**A Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales
East and Northeast Wales – Post Medieval
22/12/2003**

Introduction

This paper covers archaeology in the historic counties of Brecknock, Flint, Denbigh, Montgomery and Radnor for the period after 1600 and follows from the *Stage 1 Resource Audit* carried out by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. It is felt that the combining of Post Medieval and Industrial is inappropriate, in terms of the wide range of monument types included (e.g. churches to nuclear power stations), the sheer volume (and potential volume) of sites to be covered and the different nature of the study of industrial archaeology (especially when a site is still functioning) and 'conventional' archaeology of the post-medieval period. For the purposes of this assessment however the specified structure given has been retained.

I should like to acknowledge the contributions made by Judith Alfrey, Dr Stephen Briggs, Phil Copleston, Stephen Hughes, David Percival, Bob Silvester, Richard Suggett, Mark Walters and Elisabeth Whittle.

Summary

Existing knowledge: strengths

- Remains from the post-medieval and industrial periods still largely exist on the ground.
- There are around 22,000 and 18,000 database entries in the SMR and NMRW respectively, for the area and period.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- Compared to earlier periods, the number of records against survival of sites is considerably lower.
- SMR, NMRW and Cadw data have inbuilt inconsistencies and biases and there is a simple lack of baseline data on many subjects.
- The depth of information represented by the SMR/NMRW database entries is not known.

Research opportunities

- One of the immediate priorities should be to address differences in data and to pool what is already known.
- Many more basic records need to be created to reflect the number and survival of sites, BUT we need to assess the depth of the present record.
- Compared to other periods, much better written and graphic records are available for the post-medieval & industrial, e.g. OS maps, and there is justification for an organised programme of 'site extraction' from such sources.
- The physical resource is disappearing rapidly, by demolition and 'conservation'; there is a need to record and research quickly what is left and use the results to inform higher standards of conservation.

1. Settlement, housing and storage

Existing knowledge: strengths

- There is a wealth of readily available information contained in OS maps, especially the early 25in series, which provide useful evidence on the development of settlement patterns and the evolution of holdings.

- There are partial studies of individual site types relating to settlement, notably: farm buildings (RCAHMW Radnor farmsteads); industrial housing in Newtown; studies of lower status settlements in the uplands (Uplands Initiative) and higher status settlements in the lowlands (Register of Historic Parks & Gardens and the RCAHMW gardens database); vernacular building studies such as *Houses of the Welsh Countryside* and *Buildings of Wales* for Clwyd and Powys.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- Insufficient study of settlements in their wider contexts – although there is much listed building data in the SMR (probably more than in the other SMRs) it is available only as site or point data devoid of context.

- Absence of detailed surveys of some site types, e.g. parks and gardens

- The more recent the housing, the less we know about it, resulting in virtually no knowledge/records of 20th century housing (except from specialised collections in NMRW, such as PSA and North collections).

Research opportunities

- There are numerous research opportunities in this wide-ranging theme. For example, Tir Gofal could be developed into a wider, continuing scheme whereby a closer interest is taken in monitoring all grants for land or building improvement by all the bodies concerned acting co-operatively. This could have the aims of collecting and maintaining a more comprehensive record of both archaeological and environmental data to provide more informed advice on the preservation value of the resource and would include support for joint research projects necessary during the process.

- Industrial housing in general and the 'social archaeology' of industry.

2. Land use and enclosure (including transport and defence)

Existing knowledge: strengths

- Land characterisation projects.

- RCAHMW surveys of the Montgomeryshire Canal and Brecon Forest Tramroads.

- Welsh Wartime Aviation Wreck Survey.

- Pontcysyllte aqueduct and associated canal are included on the tentative World Heritage Site list, reflecting the research into and importance of the sites.

- RCAHMW/Ironbridge detailed study of Leighton Estate and model farms.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- There is lack of joined-up' data gathering and interpretation, partly constrained by the shortcomings of text-based databases and partly by the need to gather data in manageable areas, themes or projects.

