

# **TWO FOR ONE: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF SHOCKLACH CASTLE, CHESHIRE**

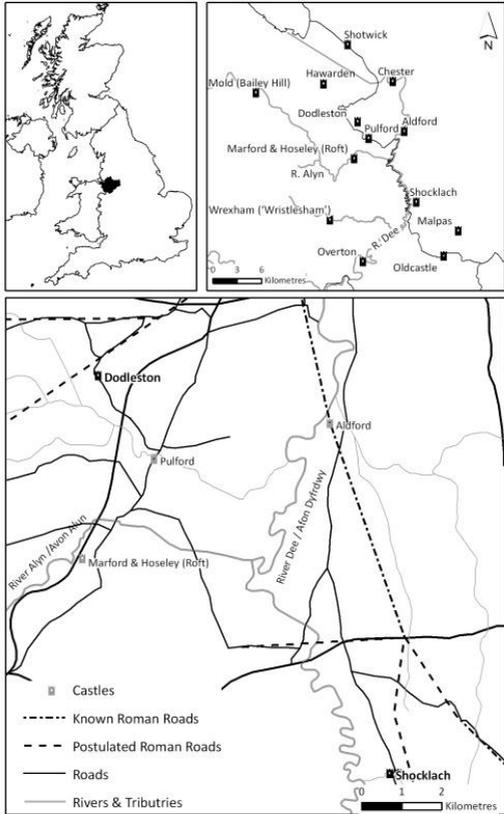
**Rachel Swallow**

## **Introduction**

Between 1995 and 1997, staff and students at University College Chester, now the University of Chester, surveyed three earthwork motte-and-bailey castle sites at Pulford, Shocklach and Dodleston in west Cheshire. That for Pulford castle was published in this journal in 1997-98.<sup>1</sup> This article publishes the survey for Shocklach castle for the first time. None of the three castles have been excavated. Previous studies have neither examined their defences, nor their internal structures to any notable extent. While limited historical references give some context for the earthworks at Shocklach, discussion of all three sites in secondary sources is sparse, and often of little more than one line.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the accurate and detailed survey presented here has been influential in prompting the further detailed and multi-disciplinary research by the author, as an integral part of doctoral research on the castles of Cheshire and their landscapes. This has resulted in successfully tracing historical and archaeological references relevant to Shocklach, as well as, for the first time, offering a broader, contextual study of the landscape context of Shocklach.

Shocklach is a so-called minor baronial castle.<sup>3</sup> It is situated within the powerful border earldom of Cheshire, with its base at Chester (see Figure 1). This position gave Shocklach strategic importance within

*Next Page: Figure 1: Location of Shocklach castle, Cheshire, in relation to other border castles in the vicinity. (Dodleston, also shown in bold, will be the subject of a paper in next year's volume.) Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2013.*



the Marcher lordship, as well as vital control - and valuable exploitation - of economic territory. The border county of Cheshire had a much lower density of castles than the neighbouring border counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire, which was possibly a deliberate policy on the part of the earls of Chester to restrict castle-building among their own barons.<sup>4</sup> Shocklach, therefore, formed a significant link in the defensive chain of fortifications to the east of the River Dee, intended to protect Chester from attacks from the Welsh.<sup>5</sup> These fortifications were sited (from north to south) at Shotwick, Chester, Dodleston, Pulford, Aldford, Shocklach, Malpas and Oldcastle. Rather than a single set of ‘beads on a string’<sup>6</sup> within west Cheshire, however, it is to be noted that the castle settlements of Hawarden, Mold, Marford/Hoseley, Wrexham (Erddig) and Overton, all situated to the west of the River Dee, were also within the bounds of Cheshire at the time of Domesday Book. We are looking, therefore, at a much wider area of Norman influence within the March. Within this context, I shall explore the earthworks at Shocklach.

## **Historical Evidence**

The settlement at Shocklach is sited on the Cheshire Plain about two kilometres east of the River Dee (see Figure 1). There are, in fact, two castles at Shocklach, the paired mottes being unique in Cheshire.<sup>7</sup> The earthworks are four kilometres south-east of Farndon, and are built upon red marl sandstones overlain with glacially derived boulder clay, sand and gravels.<sup>8</sup> The scheduled monuments are the motte to the west and the motte-and-bailey castle site to the east of the present B5069 road from Farndon to Worthenbury.<sup>9</sup> Both monuments are scheduled under the same entry.<sup>10</sup> Other scheduled monuments in the vicinity are medieval Windmill Hill,<sup>11</sup> and the medieval settlement and part of a field system at Castletown Farm.<sup>12</sup> The paired mottes were both crudely surveyed in the early nineteenth century by Hansall,<sup>13</sup> and the earthworks were surveyed again in 1964 and in 1984, on the last occasion by C. Williams and R.McKinder.<sup>14</sup> The latter survey clearly

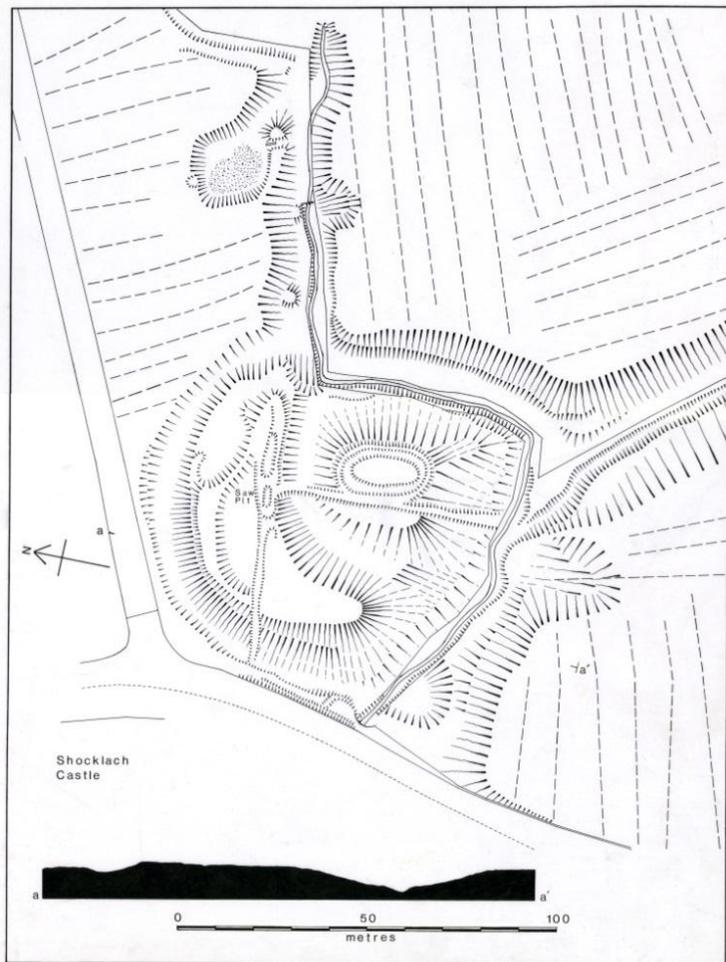
shows the west motte with an outer bank to the south, which is too small to have served as a bailey. Traces of a ditch can be seen on all sides of the motte, except to the north, where it is reinforced by the stream gorge. The motte-and-bailey to the east was the subject of the 1997 University College Chester survey (Figure 2).

