectangular windows and in place of the round openings shows ones which are quatrefoil. In one respect George Robert Leftwich's

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55 Cf McKenna 1994, 13-15.

56 Wood 1995, 310.

57 This painting is also reproduced by Curzon 1993, 26.

painting is closer to the woodcut in that it includes the small single-storey wing on the left-hand side of the building, a detail omitted from the watercolour. The watercolour also diverges from the woodcut in that the walled forecourt extends beyond the tower to include a wooded area.

Allowing for a measure of artistic licence it is possible that the watercolour took the woodcut as its source. George Robert Leftwich's painting, according to his own testimony, was derived from 'a slight pen and ink sketch' in the possession of a former tenant of the farm, and from his own observations. This pen and ink sketch seems to be otherwise unknown. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Miss Annie Leech, the daughter of the last farmer, was in possession of a drawing or painting of the Old Hall which was clearly a copy of the woodcut.<sup>58</sup> However, this need not have been the same illustration as seen by George Leftwich and it remains uncertain whether the sketch in Thomas Dean's possession was itself derived from the woodcut or not. What does seem to have been the case, from George Robert Leftwich's own account, is that the inclusion of a moat was his own innovation, based on his own observations at the site.

Illustrative evidence for the farm itself is sparse. Few terrestrial photographs are known. One, taken in c 1949 from the north-west along the approach to the site, shows the farm buildings largely hidden by a screen of trees, with the farmhouse on the right and the northern outbuildings on the left (**Ill. 19**). A close-up view of the farmhouse, perhaps taken in the 1930s (**Ill. 21**), shows the south-east corner of the building, to judge from the OS mapping; an adjoining single-storey lean-to, identified as the dairy, is clearly a later addition and from the map evidence was added between 1897 and 1908. The farmhouse itself is shown as built of bricks which appear to be of relatively large size and which therefore suggest a construction date between the 1780s and 1820s.<sup>59</sup> A third photograph probably shows the same dairy building on the right and on the left the adjacent end of the outbuilding at the south-west corner of the farmyard, which here was of a single storey (**Ill. 20**). This corner of the yard is shown as laid with cobbles, while the area adjoining the house was laid with cobbles and stone flags.

#### 4.3.5 *Aerial Photographs*

The site of Leftwich Old Hall appears on a succession of aerial photographs from 1946 onwards held by the National Monuments Record, and on more recent county coverage held by Cheshire County Council.

The evidence provided by these photographs includes details on the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of the site. The farm buildings are shown as still intact in April 1953. By September 1954 the farmhouse and the detached outbuilding on the south-east of the site were still standing but the outbuildings on the north and east sides of the farmyard had been demolished leaving a spread of demolition material, while the buildings on the south-west of the yard appear to be roofless and perhaps in the process of demolition. Between 1954 and 1966 the housing estate was built around the farmhouse and its surroundings converted to a grassy area as at present. The landscaping involved the infilling of the pond to the north-east of the farmhouse, still visible on the 1954 and earlier photographs, but mature trees within the garden area on the west side of the farmhouse still remained standing. By 1966 the chapel had been erected, adjoining the east side of the farmhouse. Later aerial photographs show that by 1985 both the farmhouse and the trees on its western side had been removed. A photograph of 1995 shows a linear depression along the boundary between the Vale Royal Borough Council and Church of England land.

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58 <http://www.leftwich.org/gallery/LeftwichHallFarm/imagepages/image5.html>.

59 Ivan Hradil, buildings archaeologist, UMAU, personal communication.

To the north-east of the study area, the early photographs reveal a linear depression running roughly east-north-east to west-south-west and at its western end curving towards the farm. Comparison with the cartographic evidence shows that this feature corresponds with the boundary between Mote Field and Long Field shown on the 1841 tithe map and 1873 OS map but removed by 1897.

Within the study area itself the 1947 aerial photographs shows a dark band running on a north south alignment to the east of the eastern range of outbuildings (**Ill. 26**). This feature does not appear to be shown on other early aerial photographs. It is not a shadow, since the photograph was taken with the sun to the east, and must represent a change in ground conditions at this point. The possible significance of this band is further discussed below (4.4.2).

#### 4.3.6 *Geophysical Survey*

In 2001 a geophysical survey of the site was carried out with the aim of possibly recovering evidence for any structural remains which may still survive below-ground level.<sup>60</sup> This survey was carried out by Keith Maude of the University of Manchester, and Malcolm Bailey of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, with University of Manchester Students Debbie Beale, Brian Grimsditch and Rob Isherwood. The work was originally intended to include both resistivity and magnetometer surveys<sup>61</sup> but the latter was abandoned due to the large quantities of modern magnetic objects, such as cans, ring pulls and nails, which would have distorted the results. The resistivity survey, however, was carried out, using a Bailey Mk III resistivity meter, with readings taken at 1m intervals in discrete rectangular areas surrounding the chapel.

The data was processed using Surfer 7 surface-mapping software and the results presented both as a black and white image, with black as the lowest resistance and white the highest, and as a shaded relief plot which shows resistance values as a topographical surface.

Both plots show several areas of high resistance (**Ills. 22 & 23**). Area 1 lay to the south-west of the chapel, Area 2 was adjacent to the stone memorial, Area 3 was located immediately to the south of the site entrance from Ellesmere Road, and Area 4 immediately north of the site entrance and extending to the north-east. Of these, the high resistance features found in Areas 1-3 were interpreted in 2001 as being probably the remains of the farmhouse and associated buildings, postdating the Old Hall. Area 4, comprising an area of high resistance approximately 15m square with bands of high resistance adjoining to the north, was interpreted as being either the remains of another building or debris dumped during the building of the housing estate, with the further possibility that the other areas of high resistance might also be such dumped material.

The fact that the farmhouse was still standing in 1971 when both it and the chapel are shown on OS mapping means that its position and that of the outbuildings shown on earlier OS maps can be located with some accuracy. Comparison of their plotted locations with the geophysical results (**Ills. 24 & 25**) shows that the area of high resistance in Area 2 corresponds with the position of the outbuilding on the north-east side of the yard. Areas 1 and 3 lie to the north-west and south-east of the site of the farmhouse, in areas where mature trees are known to have stood until about the time when the farmhouse was demolished. The site inspection for the present assessment found that in

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60 Maude & Bailey 2001.

61 A magnetometry survey measures variations in the magnetic field of the ground, which can be caused by disturbance such as the backfilling of ditches and other cut features. A resistivity survey measures the resistance of the ground to an electrical current. Differences in water content mean that a backfilled ditch may show a low resistance and a buried wall a high resistance.

each of these areas ground level was slightly raised, while it is reported that a mound in this same area comprised ‘stones’, on which children played.<sup>62</sup> The explanation for these anomalies might be that they represent the dumping of material following the trees’ removal.

The squarish Area 4 and the bands of high resistance to the north closely coincide with the area of an irregular shaped wooded enclosure shown on mapping of 1873 onwards, as was indeed noted at the time of the 2001 survey. This area lies outside the known buildings associated with farm. Its northern part, which still contains several mature trees, lies on the steepish slope towards Fairfield Road. Area 4 itself straddles the break of slope between that northern area and the flatter higher ground to the south. (III. 26).

#### 4.4 Discussion

##### 4.4.1 Location and Extent of the Old Hall Site

The Old Hall was demolished at some point between 1776 and 1810, that is prior to the earliest mapping to show the site in any detail. Comparison between Burdett’s county survey of the early 1770s and later mapping, however, implies that the Old Hall was located in the general area of the later farm and the earliest historical accounts are in agreement that the farm was built on the site of the hall. This would be in keeping with the topography, in that the farm was located on an elevated position with ground levels falling to the north. From the evidence of Burdett’s map the hall, like the later farm, was approached via a road leading south-eastwards from London Road, while the early woodcut shows the hall building to have been fronted by a walled yard with a central entrance. Burdett’s map suggests that the entrance to the site was on the west, facing London Road, but the topography of the site better favours the hall being on an east west alignment with the entrance on the north.

There is evidence that the hall was moated (see below). In the case of other moated sites within the region, the evidence points to the contemporary outbuildings such as barns and stables being located outside the moat; later farm buildings were also built outside the moat, with the farm being managed either from a hall or later farmhouse on the moat platform<sup>63</sup> or, where this had been cleared, by a farmhouse which was itself located outside the moat.<sup>64</sup> At Leftwich there may be evidence for early outbuildings situated beyond the area of the later farm in the form of field-names, in particular Stable Field and Dovehouse Field which were both located c 100m or more to the north-east of the farm and perhaps also Barn Field which was located to the west. It is also reported that the field to the north-west of the farm contained pieces of sandstone, capable of damaging a plough, with the highest concentration of strikes being closest to the woodland to the north of the farm. This sandstone is described as generally comprising either cut blocks or pieces similar to drystone walling.<sup>65</sup>

It is possible, therefore, at Leftwich that the early outbuildings were demolished at the same time as

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62 Derek Whitfield, personal communication.