Research opportunities:

- There are many opportunities for field observation and for work on existing documents and records, either as projects in their own right or as components of related projects.

- Transport (railways, turnpikes, mineral tramways) - particularly in Wrexham/Flintshire

- Results from the Defence of Britain Project could act as a catalyst for related research, including airfields, wartime factories, PoW and military camps, &c.

3. The use and exploitation of natural resources

Existing knowledge: strengths

- The metal mines surveys.

- Baseline data in the Wrexham CBC area.

- Montgomeryshire mills.

- Baseline data on mills in general.

- Lime industry on the Llangattock escarpment.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- Rural industries, particularly the small village industries and those on dispersed farmsteads or estates (e.g. tanning, smithing, woollen manufacture, agriculture, brewing, malting, brick making, clothing, boot making, &c.). Thematic surveys on any of these topics, but particularly the agricultural and woollen industries, are urgently needed to provide baseline data.

- Town industries. Complete industrial town surveys could usefully be completed within local authority town boundaries to provide baseline data. Key towns could be selected in more rural areas, but in zones of concentrated industrial activity such as the counties of Wrexham and Flintshire, almost all towns will have some previously unrecorded archaeology.

- Twentieth century industries. Very little of any significance has been done.

- Coal mining in Wrexham & Flintshire (the North Wales coalfield).

- Chemical industries lining the Dee Estuary shoreline – very vulnerable.

- Lime industries in general.

- Woollen industry - easily the largest single industry across the whole area.

- Public utilities: water, gas and electricity installations – all very vulnerable.

Research opportunities

- There is keen public interest in a narrow range of building and installation, particularly railways and defence sites. However, until recently, such enthusiasm had not been well converted into effective recording, conservation or preservation policies: local and national government do not usually see remains of industrial activity as 'archaeology'. There is a clear need to raise the profile of all industrial archaeology with the public and authorities on the one hand, and for the heritage bodies to engage more closely with the numerous specialist societies on the other.

- The scope for recording in the more industrialised towns of Wrexham and of Flintshire is huge and needs to be addressed urgently in light of the current trend for 'brownfield' development of derelict industrial sites. Full use should be made of original architects' plans where these exist.

- There is a need to quantify the amount of grey literature and archive material waiting to be accessed to the record and to encourage its early inclusion so that we have a more accurate picture of the breadth and depth of the information available.

- Industrial plant continues to be altered, developed or demolished; from experience in south Wales and applicable perhaps only in the field of industrial archaeology is the need to carry out detailed process recording at those sites which are representative of their industry, despite the existence of apparently reliable documentation.

4. Coastal archaeology (excluding maritime – discussed elsewhere)

Existing knowledge: strengths

- The recently Cadw funded coastal surveys have added a large number of previously unrecorded sites to the records on the coastal fringes of Flintshire and Denbighshire.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- Current site knowledge seems satisfactory, although general comments about the need for context could apply.

5. Environmental archaeology

Existing knowledge: strengths

- RCAHMW's dendro-chronology programme.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- Many; see *'Research opportunities'* below

Research opportunities

- There is a need to introduce palaeo-ecology and sedimentology studies generally to the study of more recent archaeology, especially to industrial sites (e.g. upland peat areas, analysis of furnace glass), gardens (ponds, soils), and settlements such as farms (pollen analysis) and related buildings (further use of dendro dating).

6. Religious or non-secular archaeology

Existing knowledge: strengths

- RCAHMW chapels recording project (pan-Wales study of chapels and chapel architecture) which has created over1600 basic records and includes many enhanced records.

Existing knowledge: weaknesses

- No organised study of post medieval churches, especially Victorian.

- No organised study of graveyards.

Research opportunities:

- Investigate plans holdings of Church Commissioners & Diocesan archives.

- Enhance existing and expand database of all churches, especially Victorian sites – which largely still exist.

Paper prepared by Brian Malaws (RCAHMW)