There is a general, and historic, confusion about the function and purpose of the two monuments at Castletown.<sup>15</sup> The Ordnance Survey (OS) 25 inch maps of 1879 and 1911 clearly mark the monument to the east as a ‘castle’ and ‘moat’, with that to the west of Castletown Bridge as a ‘moat’.<sup>16</sup> The survey of 1964 reinterprets the mound to the west as a ‘motte’, with the earthworks 30 metres to the east marked as a ‘moat’, but not as the site of a castle.<sup>17</sup> In the early nineteenth century, Ormerod stated that the earthworks to the east appear unconnected with those he seemed to believe were of the Norman fortress to the west, doubting

whether [those to the east] ever formed any part of the castle, or whether it is a fragment of some ancient work protecting the line of communication between the northern and southern Watling Streets, which passed through Shocklach.<sup>18</sup>

Ormerod disagreed with Pennant’s previous assertion of the eighteenth century that the lower earthworks to the east marked the place of the castle. Contrary to Ormerod’s later interpretation, Pennant thought that the ‘vast mount’ to the west was ‘probably of far greater antiquity than the castle [to the east], and exploratory, commanding a great view around.’<sup>19</sup> As Ormerod had done over 150 years earlier, Rhys Williams suggested in 1997 that the ‘irregular and unusual “bailey” platform’ to the east predated Shocklach castle to the west.

***Next Page: Figure 2: Earthwork survey of Shocklach motte and bailey castle undertaken by University College Chester, 1997.***



He stated that a bank and ditched feature on the platform formed a flattened circle, ‘remarkably reminiscent of a small Bronze Age disc barrow’. He therefore suggested that the platform is a prehistoric feature, ‘quite possibly with a religious function’.<sup>20</sup>

Following Ormerod, Clark avoided discussion, simply describing Shocklach as a ‘moated mound with appended earthworks’,<sup>21</sup> while MacKenzie described the earthworks to the west of the road as a

lofty circular mound or burh, 20’ high, of very early derivation, on top of which the Normans placed their keep; it is half circled by a deep ditch, close to the road, and on the left or west side, where must have existed the castle buildings, the ground falls rapidly towards the ravine.<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, the size, height and commanding position of this motte to the west would have dominated the surrounding countryside as a visible statement of authority, being characteristic of many of the early post-Conquest castles. Added to this is the fact that it stands at a strategic point on the Roman and medieval road system in the Welsh March to the east of the River Dee. MacKenzie continued:

on the east side of the road is another raised platform, shaped like a kite, also of ancient formation, which seems to have protected the communication between Watling Street on the north and that on the south, commanding as it did the road passing through.<sup>23</sup>

This suggestion of an earlier construction agrees with Ormerod’s interpretation of the two monuments. Other possible interpretations of the two monuments are put forward in this article. (See below, under the sub-title ‘Archaeological Evidence’.)

By the early nineteenth century, the earthworks were ‘still very strong and occupy an important pass ... where the present road to Chester crosses a deep ravine, watered by a small brook’.<sup>24</sup> Shocklach, along

with Oldcastle (see below), guarded the south-west angle of this landscape of widely dispersed settlements in Cheshire between the River Dee and its tributaries, one of which was a brook originally named the River Elf(e). From an unknown date, this tributary was re-named Wych(e) brook.<sup>25</sup> The date of origin of the name ‘Elf’ at Shocklach is also unknown, although the place names of Shocklach parish (see below) suggest pre-Norman use of this riverside wetland as summer shielings or meadows: Caldecott (‘cheerless shelters’) and Shocklach (‘boggy stream haunted by an evil spirit’).<sup>26</sup> It is tempting, therefore, to interpret the pre-Christian elf as the ‘evil spirit’ of the ‘boggy stream’ at Shocklach, named following the introduction of Christianity in this part of Cheshire; the English word ‘elf’ is the mid-fifth to mid-twelfth-century Old English *aelf*, *elf*, or *ylve*, meaning ‘elf’ or a ‘supernatural being’.<sup>27</sup> The meaning of the later name ‘Wych’ is thought to derive from saline springs in the area. Indeed, the landscape of Shocklach was clearly an important area for the production of salt: situated three kilometres south of Malpas, Dirtwich Saltworks are mentioned in the Domesday Survey and belonged to the Malpas barony.<sup>28</sup> For part of its course, the Wych brook formed the border between England and Wales, also flowing through Threapwood (see below), before entering the Dee south-west of Shocklach.<sup>29</sup>

In the Domesday Survey, the parish of Shocklach was in Broxton (*Dudestan*) Hundred, and during the medieval period it contained the townships of Caldecott, Church Shocklach and Shocklach Oviatt. Wulfgar the priest and three thegns held Caldecott in 1066, suggesting a continuing dependence of this part of the parish on the Mercian *familia* (household) at St. Chad’s church in nearby Farndon, which was the property of the collegiate church of St. John’s in Chester. By 1086 Caldecott had passed to Hugh fitz Osbern.<sup>30</sup> As for Shocklach manor itself, it was held in 1086 by Robert fitz Hugh, the Norman baron of Malpas, who among Earl Hugh’s leading landowners in Cheshire is the most obscure. His dispossessed pre-Conquest predecessor, Dot, had also held manors in Cholmondeley and

Bickerton within the bounds of Robert's later barony at Malpas.<sup>31</sup> However, the southern part of Broxton (*Dudestan*) Hundred, in which Shocklach is located, formed a significant concentration of Earl Edwin's holdings prior to 1066, creating a compact fief for Robert.<sup>32</sup> An Englishman, Drogo, held Shocklach from Robert, its value rising from 8 shillings in 1066 to 12 shillings in 1086.