63 As for example at Bewsey Hall, Warrington.

64 As for example at Broadoak Moat, Torkington, Stockport.

65 Derek Whitfield, personal communication. On a sketch plan held by Mrs Lillian L Piland of the Leftwich Historical Association, Inc, which is based on the tithe map of 1841, the eastern side of Higher Winnington Field is annotated ‘we called this part Old Hall site?’ (cf III. 10). No further details about this identification are known but it could well be an inference from the concentration of sandstone fragments in this area.

the hall with the whole being replaced by a more compact arrangement on the hall site itself.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4.4.2 *The Moat*

There are in the order of two hundred known or assumed moated sites within the old county of Cheshire, the majority of which are found on the clay soils which form the superficial geology of more than half the county. Most are associated with manorial sites. In form they are typically square, rectangular or sub-rectangular, and have platforms (the area within the moat) which range in size from about a quarter of an acre (0.1ha) to over 1.5 acres (0.6ha). The differences in size are likely in part to reflect the size of the buildings positioned on the platform and the wealth and status of their occupants, but there may also be a chronological development with larger moats being later than smaller ones.<sup>67</sup> Dating evidence for moats is, however, scarce. Nationally, they appear to have been constructed between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with a peak in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest in Cheshire may date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A rare documentary reference to the construction of a moat relates to Broakoak Moat, Torkington (now in Greater Manchester) and states that in about 1354 John de Legh 'built a hall of two chambers and a kitchen, moated, and outside the moat a barn, stables, wards, etc'.<sup>68</sup> The function of the moats is itself a matter of uncertainty. They may have been designed to give greater security to the household and their possessions, and in this respect it would be useful to know whether their construction was particularly prevalent during periods of greater lawlessness. They may have been status symbols, and once moats had begun to be built they may also have become simply the fashion.<sup>69</sup> As well as the moat itself, moated sites might include earthworks used to maintain a supply of water, such as dams and water channels. Once constructed moats could also serve as a fishpond, used to supply the household's kitchen, and instances where one arm or corner of a moat is of a greater width than the rest may have been specifically designed for this purpose.<sup>70</sup>

Several strands of evidence point to Leftwich Old Hall as having been a moated site. It is implied by the 'Mote Field' located to the north-east of the farm buildings,<sup>71</sup> and the field-name also suggests that the pond shown on mapping at the south-west corner of this field may itself have been originally part of the moat.

According to Robert George Leftwich parts of a moat were still visible when he visited the site in 1880, 'one of which was 100 feet by 40 feet and 8 feet deep, another 80 feet by 80 feet and not so deep'. The first of these is likely to have been the pond on the north-east side of the farm which is shown on the 1873 OS map as measuring c 45m by 25m, ie 150 feet by c 80 feet, and on the 1897 map with a reduced length of c 38m, ie 125 feet. The other feature, described as 80 feet by 80 feet (ie c 30m by c 30m) and of shallower depth, does not readily equate with any feature on the historic mapping. It was presumably evident as an earthwork but its location is uncertain.

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66 A trail of sandstone fragments similar to drystone walling is also reported to have run westward from the farm towards the present Dunham Road (Derek Whitfield, personal communication). Mapping from 1841 onwards shows an east-west field boundary here, and it is possible that this trail represented a dumping of material along that boundary.

67 Wilson 1987, 143-7.

68 Wilson 1987, 151-3.

69 Wilson 1987, 149-50.

70 A distinctive bulge at one corner is a feature of a number of Cheshire moats (Tindall 1985, 67) and was also found at Ordsall Hall, Salford, formerly in Lancashire, now Greater Manchester.

71 The distribution map of Cheshire moated sites published by Wilson 1987, 145 shows Leftwich township as containing a 'documented moat, not located'. The documentary evidence referred to is presumably the field-name.

It is also possible that traces of the moat are visible on the aerial photographic evidence. A dark band shown on the east of the farm buildings on a photograph of 1947, running north-south and measuring c 20m wide and c 80-90m in length, appears to merge into the site of the pond as shown on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century mapping and lies at a right angle to that feature (III. 26). A note of caution should be introduced in that this band has not been identified on other aerial photographs and may have been the result of temporary disturbance of the ground surface here, caused for example by livestock. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of the dark band and the pond is consistent with the two representing two adjoining arms of a moat.

The present topography of the site does not provide any clear indication of the existence of a moat but is not inconsistent with this possibility. In particular if the pond had once formed part of the northern arm of the moat, that arm would have crossed the study area roughly where ground level begins to fall more sharply to the north. On modern mapping a boundary is shown in approximately this same position and can still partly be traced on the ground as a slight linear depression, although this last feature may itself be coincidental to the moat. To the south of this point there is a perceptible rise in ground level towards and beyond Belgrave Road, but it is not of the same magnitude as the fall to the north, with the result that the modern boundary line roughly marks the northern edge of an area of comparatively flattish ground which might possibly have accommodated the four arms of a moat. This suggested location of the northern arm of the moat partly coincides with an area of high resistance, Area 4, revealed by the geophysical survey. It is possible that this geophysical anomaly represents infilling of the moat with demolition material, or possibly the construction of a building over the line of the moat after infilling had taken place.

If the site was moated it is also possible that the courtyard wall shown on the woodcut followed the edge of the moat platform.

#### 4.4.3 *The Stone Tower*

Of the stone tower which stood at one end of the Old Hall George Ormerod wrote that 'the original fabric... appeared to be of considerable antiquity'. It is uncertain whether or not Ormerod was writing from first-hand knowledge of the building, but its depiction on the woodcut is in line with his assessment. The general form of the building and the particular detail of its corbelled battlements are suggestive of a medieval date. The window openings, if accurately depicted, seem to be a later alteration but it is possible that the rectangular windows were in fact mullioned and transomed and contemporary with the tower. A sandstone block, with a carving perhaps resembling a Tudor rose, is reported to have been in the possession of Elsie Williams, nee Leach, and to have come from the Old Hall site.<sup>72</sup> The description suggests that this was possibly a boss from a vaulted ceiling or a 'stop', set at the end of moulding above a window or door.

This tower was a relatively rare feature. In Cheshire medieval stone towers survive at Doddington Hall in the south of the county and at Brimstage Hall on the Wirral. The example at Doddington is of three storeys, with corner turrets and a vaulted chamber on the ground floor. Although it now forms a freestanding feature within the grounds of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Doddington Hall, it was originally a solar tower attached to a contemporary great hall, the whole being surrounded by moat. Details of the tower's design, including embattled chimneys on top of the turrets and an apparent lack of stairs from the second floor to the roof, have led to the suggestion that the building was intended to be decorative rather than defensive. It is believed to have been built in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century by John Devles, who bought the manor of Doddington in 1352. He fought at Poitiers in 1356 and in 1363 was knighted and appointed to the king's bodyguard. In the following year the

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72 Derek Whitfield, personal communication.

Black Prince, as earl of Cheshire, give him a licence to crenellate (ie permission to fortify) his house at Doddington.<sup>73</sup>

The tower at Brimstage Hall in the Wirral was also originally of three storeys but has been reduced to two. It does, however, retain a full-height turret at one corner housing a staircase and garbages. The ground floor of the tower has a rib-vaulted room, whose ceiling includes the emblem of the Troutbeck family. They occupied the house between the second quarters of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and are believed to have built the tower early in this period. As at Doddington, the tower formed part of a larger hall, which also appears to have been moated.<sup>74</sup>

A stone tower is also known to have stood at Hooton Hall, in the Wirral. This was of three storeys with a turret and was attached to a timber-framed courtyard house. A license to crenellate was granted in 1487 to Sir William Stanley, a member of the region's most important family at this time.<sup>75</sup>

Stone towers are also relatively rare in southern Lancashire but include an example at Radcliffe, now part of Bury in Greater Manchester. Here the tower comprised a barrel vaulted basement with probably two storeys above this, although the upper part has been lost. A licence to crenellate was granted by the crown to James de Radcliffe in 1403 but it has been suggested that the building dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. As at Doddington, it was originally adjoined by a contemporary great hall. This hall was timber-framed and it is known that at the opposite end to the tower the hall was adjoined by other timber-framed ranges, making a complex of comparable size to Leftwich Old Hall. The whole site seems to have been set within a square enclosure, defined by an outer wall and ditch. As at Doddington, the tower seems to have involved an element of ostentation. Its basement was used as a kitchen and contained no fewer than three large fireplaces, whose presence was advertised by three blind arches on the external walls.<sup>76</sup>

In Cheshire and southern Lancashire stone towers seem to have been built by only a handful of families and primarily as a display of status rather than for defence. The construction of a stone tower at Leftwich would have been in keeping with this model, with the place in the later medieval period being the head manor of a family descended from the barons of Shipbrook. Situated on its elevated position this tower would have been a conspicuous feature in the landscape, visible from perhaps miles around. As for the general position of the tower on the site, if as suggested the hall range was aligned east west and facing north, it would have been located at the west end of that range, possibly in the general locality of the later farmhouse.