The settlement at Castletown is approximately one and a half kilometres north of Shocklach village, and itself straddled the townships - later civil parishes - of Church Shocklach and Caldecott. Castletown is first mentioned in an Inquisition Post Mortem dated to the 1290s.<sup>33</sup> Along with its place name, meaning 'hamlet at a castle',<sup>34</sup> this suggests a relatively late addition to the Anglo-Norman landscape, crossing township boundaries. As Domesday makes clear, Church Shocklach and Caldecott were already under different lordship both just before and soon after the Norman Conquest. This joint lordship might well have formed the basis for moiety possession (that is, the holding of half a piece of land or property) evidenced in later documents, and, it is suggested, evidenced in the castles' landscapes (see below).

Shocklach castle owed suit and service to the superior manor of Malpas.<sup>35</sup> Of the three castles held by Robert fitz Hugh, Oldcastle and Shocklach are thought to have been outposts to Malpas.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, both Oldcastle and Shocklach lay adjacent to extra-parochial Threapwood, meaning 'debatable land, wood',<sup>37</sup> thus highlighting the defensive purpose and siting of these Malpas barony castles within disputed Marcher territory. Although Shocklach is not listed as an early castle in the Welsh March,<sup>38</sup> in 1121 the Welsh burned two castles, which are generally accepted to be those of Shocklach and Malpas.<sup>39</sup> Between 1208 and 1229, David de Malpas (1185-1252) had obtained admission to the fee of Shocklach.<sup>40</sup> The younger brother of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd (the Last) of Gwynedd (1223-82), Rhodri ap Gruffudd (c.1230-1315) married Beatrice de Malpas, David de Malpas' daughter, sometime after 1272. Through this significant cross-border

marriage, Rhodri acquired his wife's property in Cheshire, including Shocklach. However, it would seem that he held no part of his wife's lands by courtesy. That is, he was not entitled by common law to his wife's estate of lands held during their marriage.<sup>41</sup>

The manor of Shocklach appears to have passed to the Suttons and the St Pierres, who held it in moieties, although it is called the manor of Shocklach in deeds of each family.<sup>42</sup> Both the castles of Malpas and Shocklach are mentioned in a late fourteenth-century extent, where John de Sutton, knight, held the former in its entirety, plus a moiety of the castle of Shocklach.<sup>43</sup> A plea at Chester on 26 April 1366 states that in the previous year John had wrongly impounded at Shocklach castle three oxen not belonging to him. The same plea informs us that John le Strange (1306-49) had held the manor of John de Sutton for the same services, including finding one man to guard Shocklach castle in the time of war in Wales if warned, and four men to make a stockade (*hirsun*) there when necessary.<sup>44</sup> It would appear that Shocklach castle had a defensive function until the latter part of the fourteenth century at least.

The motte-and-bailey site to the east of the B5069 is probably the site of the fortified manor house, mentioned in 1499, when Lord Dudley, the Judge, 'notorious in the time of Henry VII, by his exactions',<sup>45</sup> claimed the right to man the castle at Shocklach, fortified, ditched and crenellated, and to have a toll for himself and William Brereton.<sup>46</sup> The castle thus passed onto the Breretons as a parcel of the Malpas barony, followed by the Hills (the family of Sir Rowland Hill, the 'first Protestant Lord Mayor of London' in 1549),<sup>47</sup> and then onto the Drakes. A Deed of Purchase relating to William Lord Brereton, which dates to about 1700, refers to the barony of Malpas, its manor and castle, and includes the manors of Oldcastle, Shocklach and Castletown.<sup>48</sup> In the early twentieth century, it was noted that the Breretons of Malpas and Shocklach could travel from Malpas to Chester without passing over the territory of another landowner.<sup>49</sup> The Deed, however, mentions the manor, but not the castle at Castletown, and Hearth Tax Returns for Broxton Hundred in 1663 suggest that the

Hall of Shocklach had superseded the castle at some stage during the sixteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Saxton's map of Cheshire of 1577 shows only a church at Shocklach and Malpas, whereas a castle is indicated for Oldcastle.<sup>51</sup>

## **Archaeological Evidence**

It is notable that Oldcastle within the barony of Malpas, which was surveyed and excavated by Mr F.H. Thompson for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in 1957, bears no resemblance in form to that of either of the monuments at Shocklach. There is no trace of a bailey either at Oldcastle or at the western motte at Shocklach, but at Oldcastle the motte is rectangular, measuring approximately 30 metres by 11 metres.<sup>52</sup> The landscape of Oldcastle's motte siting, however, is remarkably similar to that of the motte to the west at Shocklach: each motte occupies a long spur running within a loop of a brook, which provided a natural defence on three sides. The 1957 survey noted that the date and purpose of the earthworks at Oldcastle remain enigmatic.<sup>53</sup> Although trenching on the platform produced no finds, the presence of a layer of stone and a possible hearth was suggested, as was a postulated date of an eleventh- or twelfth-century build. It is presumed that both Oldcastle and Shocklach were intended to block the route along the Wych valley, acting as outposts of the motte-and-bailey at Malpas; Oldcastle is about three kilometres to the south-west of Malpas, and Shocklach, approximately five kilometres to the north-west of Malpas.

The motte to the west at Shocklach stands about 7 metres high and is typical of a number of sites throughout the Welsh Marches which controlled Saxon manors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and which acted as a frontier to any Welsh incursions. The motte of Bailey Hill castle at Mold (now in Flintshire), for instance, is between 10 and 14 metres high, with a summit of approximately 20 metres in diameter. Both Bailey Hill motte and the motte to the west at Shocklach are conical mounds, with the base of that at Shocklach being elliptical, with a maximum of 110 metres across.<sup>54</sup> The flat-

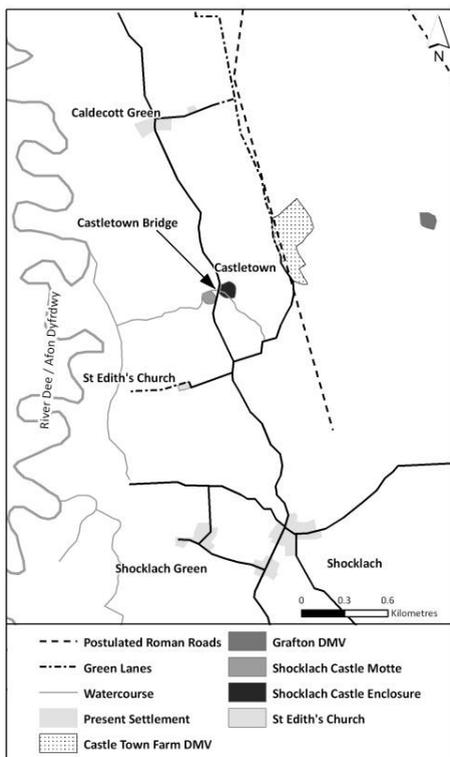
topped summit is nearly circular, and, as at Bailey Hill, Mold, is about 20 metres in diameter. As the brook and deep valley surrounds the Shocklach motte in a loop to the west, north and east in an area known as The Beach,<sup>55</sup> the earthwork to the south of the motte would have been constructed to create its significant defensive ditch. As Ormerod stated in the early nineteenth century, the motte was 'commanded by no superior elevations, and when its advantages of situation were strengthened with natural thickets and surrounding morasses, the fortress must have been nearly impregnable'.<sup>56</sup>