#### 4.4.4 *The Timber-framed Building*

The central section of the house flanked by two wings can safely be supposed to have contained the building's great hall. This seems to be shown on the woodcut as having an upper floor lit by a central window. If correct this arrangement would be no earlier than the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, prior to which date the great hall would have been built open to the roof. The evidence for the form of the hall is, however, ambiguous. The timber framing in this part of the building, as shown on the woodcut, suggests a late medieval to early 16<sup>th</sup>-century date, raising the possibility that a floor was later inserted above an earlier hall. On the other hand, the six or seven hearths for which Leftwich

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73 Figueiredo & Treuherz 1988, 72; Emery 2000, 530-1. A licence to crenellate was also granted to his great nephew John Delves in 1403.

74 Figueiredo & Treuherz 1988, 219; Emery 2000, 518.

75 Figueiredo & Treuherz 1988, 244; Emery 2000, 577.

76 Arrowsmith 1995; Emery 1996, 243.



Oldfield was assessed in the 1660s and 1670s is a relatively modest figure for a house of this scale and would perhaps be better in keeping with a hall open to the roof. It is also possible that the belfry shown on the woodcut replaced a central louvre in an open hall.

The great hall would have been flanked on one side by the service rooms common to any sizeable medieval house, including the buttery, pantry, kitchen, and servants' quarters, and on the other by the family's own accommodation. The woodcut itself, however, does not provide sufficient information to determine which end of the building fulfilled which role.

The woodcut's depiction of the arch fronting the great hall is problematic. The stone screen, reminiscent of the Gothic Revival, depicted on George Robert Leftwich's painting is a far more convincing feature but it is uncertain as to whether or it was based on a reliable source or was the artist's own attempt at improving upon the woodcut.

#### 4.4.5 *The Farm*

The farm was built at some point after 1776, when the site ceased to be the residence of its gentry owners and was leased instead to a tenant farmer, and 1810 when the *Magna Britannia* tells us that it had replaced the hall. The mapping evidence allows the buildings of the farm to be located with some certainty, and shows that the farmhouse was located on the west of the site with outbuildings arranged around a farmyard on the east, with later buildings being added on the north and south. The largest of the later additions was probably a Dutch barn. The other buildings can be assumed to have included a barn, stables and a shippon (ie a cowshed) but the mapping evidence does not provide a definitive indication as to which building was which (apart from suggesting the location of a pigsty), and the photographic evidence is poor in this respect. However, the ranges on the north and east sides of the yard are reported to have been of two storeys.<sup>77</sup>

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77 Derek Whitfield, personal communication.

## ***5. Significance of the Archaeological Resource***

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### **5.1 The Criteria**

Although there are a wide number of methodologies for assessing archaeological significance, that with the greatest legal standing is the Secretary of State's criteria for the scheduling of ancient monuments, outlined in Annex 4 of PPG16 (*Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning*, DoE 1990). The following assessment of significance utilises these criteria.

#### **5.1.2 *Period***

The study area is believed to lie on the site of Leftwich Old Hall, established by the early 14<sup>th</sup> century when the family name of Leftwich was in use by the lord of the manor. The hall included a stone tower, believed to be of late medieval date, and there is also evidence for a moat, again probably dating to the medieval period. A woodcut shows that the greater part of the hall comprised a timber-framed range, including perhaps a medieval great hall and other elements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This building was demolished between 1776 and 1810 and a farm built on the site, which was in turn demolished in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **5.1.3 *Rarity***

The potential remains of the medieval and post-medieval Leftwich Old Hall can be considered to be of regional rarity, comprising a moated hall site which includes the particularly uncommon feature of a stone tower. Remains of the later farm would be considered to be of more local rarity.

#### **5.1.4 *Documentation***

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the development of the study area can be traced reasonably well from the cartographic evidence, which relates to the farm. The quantity of documentary evidence for the hall, on the other hand, is low by comparison with many other hall sites within the region. No known mapping shows the building in any detail and useful evidence from probate documents is lacking. As a consequence, the principal source is the woodcut published in Hanshall's county history, while other information can be gleaned from field-names and the Hearth Tax returns.

#### **5.1.5 *Group Value***

Relatively few hall sites have been excavated within the region and findings from Leftwich Old Hall could make a significant contribution to the current body of information on the development and material culture of such sites.

#### **5.1.6 *Survival/condition***

The extent of survival and condition of below-ground remains within the study area is at present uncertain. The results of the geophysical survey imply that in-situ remains survive of the farm. The extent to which remains survive of the hall is unknown.

#### **5.1.7 *Fragility/vulnerability***

There is the potential for below-ground remains to be damaged by any possible future groundworks in the study area, including landscaping or redevelopment.

#### 5.1.8 *Diversity*

The diversity of surviving remains within the study area is at present unknown.

#### 5.1.9 *Potential*

The study area includes the site of a pond, which may have originated as part of the moat. The site of this pond, and of the moat as a whole, may contain significant material, including organic remains and palaeoenvironmental material, within any surviving silts.

### 5.2 **Significance**

- 5.2.1 PPG 16 draws a distinction between remains of national importance and other remains. In the case of the former, the presumption should be in favour of preservation in situ; in the case of the latter, where this is warranted by their significance, remains may undergo preservation by record, that is the making of an appropriate record by the use of survey, photography, excavation or other methods.

On the criteria of PPG16, the study area potentially contains remains of regional and local significance.

## 6. Recommendations for Further Archaeological Investigation

### 6.1 Evaluation

- 6.1.1 The assessment has found that the study area has the potential for containing remains of regional and local significance belonging to the medieval and post-medieval hall and the later farm. The presence and extent of such remains could be confirmed by further work, beginning with a programme of archaeological evaluation by trial trenching.

Based on the findings of the assessment, three parts of the study area can be targeted by that investigation, as follows.

- 6.1.2 The upper, southern, half of the study area could be sampled to confirm the survival of remains relating to the farm and to test for the presence of remains of the hall.
- 6.1.3 The possibility of the northern arm of the moat running across the study area could be tested by trial trenching across its suggested east west alignment.
- 6.1.4 The lower, northern, half of the study area could be sampled for possible archaeological deposits surviving outside the suggested line of the moat.

### 6.2 Excavation

- 6.2.1 Depending upon the results of the evaluation, this phase of investigation could in turn be followed by a programme of open area excavation in one or more of these three areas.
- 6.2.2 This further phase of work has the potential for community involvement. The possible archaeological remains range from complex and, in the case of the moat, deep deposits associated with the hall, to brick footings and floor surfaces belonging to the farm, and as such might be excavated and recorded using a range of archaeological experience, from supervisory professionals to novice volunteers.

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## **Aerial Photographs**

*Held by the National Monuments Record, Swindon:*

RAF/106G/UK/1186 Frame No 3067 21 February 1946, scale 1:10,200, black & white vertical.

RAF/CPE/UK/1935 Frame No 1060 17 January 1947, scale 1:9840, black & white vertical (digital copy also held by Cheshire County Council Environmental Planning Service).

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Run 22 2985/063, 064, 133 & 134, 1985, scale 1:10,000, colour vertical.

Line 22 Geonex 93 93/153, 1993, scale 1:10,000, colour vertical.

## **Illustrations and Photographs**

Leftwich Old Hall by Henry Thomas Leftwich (d 1894), watercolour (Northwich Library).