The reduced motte-and-bailey earthworks to the east at Shocklach, on the other hand, are larger and lower than those to the west, with the well-preserved motte in the south-east part of the site rising approximately 4 to 5 metres in height from the bottom of the ditch.<sup>57</sup> While no bailey or ditch survives at the head motte-and-bailey at Malpas, the motte-and-bailey castle at Shocklach was presumably similar in form. The motte at Malpas has an average height of 3.7 metres,<sup>58</sup> comparable with the motte at Pulford, approximately sixteen kilometres to the north-west of Shocklach, which has a height of 3 metres. The Pulford motte, with its kidney-shaped bailey to the north-east, commands Pulford brook to the south.<sup>59</sup> Despite suggestions otherwise, therefore (see the summary of the historical confusion, above), the east 'moat' is, in fact, a motte of typical form with a kidney-shaped bailey to its west, very similar to that of Pulford castle. At Shocklach, the motte is oval-shaped, and is bounded by a low, narrow bank. Two distinctive earthworks are visible on the mound: a straight narrow ditch runs east to west across the north half and is the line of the township boundary between Caldecott and Church Shocklach. There is also a modern sandpit.<sup>60</sup> A tower of about 22 feet (approximately 6.7 metres) was said to have been built upon the motte.<sup>61</sup> The bailey is D-shaped in plan, measuring approximately 70 metres by 78 metres internally. It is surrounded by a prominent ditch around the north half and a stream valley on the south side, with a depth of about 2.7 metres in places. This is now dry, but would have been originally water-filled, by damming the south arm through which

the stream flows; the road is now sited upon the dam. This is evident from the survey of the earthworks. Ormerod advised that the bailey had been used as a garden, but no date is indicated.<sup>62</sup> The bailey has been quarried in the north-east corner, apparently in the early twentieth century when the farmer was noted to have filled part of a ditch and some hollows.<sup>63</sup>

The two distinct monuments at Shocklach are separated by the present B5069 road from Farndon to Worthenbury, which at this point uses Castletown Bridge to cross a brook (see Figure 3). The castle or castles at Shocklach would therefore appear to protect the line of communication between the Roman roads of northern and southern Watling Streets from Chester, which passed through Eaton Park, Aldford and Caldecott and went onto Bangor Is y Coed to the west of the River Dee, and were presumably still in use in the medieval period.<sup>64</sup> Castletown Bridge was probably the site of the medieval toll gate, catching people and animals entering Cheshire from Wales to the south and west, as Shocklach castle guarded the only road into Cheshire at this point.<sup>65</sup> There appears to have been a toll gate here from at least 1290,<sup>66</sup> significantly when Castletown is first mentioned in surviving documents. Between 1208 and 1229, David de Malpas held half, or a moiety, of ‘the passage’ at Shocklach.<sup>67</sup> The same passage is mentioned in the latter half of the fourteenth century, in which John de Sutton, knight (born c.1340), also claimed a passage at Malpas and Tushingham (Cheshire).<sup>68</sup> In 1499, when we know that there was a fortified manor house at Castletown, Shocklach, Edward Sutton (1459-c.1533) claimed a passage ‘at a place called Tolgate’ at Shocklach.<sup>69</sup> Extant nineteenth-century stonework in the bailey ditch below the road, the significant height of the road rising above the ditch, and the road’s encroachment on these earthworks, all indicate

***Next Page: Figure 3: The landscape of Shocklach castles, Cheshire. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2013.***



that the road sits upon a dam of the brook, the road having been straightened at a late- or post-medieval date.<sup>70</sup>

The Tithe Map and Award of 1839 covering Castletown as part of the parish of Church Shocklach<sup>71</sup> provide nineteenth-century field names which give tantalising clues to support a proposed paired castle landscape. The field to the east of the road and in which the motte-and-bailey is sited is called Castle Hill, with two large fields to its north and south, both called Castle Field, and one to its immediate east, called Near Castle Field.

St Edith's church, Shocklach, is to the south, distant from both the castles at Castletown. This Grade I listed building is considered to be the best Norman chapel in Cheshire<sup>72</sup> and a green lane leads west from it to what were communally-owned water meadows<sup>73</sup> and eventually to a ford on the River Dee, about half a kilometre away. Bryant's map of 1831<sup>74</sup> marks a Shocklach Ferry, and Swire & Hutchings' map of 1830 shows a track extending towards the market town of Wrexham in Maelor Cymraeg, six kilometres to the west.<sup>75</sup> A possible Deserted Medieval Village (DMV) was suggested at St Edith's in 1965 in the large field to the north of the church, although the Ordnance Survey could not identify it in 1969, and recent geophysical survey has not been conclusive in this respect.<sup>76</sup>

While there are a number of church-related field names to the immediate north of the isolated St Edith's church in Shocklach, to the immediate north of the motte-and-bailey at Castletown there is also a field called Church Yard. This is highly suggestive of a church existing within the motte-and-bailey's immediate landscape. If this was the case, it would be a situation similar to that found at other castles in west Cheshire, where churches often sit immediately adjacent to the castle bailey. Examples exist at Malpas, Aldford, Pulford, Dodleston and Mold. A number of fields to the north-west of Church Yard support this probability: Little Church Croft, Far Church Field (two) and Church Field. Although Ormerod indicated doubt as to the function and date of the earthworks of this motte-and-bailey site

(see above), he did state that the church of Shocklach 'has been said to stand upon it',<sup>77</sup> which clearly supports the cartographic evidence described here.