Leftwich Hall by George Robert Leftwich, oil on canvas  
(<http://www.artnet.com/artist/693201/george-robert-leftwich.html>)

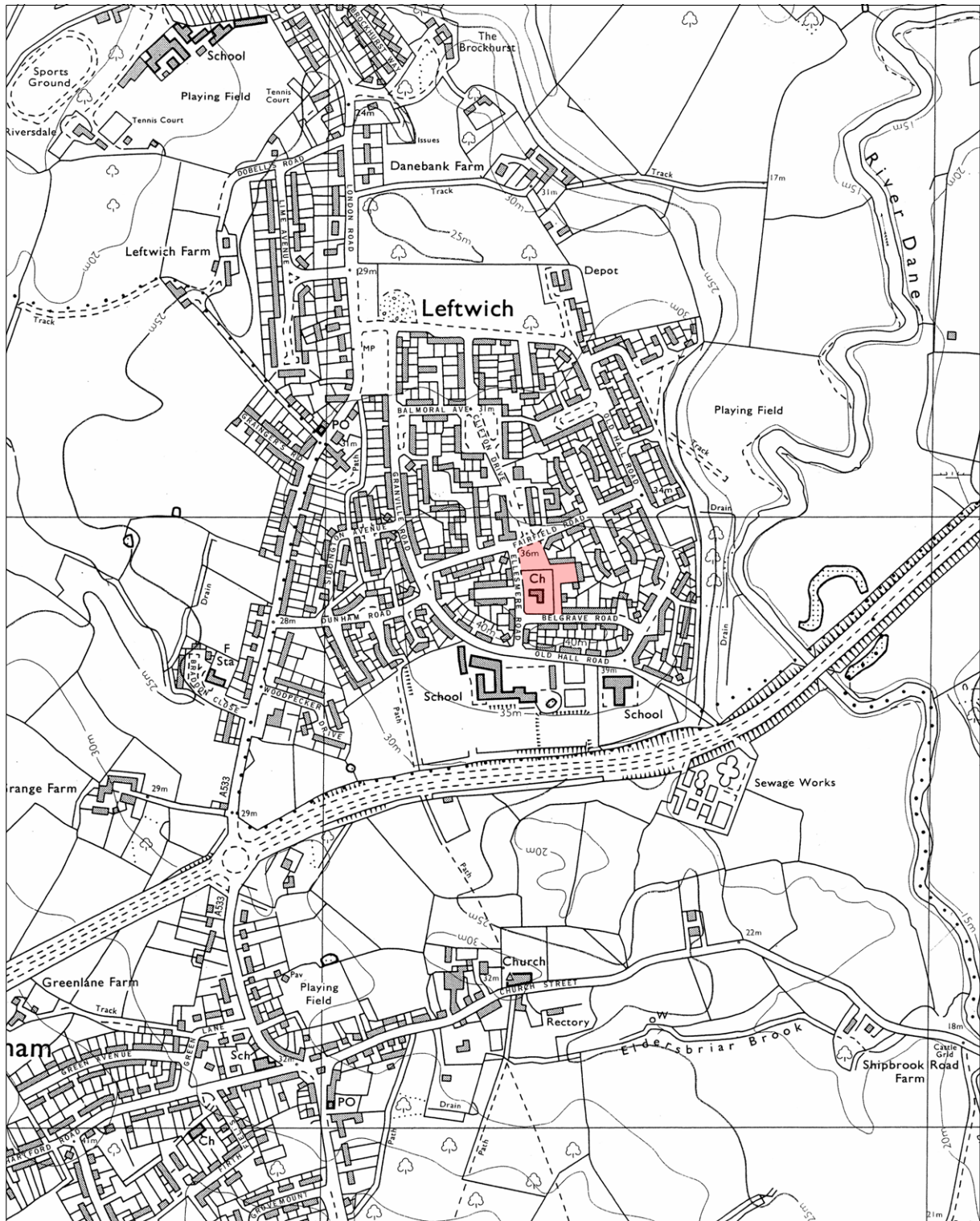
Outbuildings at Leftwich Old Hall, photograph  
(<http://www.leftwich.org/gallery/LeftwichHallFarm/imagepages/image1.html>)

The farmhouse at Leftwich Old Hall, with the dairy on the right, photograph c 1930s  
(<http://www.leftwich.org/gallery/LeftwichHallFarm/imagepages/image2.html>)

Miss Annie Leach, with illustration of Leftwich Hall, photograph c 1971  
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Approach to Leftwich Old Hall, photograph c 1949  
(<http://www.leftwich.org/gallery/LeftwichHallFarm/imagepages/image6.html>)



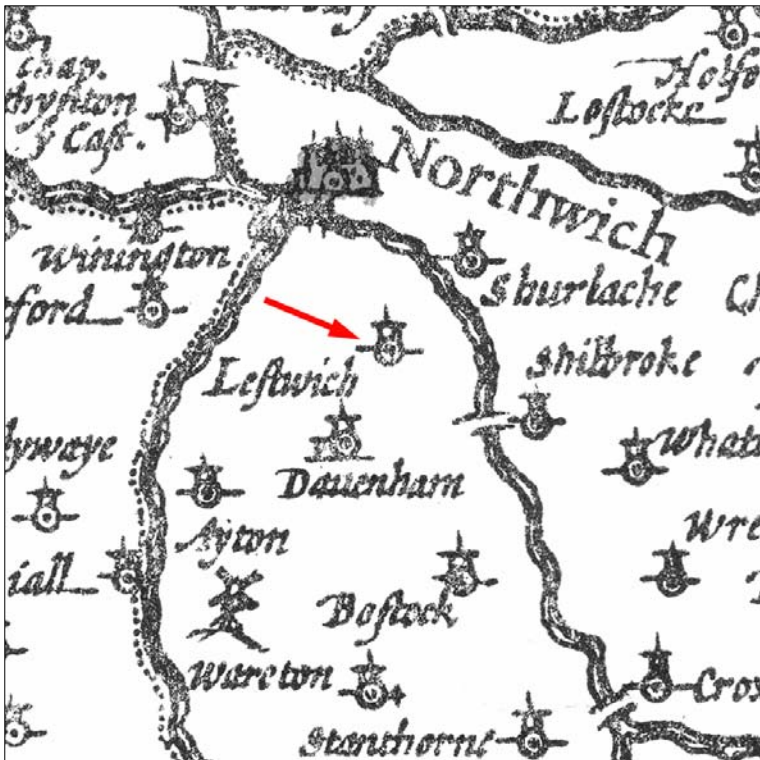


**III. 1:** Leftwich Old Hall archaeological assessment, location map, with study area shaded red. Scale 1:10,000.

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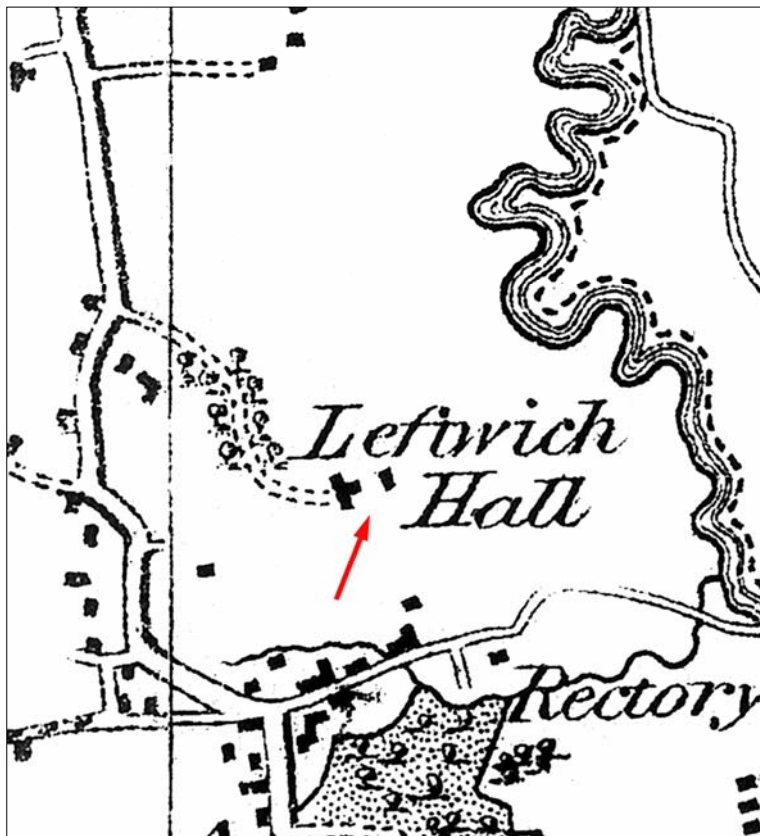
III. 2: Leftwich Old Hall on Saxton's map of Cheshire, 1577.



III. 3: Leftwich Old Hall on Speed's map of Cheshire, 1610.



III. 4: Leftwich Old Hall on Burdett's map of Cheshire, surveyed 1770s, published 1777.



III. 5: Leftwich Old Hall on Greenwood's map of Cheshire, surveyed 1819.



III. 6: Leftwich Old Hall on Swire and Hutchings's map of Cheshire, surveyed 1828-9.



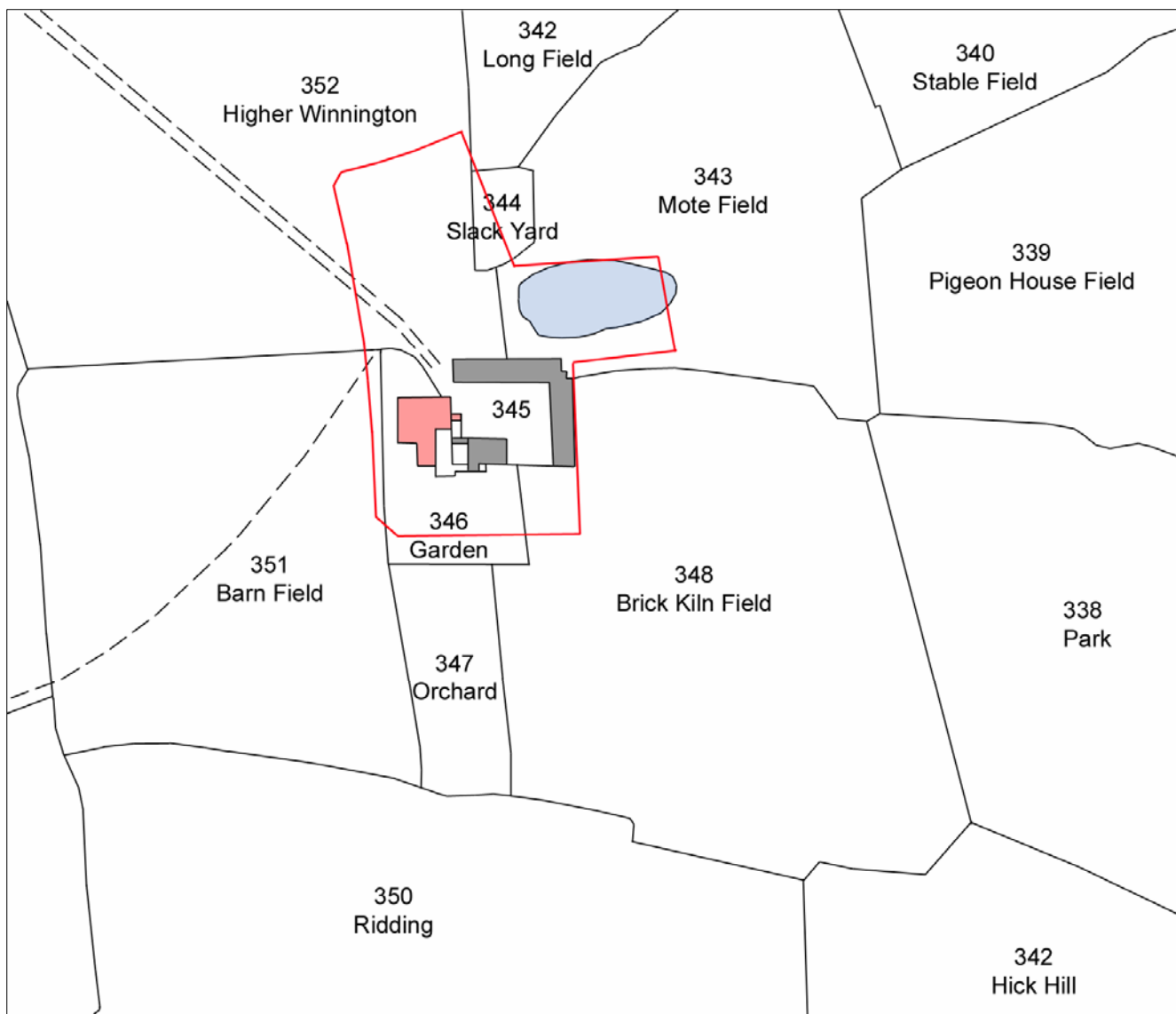
III. 7: Leftwich Old Hall on Bryant's map of Cheshire, surveyed 1829-31.



**III. 8:** Leftwich Old Hall on OS Hill Sketch Series, made 25 July 1840 (British Library).



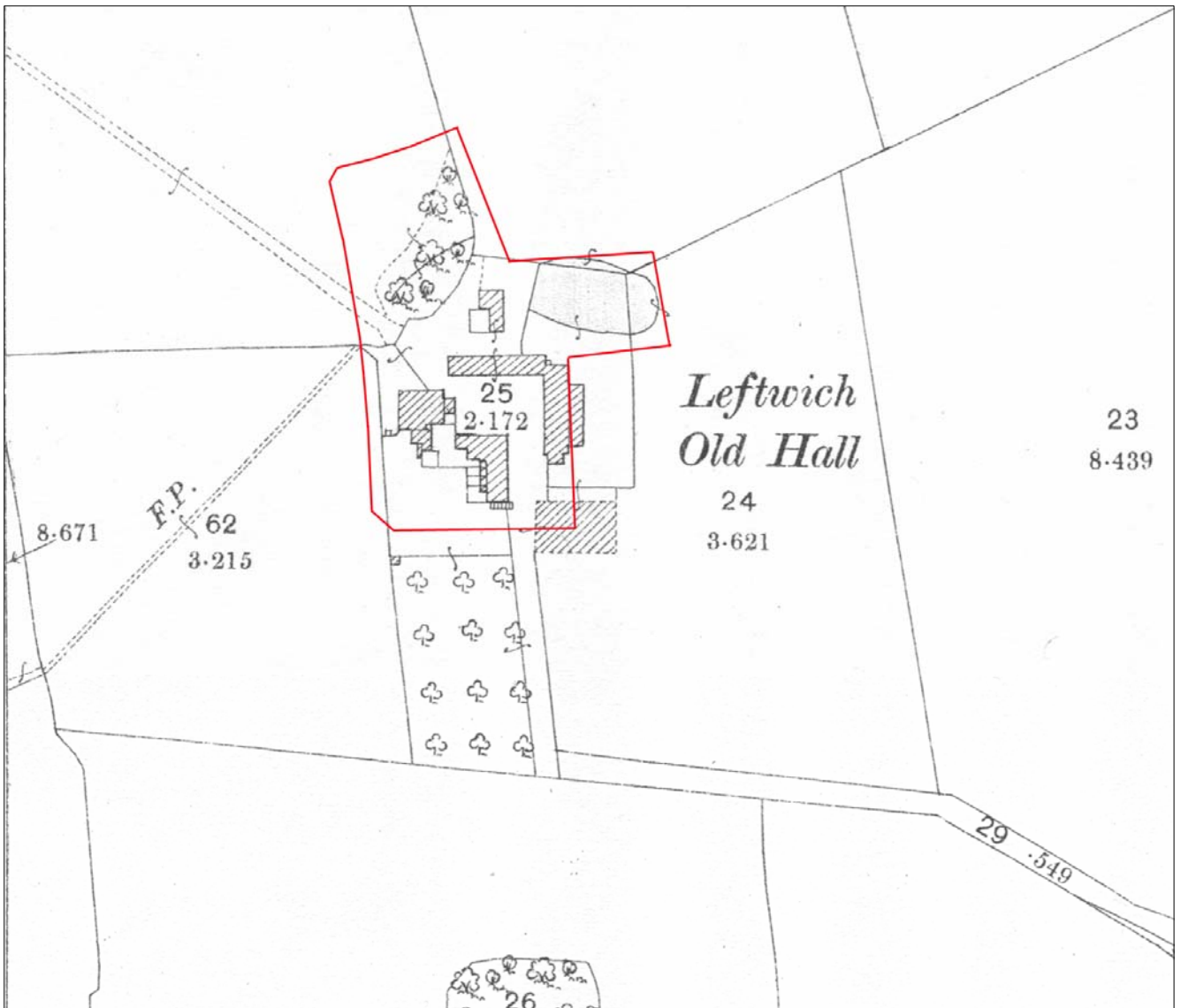
**III. 9:** Leftwich Old Hall on OS 1in to 1 mile sheet, surveyed 1839-40, published 1842, reprinted 1860s.