As mentioned above, there was a medieval settlement associated with the motte-and-bailey and its church at Castletown, immediately to its east. Nine cottages were noted in a 1603 survey. Aerial photographs taken by Rhys Williams in 1986 identified what he described as abandoned tofts and crofts of Castletown, surrounded by the ridge and furrow of medieval fields. Both the settlement and part of the field system are Scheduled Ancient Monuments.<sup>78</sup> The medieval hamlet here is now occupied by two farms dating from the seventeenth century.<sup>79</sup> The green lane which runs from Lords Field is substantial. This is now a footpath and runs from Castletown northwards towards Caldecott Green and onto Kings Marsh near Aldford, which may well have been an Anglo-Saxon royal estate from the tenth century.<sup>80</sup> The original course of the green lane may have run due north to meet Watling Street at SJ43695418. For a significant proportion of the lane's length, its eastern boundary forms the township boundary between Kings Marsh, Stretton, Caldecott and Grafton. Caldecott Green to the north of Castletown is a small hamlet, which was a secondary medieval settlement and is recognised as a shrunken village, also with evidence of medieval crofts and tofts. Believed to be the site of Bovium, Grafton (see Figure 3) was a Roman settlement and fort with archaeological evidence of a fort, aqueduct, bath house, furnace, building and a ditch.<sup>81</sup> It is also classed as a Deserted Medieval Village, which had an ornamental pond, hall, moat and a medieval rabbit warren, or pillow mound.<sup>82</sup> This green lane, therefore, may have been a drove road, and it may even have been a military road backing the line of motte-and-bailey castles and defended along its western side by the ditch.<sup>83</sup>

As regards field names associated with the motte to the west of the road, the Tithe Map and Awards notably show Lords Field and Sheriffs Field to its north, both of which are clues as to the demesne of the manor of Shocklach. The north boundary of Sheriffs Field aligns

with one large, curving field to the west, called Clomley Park.<sup>84</sup> The significant field name of Bailey Wood lies to the south of Clomley Park Field, which itself abuts the area called Castletown Rough to its south, a wooded area containing the motte. While there is no evidence in the landscape today, this suggests that a bailey to the motte may have existed north of brook. It also suggests that the motte was within, or adjacent to, a medieval wood or park. The fact that there was a field called New Haye (indicative of an enclosure in the forest for the capture of deer),<sup>85</sup> which was first mentioned in 1561,<sup>86</sup> adds weight to the likelihood that Clomley Park formed an earlier hunting enclosure at Castletown.

The paired mottes together might have been a motte-and-bailey configuration, now severed by both road and stream. The 'bailey' to the east, therefore, could have been added at a later date to the motte to the west, being lower with a far less commanding and visible position. Material evidence could be interpreted to support such a later date of construction: a fourteenth-century silver penny was found in a field just north (SJ434509) of the site at Castletown, which is possibly of either Edward II (1307-27) or III (1327-77) date.<sup>87</sup> This is in keeping with the fact that the first documentary reference to Castletown is in the 1290s (see above). Indeed, this monument appears to post-date the surrounding medieval ridge and furrow,<sup>88</sup> clearly visible on aerial photography,<sup>89</sup> which supports a later construction than that of the monument to the west. The monument to the east could also be the site of Lord Dudley's fortified manor house of 1499, which may well have replaced the motte to the west entirely.

However, there are additional theories that have not been explored to date. The two sites bear a close resemblance, on a number of points and site features, to Lewis's description of paired mottes in East Chelborough, Dorset.<sup>90</sup> Lewis suggests that such pairing can be the result of forming constituent parts of a unified defensive system, or where the second motte replaces the first. These possibilities have been raised already in this article. A third possibility is that one of the mottes is a siege motte. This has not yet been explored for the

earthworks at Shocklach, and raises the suggestion that the more elevated defensive position of the motte to the west could have been a later construction rather than an earlier one, perhaps as an adulterine or siege castle during the Anarchy period, when it might have been built deliberately in opposition to the existing motte-and-bailey. Notably, Ranulf de Gernons (d.1153), fourth earl of Chester, played a leading role in King Stephen's downfall during and after 1141.<sup>91</sup> Neighbouring Powys was fought over during the Anarchy, and particularly from 1146, after Ranulf had finally committed himself to the Angevins.<sup>92</sup> While the motte to the west is worthy of consideration as a siege motte for these historical reasons, the argument falls flat on a number of archaeological points. The maximum accurate range of a bow in the twelfth century was about 100 metres.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, at Shocklach, although the besiegers would have been within accurate bow-shot range of the motte-and-bailey 30 metres to the east, likewise, the besiegers' motte would have been within easy range of the besieged motte-and-bailey. Lewis's case study indicates that the paired monuments at East Chelborough are distant by between 110 and 150 metres, that is, measuring the distance from the motte of the one monument to the bailey and motte of the other; here, but not at Shocklach, the besiegers of the motte would have been safely out of range of bow-shot from the motte-and-bailey structure. Added to this, the motte at Shocklach has an unusual height for a siege motte: it stands about 7 metres high, compared with known siege mottes, these typically having a height of about 1.5 metres.<sup>94</sup> More particularly, and again to counter the argument for a siege castle, it is to be wondered why the more defensive position of the motte to the west would not have been chosen for the site of the earlier castle site, the motte-and-bailey structure to the east offering no strategic controlling advantage over the other motte.

A further, important, consideration is that the township boundary between Caldecott to the north and Church Shocklach to the south passes through the motte-and-bailey to the east and immediately north of the motte to the west. Given the many documentary references to dual lordship/moiety possession during the medieval period, following

on from the Domesday account of Caldecott and Shocklach being held by different lords, there is good reason to suggest that both monuments existed separately, and possibly concurrently, in the possession of different lords. The township boundary follows the brook, with the exception of the motte-and-bailey, where there is evidence of damming to its north east and west (see Figure 2) to re-route the watercourse to the south of the monument. The motte to the west is clearly within Church Shocklach township, rather than within Caldecott or Castletown. This western motte is therefore directly connected to the possible settlement and extant church of St Edith's in Church Shocklach to the south, which may not have been so unusually isolated in the landscape as it would appear today. Conversely, the watercourse diversion artificially placed the motte-and-bailey to the east, along with the now-vanished church evident from field names and its associated castle settlement 'Castletown', outside the township and manor of Shocklach. We know that Shocklach castle existed in 1121, and this could be a reference to the western motte, with place name, ridge and furrow and documentary evidence for moiety possession all suggesting a late thirteenth-/early fourteenth-century date for the Castletown motte-and-bailey to the east. Field name evidence also suggests that the motte to the west was eventually incorporated into the design of a medieval park landscape.

## **Conclusion**

Original and innovative multi-disciplinary research - including analogy, morphological analysis, landscape and historical context - has added some clarity, although no definitive conclusion, to the former historical confusion regarding the earthworks at Shocklach. As a consequence, this article confirms that there are two castle sites at Shocklach, not one; Shocklach provides the only example in Cheshire of paired mottes, with few exist in anywhere else in England.<sup>95</sup>

Although the castles are separated by the road and the brook, the frequently recorded toll gate and passage situated between them may well explain their close geographical proximity, with the lords of both

castles wanting a stake in the profits from trade. This suggests a commercial, as well as a defensive, function for the paired mottes. The original build date of both castle earthworks remains uncertain but the theory of a later siege motte built alongside an existing motte and bailey castle can be ruled out. The proximity of the two castles could instead be explained by the development of the medieval manorial landscape: the castle motte to the west could have been extended to create an adjacent bailey to its east, or the motte and bailey could have superseded the motte to the west entirely, at a time when defensive requirements had declined to some extent. Alternatively, the theory favoured here is that the proximity of the two castles can be explained by moiety possession within the manorial landscape, which provides a strong indication that the power of two lords with their elite landscapes, first glimpsed in the different tenure of Shocklach and Caldecott in Domesday Book, sat side-by-side, or were shared between them, for an as-yet-unknown period prior to the end of the sixteenth century. While the relationship between the associated mottes may have changed over time from that intended by the original builders, therefore, Shocklach was certainly a place of significance in medieval England.

For both Shocklach castles, continuity of significance of place was crucial for their siting. Not only were they strategically placed within the Welsh Marches, but there is clear evidence that the Roman and Anglo-Saxon landscapes influenced their location. A commercial control of the Cheshire and Marcher landscape was of prime consideration, with all evidence pointing to the importance of facilitating and protecting trade and related route and river ways. The dispersed nature of settlement in the west Cheshire landscape, however, did not deprive the castle builder of elite residential and leisure functions associated with the castles: there is evidence of a hunting landscape, for instance. Although the castles at Shocklach may have originated as part of an Anglo-Norman border defensive scheme, therefore, they also demonstrate the same elite residential

function and concern to control trade-routes as medieval castles elsewhere.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Shocklach motte-and-bailey castle survey was undertaken by University College Chester (now the University of Chester), in 1997: Graeme White (then Head of the History Department) organised the investigative project; Susan Reynolds (then a Visiting Lecturer in the Department) conducted it and led the students in their survey work, and Wayne Cocroft (previously of Royal Commission on Historic Monuments and now Senior Investigator with English Heritage), produced the drawings. The students involved, were: Bob Cadwallader; Gareth Catherall; Liz Lawrenson; Peter McSorely and Kimberley Nevitt.

I am very grateful to the following: Mr and Mrs Shaw, of Castletown, Shocklach, who gave their kind permission for me to access their land in order to study both monuments; the Reprographic Department at the University of Chester, which reproduced the original survey drawing in digital format for the purposes of this article; Rob Edwards, Historic Environment Records Officer at Cheshire West and Cheshire, who created the other two illustrations for this article, and who shared with me so freely his invaluable and extensive knowledge of the Cheshire landscape; and Professors Stewart Ainsworth, Nick Higham, Graeme White and Howard Williams, for their valuable comments on previous versions of this article. Any errors and omissions are my own.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> S. Reynolds and G. White, 'A Survey of Pulford Castle', *Ches. Hist.*, XXXVII (1997-98), pp. 23-25.

<sup>2</sup> For example, P. W. Cullen and R. Hordern, *The Castles of Cheshire* (Liverpool, 1986), p. 10; B. Grimsditch, M. Nevell, R. Nevell, *Buckton Castle and the Castles of North West England* (Manchester, 2013), p. 106; M. Salter, *The Castles and Tower Houses of Lancashire* (Worcester, 2001) and O. Bott and R. Williams, *Man's Imprint on Cheshire* (Chester, 1975), p. 15.

- <sup>3</sup> R. Williams, *West Cheshire from the Air* (Chester, 1997), p. 47; B.M.C. Husain, *Cheshire under the Norman Earls, 1066-1237* (London and Prescot, 1973), p. 101, *et al.*
- <sup>4</sup> G. J. White, *The Medieval English Landscape, 1000-1540* (London), p. 186.
- <sup>5</sup> Cheshire County Sites and Monuments Record (CSMR) Number 1978, *et al.*
- <sup>6</sup> N. J. G. Pounds, *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Social and Political History* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 70, *et al.*
- <sup>7</sup> D. J. C. King, *Castellarium Anglicanum: An Index and Bibliography of the Castles in England, Wales and the Islands*, I (New York, 1983), p. 68: a motte-and-bailey and an embanked platform are listed as Shocklach 1 and 2, respectively.
- <sup>8</sup> Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) event number R2551: *Castletown Farm, Shocklach. An Archaeological Watching Brief* (Gifford & Partners Ltd, February 2005).
- <sup>9</sup> CHER reference: CH 13422/02.
- <sup>10</sup> Sites and Monuments Record (SMR): 13422/1012620 held at CHER.
- <sup>11</sup> CHER reference: CH13422/01.
- <sup>12</sup> SMR reference: SM30391/01 and /02 held at CHER.
- <sup>13</sup> J. H. Hansall, *The History of the County Palatine of Cheshire* (Chester, 1823), p. 353: details of a survey of Shocklach describe the ‘exterior mound; about 45 feet in width at the base’ and ‘site of the Keep; about 32 feet in perpendicular height’.
- <sup>14</sup> Surveys undertaken by C. Williams and R. McKinder, April 1984, recorded in CSMR 1794 (Castletown) at CHER.
- <sup>15</sup> Indeed, there appears to be confusion between those of the Malpas barony. For instance, Grimsditch, Nevell and Nevell, *Buckton Castle*, p. 113, and <http://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/211.html> (accessed 3 April, 2013): the Shocklach Oldcastle entry for both refers to documentary sources relating to Shocklach castle at Castletown, and not to Oldcastle, a separate site to the south of Malpas.
- <sup>16</sup> OS 25 inch map, sheet 59/4 (surveyed 1879); OS 25 inch map, sheet 59/4 (surveyed) 1911.
- <sup>17</sup> CHER 1784: OS Record Card prepared by T. P. Waggott, F. I., 17.11.64.
- <sup>18</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 584, although their conclusions appear to be similar.
- <sup>19</sup> T. Pennant, *A Tour in Wales* (London, 1778), p. 214.
- <sup>20</sup> Williams, *West Cheshire from the Air*, pp. 42-46.