**III. 10:** Leftwich Old Hall on the 1841 tithe map, with the study area outlined (after CRO EDT 234/2).  
Scale c 1:2000.

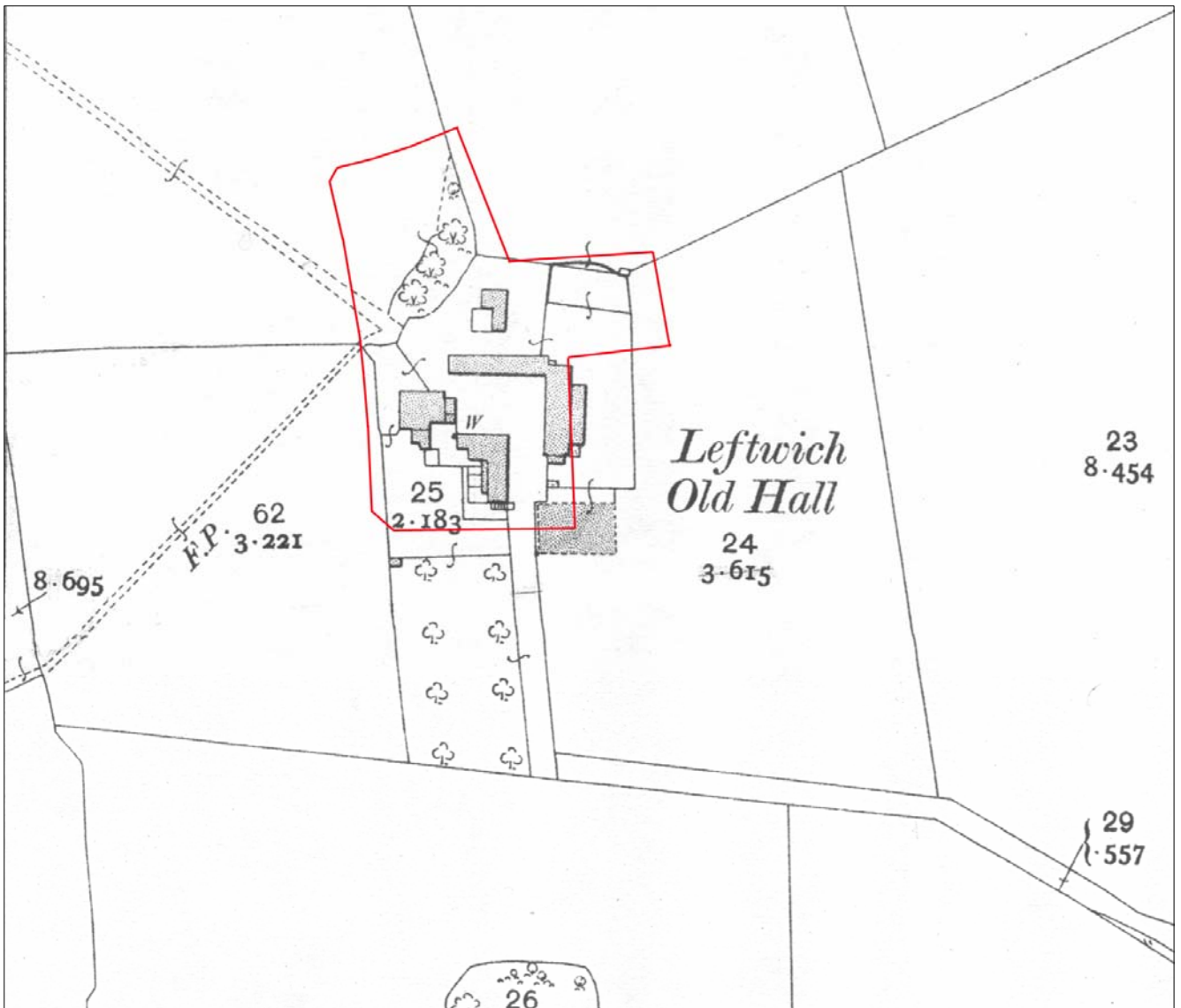


**III. 11:** Leftwich Old Hall on the 1873 OS 1:2500 map, with the study area outlined. Reproduced at 1:2000.

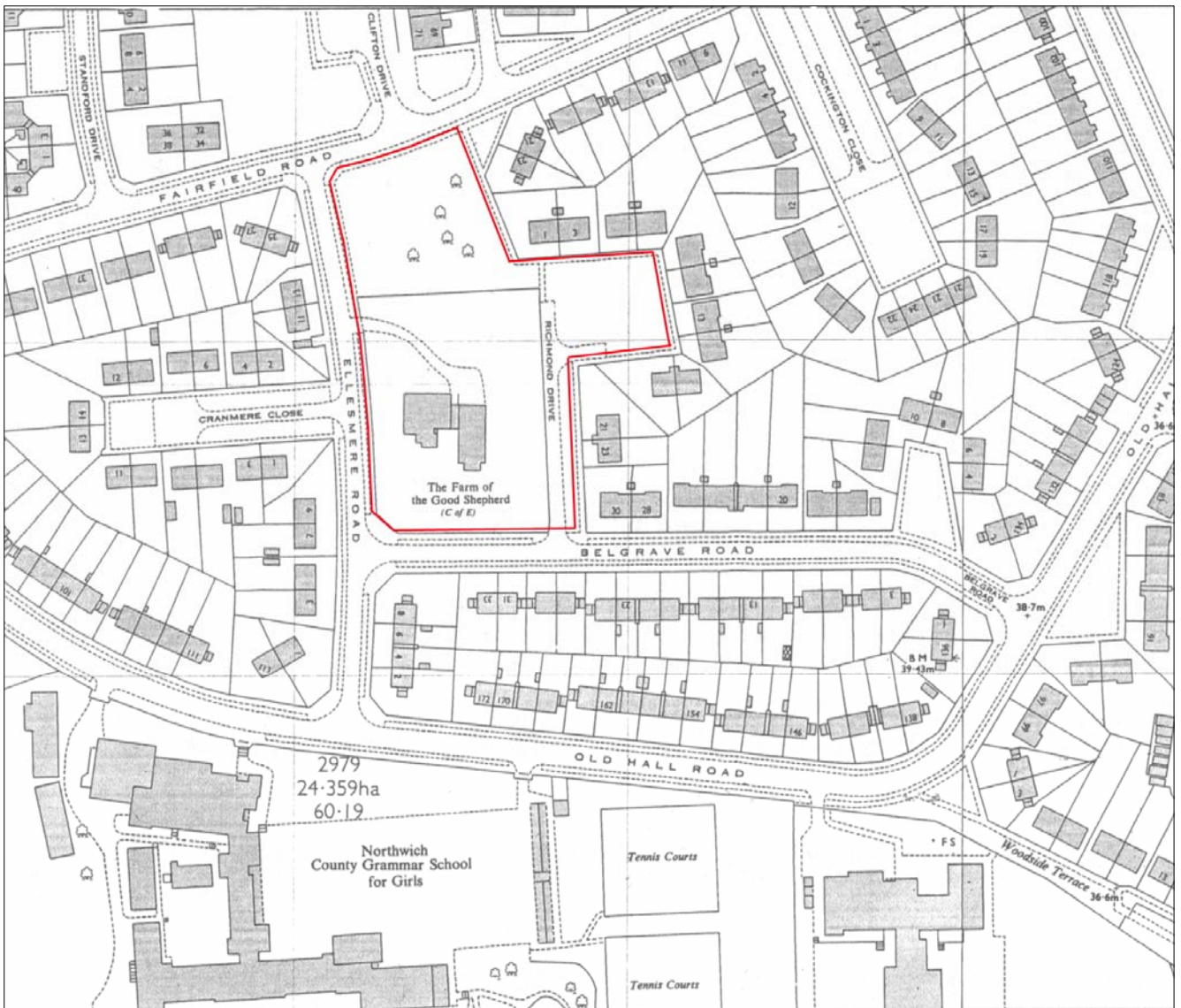


**III. 12:** Leftwich Old Hall on the 1897 OS 1:2500 map, with the study area outlined. Reproduced at 1:2000.



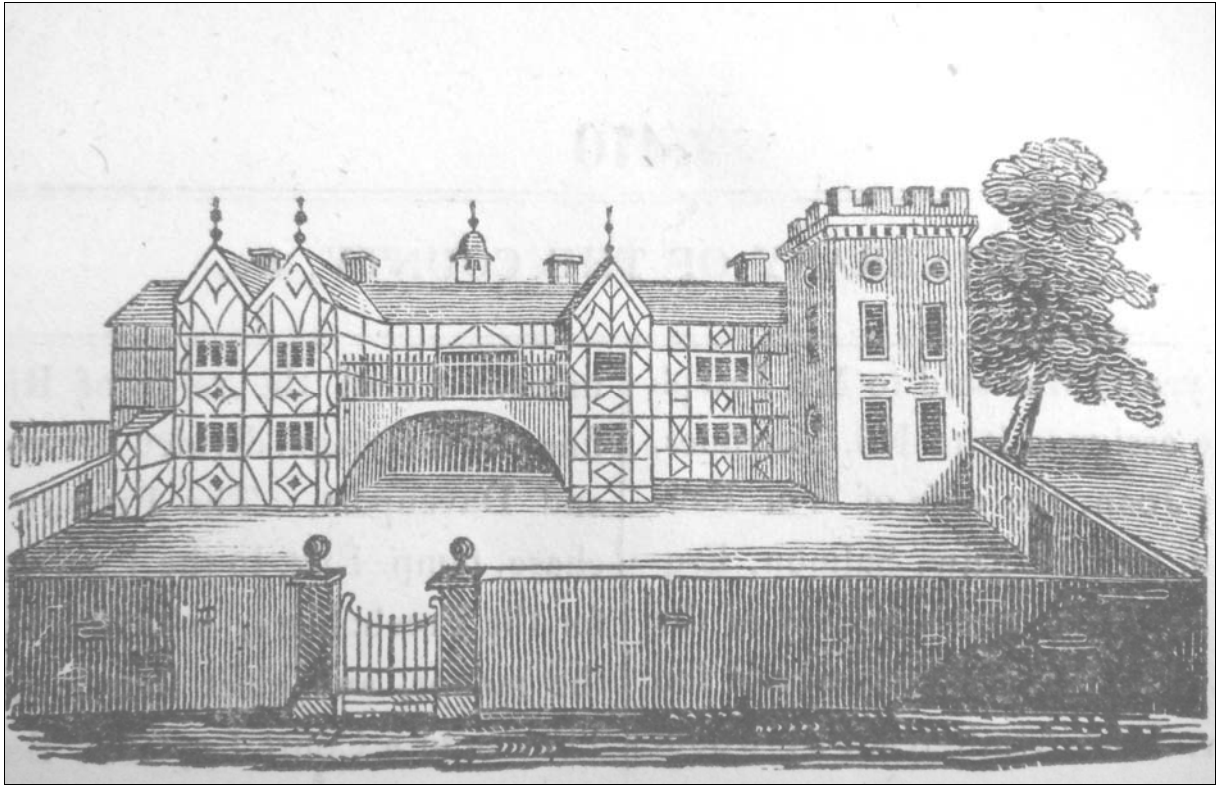


**III. 13:** Leftwich Old Hall on the 1908 OS 1:2500 map, with the study area outlined. Reproduced at 1:2000.