- <sup>21</sup> G. T. Clark, 'Contribution towards a complete list of moated mounds or burhs', *The Archaeological Journal*, XLVI (1889), pp. 197-217, at p. 202.
- <sup>22</sup> J. D. Mackenzie, *Castles of England; their story and structure*, II (New York, 1886), pp. 179-80.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 689.
- <sup>25</sup> F. A. Latham, *Tilston, Shocklach & Threapwood: The History of Three Parishes* (Whitchurch, 2001), p. 20.
- <sup>26</sup> J. McN. Dodgson, *The Place-Names of Cheshire*, IV (English Place-Name Soc., 1972), p. 62.
- <sup>27</sup> R. Lass, *Old English: A Historical Linguistic Companion*, (Cambridge, 1994). For a full and recent discussion, see A. T. P. Hall, 'The Meaning of Elf and Elves in Medieval England' (unpubl. PhD, University of Glasgow, 2004) and A. T. P. Hall, *The Meaning of Elf and Elves in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2007).
- <sup>28</sup> CSMR 1696; 1696/1/0: place name evidence suggests a salt works at Higher and Lower Wych from the eleventh century until the eighteenth century, known as *Fulewic* in 1096-1101, and *DritWyche* from 1482.
- <sup>29</sup> J. M. Wilson, *Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales*, V (London, Glasgow and New York, 1870-72), p. 520; [www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/histland/maelor/msnatura.htm](http://www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/histland/maelor/msnatura.htm) retrieved on 30 June 2013.
- <sup>30</sup> N. J. Higham, *The Origins of Cheshire* (Manchester, 1993), p. 134.
- <sup>31</sup> The Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE): [www.pase.co.uk](http://www.pase.co.uk), accessed 30 June, 2013; *Domesday Book. Cheshire: including Lancashire, Cumbria and North Wales*, ed. P. Morgan (Chichester, 1978): 264b, 264c.
- <sup>32</sup> C.P. Lewis, 'English and Norman Government and Lordship in the Welsh Borders, 1039 -1087' (unpubl. D.Phil, University of Oxford), p. 197.
- <sup>33</sup> Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, IV, p. 63.
- <sup>34</sup> Williams, *West Cheshire from the Air*, p. 42.
- <sup>35</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 686.
- <sup>36</sup> P. Morgan, *Domesday Book and the Local Historian* (London, 1994), p. 32.
- <sup>37</sup> E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (4<sup>th</sup> edn., Oxford, 1970), p. 470. An alternative interpretation of the place name could be that it derives from the Saxon word, 'Threp', meaning a ford; this could refer to the ford on the road crossing the Wych Book at Threapwood (E. Broad, 'Threapwood. A Refuge of Immorality and Lawlessness', *Malpas History*, no. 6, 1986, pp. 2-7, at p. 2).

<sup>38</sup> A. H. A. Hogg and D. J. C. King, 'Early castles in Wales and the Marches: a preliminary list', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, CXII (1963), pp. 77-124.

<sup>39</sup> Latham, *Tilston, Shocklach and Threapwood*, p. 21; D. and S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, II (London, 1810), pp. 772-73; *The Text of the Mabinogion and other Welsh Tales from the Red Book of Hergest*, ed. J. Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Oxford, 1887), pp. 105-9; *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, ed. H.T. Riley, I (London, 1853), p. 214, as quoted in P. M. Remfry, *A Political Chronology of Wales, 1066-1282* (Malvern, 2003), pp. 17-18: 'That winter, hearing of the death of Richard of Chester in the White Ship [25 November 1120], the sons of Gruffydd king of the Welsh [Cadwallon and Owain?], burned two castles and slew many men, and ravaged some parts of the earldom [Tegeingl?] before Ranulf le Mechin, the cousin of the drowned Richard, was raised to the earldom in 1121.'

<sup>40</sup> R. Stewart-Brown, 'Domesday Roll of Cheshire' in *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, XVIII, January 1923 (1924), p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Rhodri later married a Catherine and, through that marriage, acquired Tatsfield manor in Surrey: W. Farrer, *Honors and Knights' Fees, II* (London, 1924), p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 684; Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, II, pp 772-73.

<sup>43</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 652: Extent taken 2 Hen IV at Waverton before Richard de Manley, Escheater. The jurors found 'quod Castrum del Malpas et medietates Castri de Shokelache una cum medietate totius Baronie del Malpas et quarter pte al'ius medietatis ejusdem Baronie com membris et ptin suis extendunt et valent per annum in omnibus ext' quat' viginti marcas que quedem, Castrum et medietates predictam Johannes de Sutton, tenet, de domino Cestr' per baroniam scdm quantitatem p'dcam', etc; *Calendar of Recognizance Rolls of the Palatine of Chester (fifteenth century). The thirty-seventh annual report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1876), p. 652: listed under 'Shocklach': 1487, November 9. Castle. Sutton, Edward son of John, Livery: (...), that John Sutton, Kt, died seized in his demesne, as of fee, of the castle of Malpas and a moiety of the castle of Shockelache, together with a moiety of the barony of Malpas, and a fourth part of another moiety of the same barony, with the same moieties of the advowson of the church of Malpas; that the same were held of the Earl of Chester, by barony (...).

<sup>44</sup> *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, XLVII, Jan- Dec 1952 (1953), p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Hanshall, *History of Cheshire*, p. 326.

- <sup>46</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 333: plea of Lord Dudley, 15 Hen VII; CHER 1795/1; Hansall, *History of Cheshire*, p. 326; MacKenzie, *Castles of England*, pp. 179-80.
- <sup>47</sup> Hanshall, *History of Cheshire*, p. 326.
- <sup>48</sup> Deed of Purchase, including Shocklach and Castletown, c. 1700: CALS, DCH/C/792.
- <sup>49</sup> *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, IV, October 1917, p. 64.
- <sup>50</sup> That is, after the death of Henry VII. The Hearth Tax Return for the Hall of Shocklach was 10 shillings: *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, IV, October 1917, p. 64.
- <sup>51</sup> C. Saxton, *Cestriae Comitatus* (1577): CALS, PM12/10.
- <sup>52</sup> F. H. Thompson, 'Castle Hill, Oldcastle, Near Malpas, Cheshire', *Journal of Chester Archaeological Society*, LIV (1967), pp. 5-7; Ormerod, II, p. 666; CHER 1667/1.
- <sup>53</sup> Thompson, 'Castle Hill', p. 7.
- <sup>54</sup> Rick Turner's notes, March 1986: CSMR 1784 and 1785, held at CHER.
- <sup>55</sup> First mentioned in a document of 1319, and also appearing on the 1842 OS map, this means 'the valley with a stream': Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, IV, p. 63.
- <sup>56</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 689.
- <sup>57</sup> CHER event number R3097: J. Kirton, *Report on the Geophysical survey around St Edith's Church, Shocklach, Cheshire* (Chester, 2010), p. 4.
- <sup>58</sup> CHER 1689/2.
- <sup>59</sup> CHER 1830/1/0; 1830/1/1; 1830/1/2.
- <sup>60</sup> CHER 1795/1.
- <sup>61</sup> Hansall, *History of Cheshire*, p. 326.
- <sup>62</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 689.
- <sup>63</sup> *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, XXIV, September 1927 (1929), p. 65: 'Nearly a year ago a correspondent wrote that when passing the remains of Shocklach castle, a short time previous to this, he had noticed with pain, that the farmer was cutting away the east of the mound, and that with it he had filled up part of the fosse and some other hollows in the vicinity.'
- <sup>64</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 689; W. Thompson Watkin, *Roman Cheshire* (Wakefield 1974), pp. 50-51; R. W. B., 'The Course of Watling Street between Urconium and Deva', *Archaeologica Cambrensis*, V, 4<sup>th</sup> Series (1874), pp. 200-17, at p. 202.

<sup>65</sup> The Chester Pleas of Quo Warranto in 1499, XXXIII. Sir Ed. Sutton, Lord Dudley, cited in *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, XXX, Jan.-Dec. 1935 (1936), pp. 39 and 50, by R. Stewart Brown: The castle of Shocklache within the manor aforesaid, with murage, ditching and crenellation of same; the passage [*passagium*] at Cristelton [*sic*] Shoklache at a place called Tolgate, of each horse with ‘paksadel’ loaded with goods ½ d.; of every cart with goods 4d.; of every drove of cattle for sale, above 20 4d., under 20 nil; of 100 or more sheep 4d., under nil. Prescription pleaded.

<sup>66</sup> Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, IV, p. 65:1290 Inquisition Post Mortem: *passagium vocatum Tholyate*.

<sup>67</sup> Stewart-Brown, ‘Domesday Roll of Cheshire’, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Chester Plea Roll, no. 67, 32-36 E. Cestria. John de Sutton, Knight, lord of the manor of Malpas, cited in R. Stewart-Brown, ‘Note: Shocklach Court Leet and Baron’, *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, XXXII, September 1937 (1938), pp. 100, 101.

<sup>69</sup> See note 66, above.

<sup>70</sup> *Pers. Comm.* with Professor Stewart Ainsworth, May 2013. Ormerod, writing in the early nineteenth century (II, p. 689), refers to what is the present road.

<sup>71</sup> Tithe Map for Church Shocklach, (1839): CALS, EDT 355/2.

<sup>72</sup> There is a Norman doorway in the south wall, with a semi-circular arch with chevron and cable decoration, ending in carved heads. The oldest part of the church is said to date to about 1150: R. Richards, *Old Cheshire Churches*, (Manchester, 1973), pp. 294-96; Latham, *Tilston, Shocklach and Threapwood*, p. 61.

<sup>73</sup> Rick Turner’s notes, March 1986: CHER 1784.

<sup>74</sup> A. Bryant, 1831 Cheshire Map; Latham, *Tilston, Shocklach and Threapwood*, p. 101.

<sup>75</sup> Swire & Hutchings. 1830: CALS, DLI 13/2; Latham, *Tilston, Shocklach and Threapwood*, p. 101.

<sup>76</sup> CHER 1781; CHER event number R3097.

<sup>77</sup> Ormerod, II, p. 584 cites Bishop of Cloyne’s communication in Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, II, p. 434.

<sup>78</sup> Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) List Number 1016588 held at CHER.

<sup>79</sup> Williams, *West Cheshire from the Air*, p. 42; CHER 1784.

<sup>80</sup> A. Crosby, *A History of Cheshire* (Chichester, 1996), p. 32; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles: The Peterborough Manuscript (E) 972*, ed. M. J. Swanton (London, 1996), p. 119. It was John of Worcester, writing some 200 years after the event, who referred to Edward the Elder departing this life at the royal township of Farndon ('in regia uillaque Fearndun nominator'): *The Chronicle of John of Worcester, Vol II. The Annals from 450 to 1066*, ed. R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, trans. J. Bray and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995), pp. 424-25.

<sup>81</sup> CHER 1768/1/0.

<sup>82</sup> CHER 1770/0/0; 1770/0/1; 1770/0/2.

<sup>83</sup> CHER 1783; 1785/; 1785/2 and 1983; CHER event number ECH 4532.

<sup>84</sup> Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, IV, p. 65 and III, p. 47: possibly derived from the Old English for a clearing or pasture (*leah*) of mud or clay (*clām*) or *clæmig*, meaning 'muddy, clayey, damp'; the Park element derives from Old English, *pearroc*, meaning 'a paddock, a small enclosure'.

<sup>85</sup> R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (London, 1965), p. 220. Hays recorded in Domesday Cheshire are found in heavily wooded areas in the centre, the south and east of the county, with Shocklach to the west being unusual. The entries for Kingsley and Weaverham to the east of Cheshire state that the hays there were for catching roedeer: Husain, *Cheshire under the Norman Earls*, p. 28.

<sup>86</sup> Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, IV, p. 63.

<sup>87</sup> CHER 2377.

<sup>88</sup> C. Hartwell, M. Hyde, E. Hubbard, N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cheshire* (New Haven and London, 2011), p. 586.

<sup>89</sup> The most clearly visible is on Run 16/3861, taken on 17 July 1972, but see also Run 15/4231 and Run 17/0083, both taken on 8 July 1971. All three copies held with CHER.

<sup>90</sup> C. Lewis, 'Paired mottes in East Chelborough, Dorset' in M. Bowden, D. Mackay, P. Topping, eds., *From Cornwall to Caithness: some aspects of British Field Archaeology: Papers presented to Norman V. Quinnell* (BAR British Series 209, 1989), pp. 159-71.

<sup>91</sup> G. White, 'Ranulf (II) [Ranulf de Gernon], fourth earl of Chester (d. 1153), magnate' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (on-line): <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23128>. Accessed 14 April, 2013.

<sup>92</sup> ‘in 1146 ... the men of Powys ravaged the Cheshire and Shropshire Marches before advancing to their defeat at the battle of Wych between Malpas and Whitchurch on 3 September ... in 1149 King Madog ap Maredudd of Powys rebuilt Oswestry castle.’ Quoted in P.M. Remfry, *Whittington Castle and the families Montgomery, Peverel, Maminot and Fitz Warin*, (Malvern, 2007), p. 10; *Annales Cestrienses, A Chronicle of the Abbey of St Werburgh, Chester*, ed. and trans. R.C. Christie (RSLC, XIV, 1887), p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> D. F. Renn, ‘Mottes: a classification’, *Antiquity*, XXXIII (1959), pp. 106-12, cited in Lewis, *Paired Mottes*, p. 169.

<sup>94</sup> Lewis, *Paired Mottes*, p. 149.

<sup>95</sup> Renn, ‘Mottes’, cited in Lewis, *Paired Mottes*, p. 160: Renn lists 70 examples of paired mottes (and does not include those at Shocklach).