**III. 14:** OS 1:2500 mapping of 1971, with the study area outlined. Reproduced at 1:2000.

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**III. 15:** Leftwich Old Hall, woodcut reproduced in Hansall's *History of the County Palatine of Chester* (1819-23, 469).



**III. 16:** Leftwich Old Hall by Henry Thomas Leftwich, watercolour (Northwich Library)..



**III. 17:** Leftwich Old Hall by George Robert Leftwich, oil on canvas.



**III. 18:** Leftwich Old Hall (Hopkins 1931, xiv).



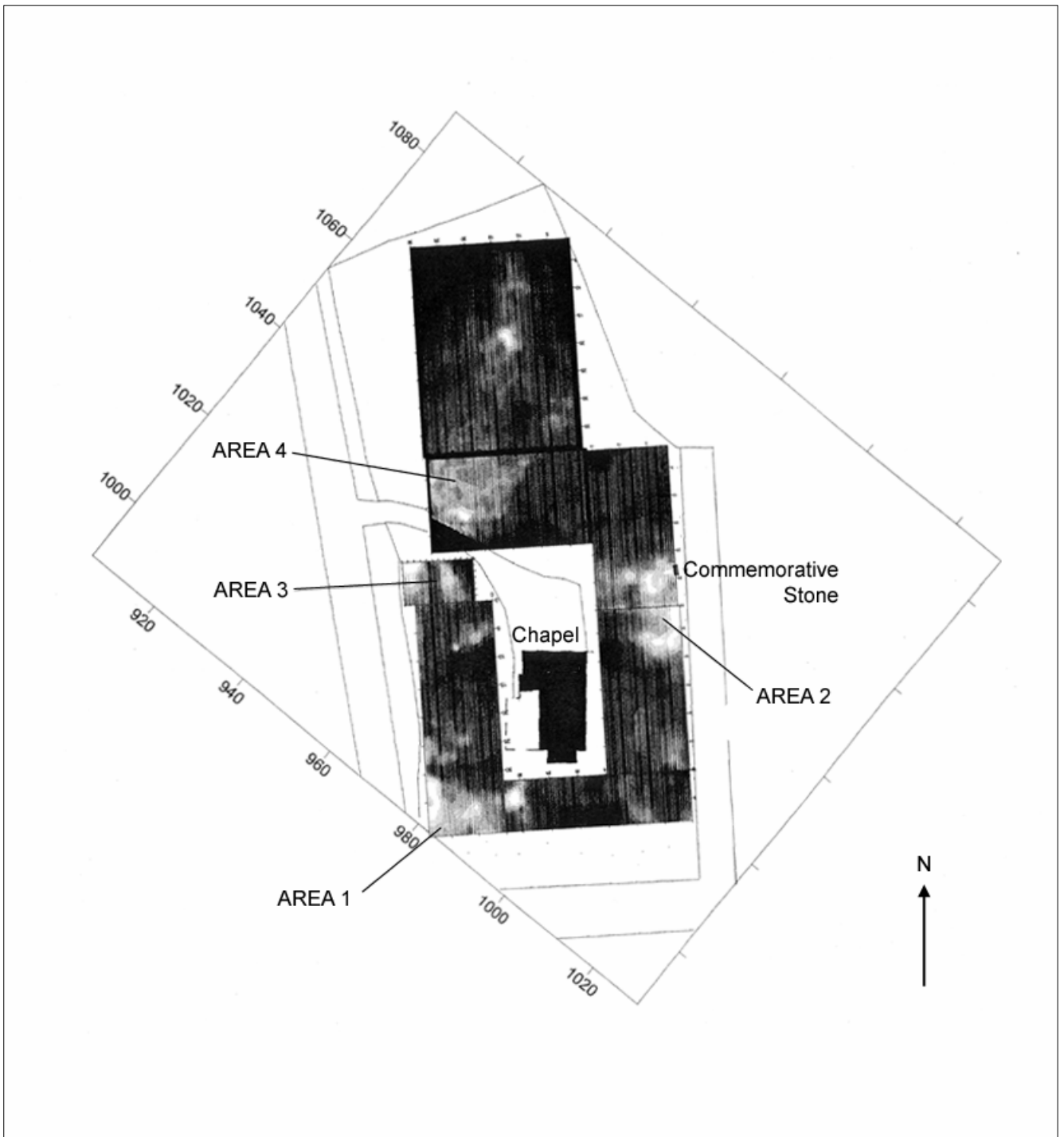
**III. 19:** Approach to Leftwich Old Hall, c 1949.



**III. 20:** Outbuildings at Leftwich Old Hall.

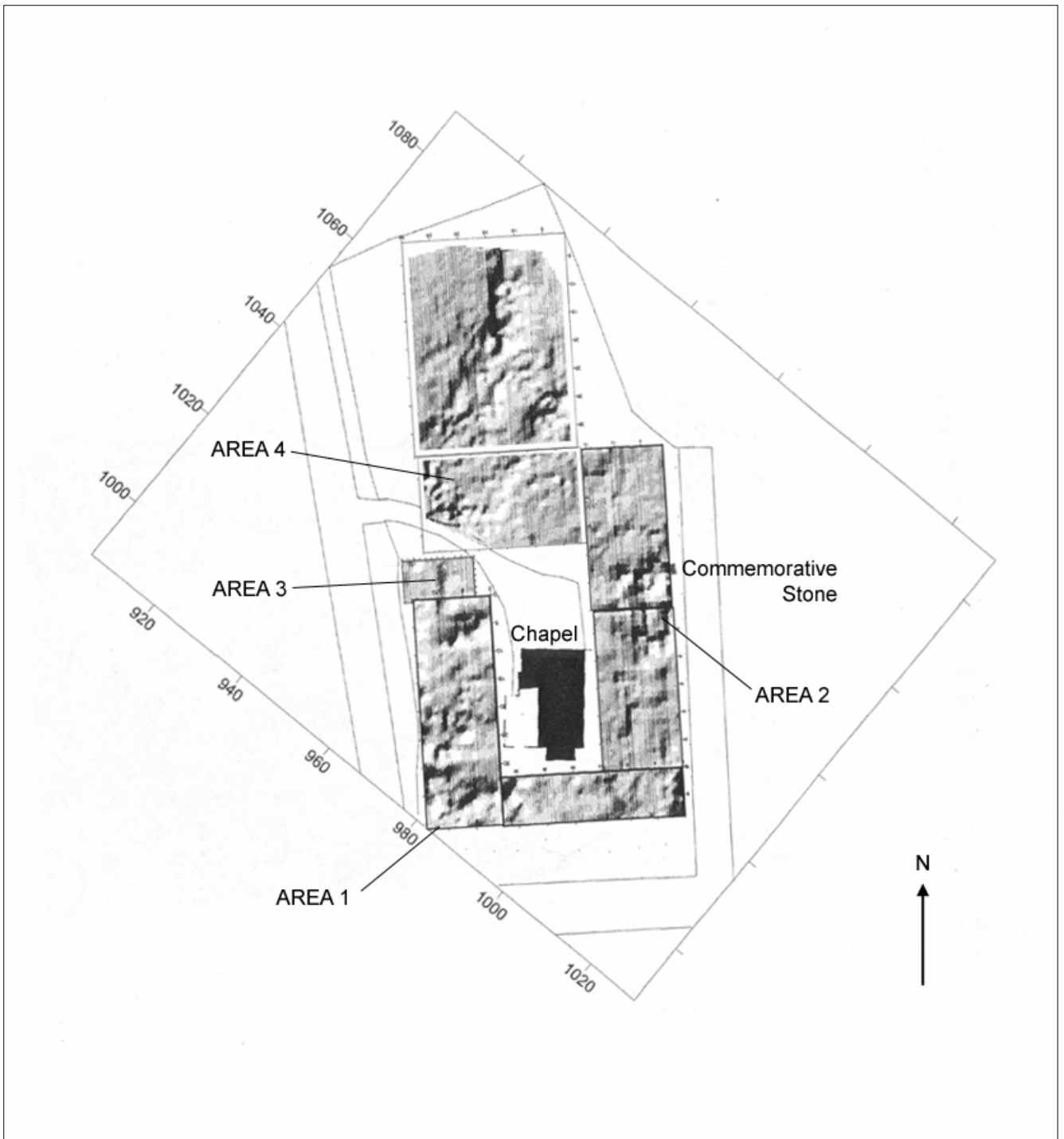


**III. 21:** The farmhouse at Leftwich Old Hall, with the dairy on the right, c 1930s.



**III. 22:** Geophysical survey 2001, image plot with black as areas of lowest resistance and black as highest (after Maude & Bailey 2001). Scale 1:1000.





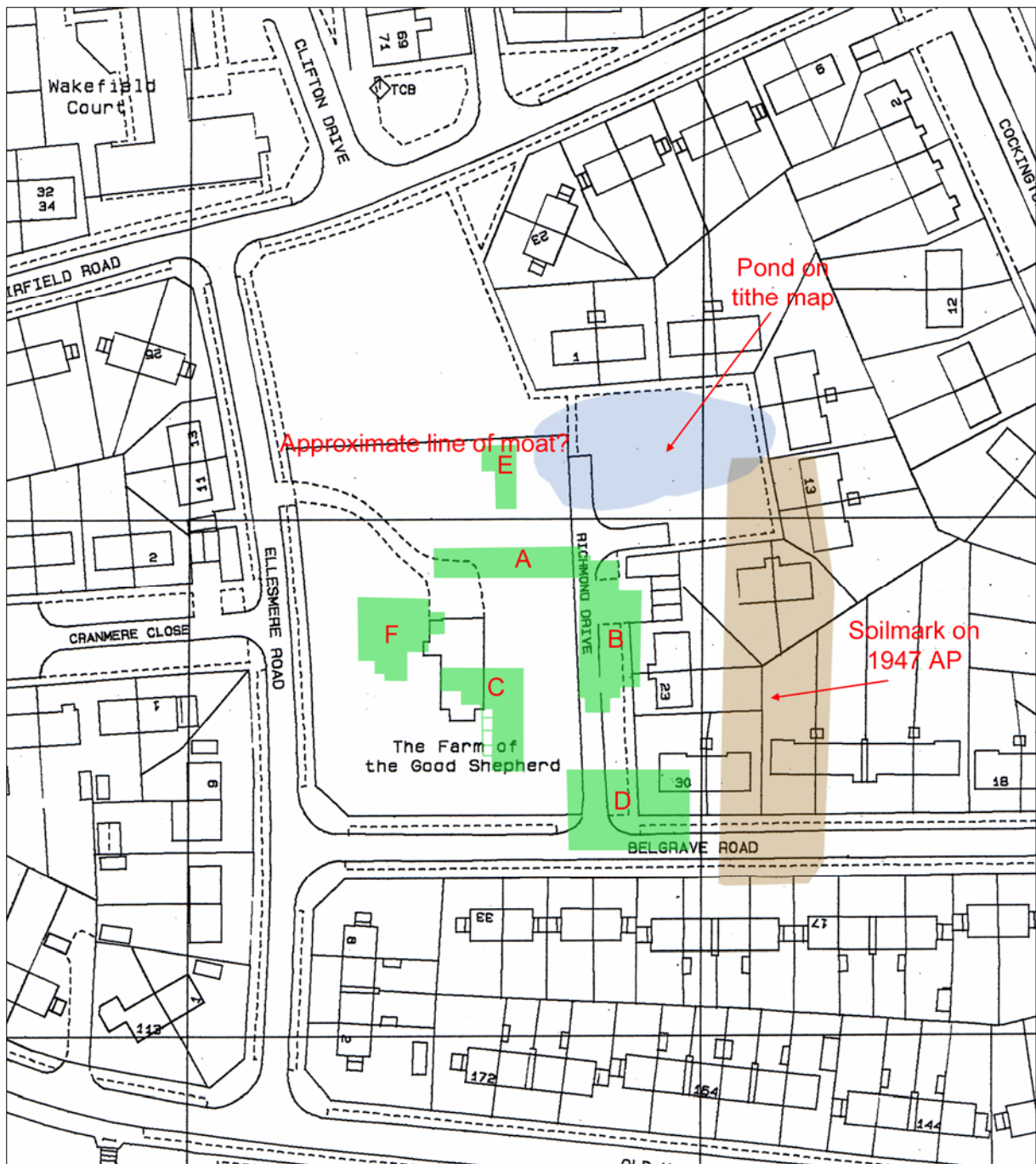
III. 23: Geophysical survey 2001, shaded relief plot (after Maude & Bailey 2001), with. Scale 1:1000.



**III. 24:** Geophysical survey 2001, image plot with black as areas of lowest resistance and white as highest (after Maude & Bailey 2001), with position of buildings shown on OS mapping of 1897 and 1908 outlined in purple. Scale 1:1000.



**III. 25:** Geophysical survey 2001, shaded relief plot (after Maude & Bailey 2001), with, with position of buildings shown on OS mapping of 1897 and 1908 outlined in purple. Scale 1:1000.



**III. 26:** Location of sites identified by the archaeological assessment. Scale 1:1000.  
 A-E = farm outbuildings; F = farmhouse.

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**III. 27:** The study area from the north-west.



**III. 28:** The study area from the north-east.



**III. 29:** The study area looking north from the site of the Farm of the Good Shepherd.



**III. 30:** The north-east area of the study area, looking south-west towards the site of the Farm of the Good Shepherd.



**III. 31:** Looking west from the north-east area of the study area.



**III. 32:** Looking east across the study area, along the line of a modern boundary and the possible line of the moat.



**III. 33:** The study area from the south-west.



**III. 34:** The study area from the south-east.





**III. 35:** Looking south-eastwards towards the site of the Farm of the Good Shepherd from the entrance on Ellesmere Road.



**III. 36:** Stone kerb on the south side of the entrance from Ellesmere Road.



**III. 37:** Sandstone block, below the turf, in the north of the study area (photograph by Derek Whitfield).