

Excavations at Wavertree, March 1976.

Archaeological History of the Site

In June and July, 1867, a Bronze Age site was discovered during excavations for the drains and foundations of the house later known as 'Urn Mount', now 29 and 31 North Drive, Wavertree. (SJ39148977). Eight cordoned urns were found, six of which were destroyed by the workmen at the time. The surviving two were given to the Liverpool Free Museums. A flint scraper and an arrowhead from the site also survive, and a number of worked flints were reported as found close to the urns. The finds were made to the south and south east of the house and within it. (Ecroyd Smith, 1867). The rest of the site was thoroughly trenched by Henry Ecroyd Smith, then curator of the Museum -

'... trenches were taken in breadths of about eight feet and were carried down to the rock, which was reached at a depth varying from 3 - 5 feet but on this side (the north) no traces of any artificial disturbances of the virgin soil below the cultivated surface appeared, with the exception of a block of sandstone about a foot cube, which bears longitudinal groovings at irregular distances.'(Ecroyd Smith, 1867).

Excavation

Early in March, 1976, it was reported that housing development was being undertaken on Sandown Fields, the open area to the north of 'Urn Mount'. It seemed advisable that a small area in the immediately adjacent area should be examined for evidence of any other prehistoric activity peripheral to the burial site, before the contractors started work.

A small area 8m x 4m was stripped of turf by the constructors on the site, who were laying roads and inserting drains. A trial section done by machine showed the depth of soil above the natural red sandstone to be only approximately 40-60cm, adjacent to the area to be examined. In the first 30-40cm. excavated, an old hedge line (established as the original boundary of the garden of 'Urn Mount' from Ecroyd Smith's plan of the site) and a number of shallower transverse slots running east-west were visible. These linear features were only 8-10cm. deep in the clean sandy soil beneath the black field soil, and had disappeared by an excavated depth of approximately 35cm. They are possibly to be interpreted as vestigial plough marks. The 1845 6" Ordnance Survey of the area shows it as open fields and there are verbal reports from local people who remember it as ploughed farmland. No other features were apparent.

It seems likely that Sandown Fields has been thoroughly disturbed by ploughing and by levelling for the tennis courts and playing fields, as relatively recent pottery was found, mixed with 18th and 19th century sherds, throughout the depth of the excavation until a sterile sub-soil was reached. It is possible that some prehistoric features cut into the bedrock might have survived but only large scale area excavation could reveal this. The site is now in the garden plot of a detached house.

THE FINDS

Most of the pottery was recent in date covering a period from the 18th century to the present day. Two clay pipe stems of 7/64 bore diameter could indicate a slightly earlier date, late 17th - 18th century, but taken in isolation are not conclusive. A fragment of medieval jug or flagon handle, found in context with 19th century pottery, was the earliest evidence of occupation on the site. A number of flint fragments were found but none of these showed any signs of working. As all the finds were in effect unstratified, only the medieval fragment is described below as being of particular interest for its own sake.

Gill Chitty.

References

- Carter, C., 1930 Flint Arrowheads in Liverpool Museums, North West Naturalist, Sept. 1930, V. No.3, 144-4, 147.
 Ecroyd Smith, H., 1867, An Ancient British Cemetery at Wavertree, Trans.Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society, 20, 131-.46.

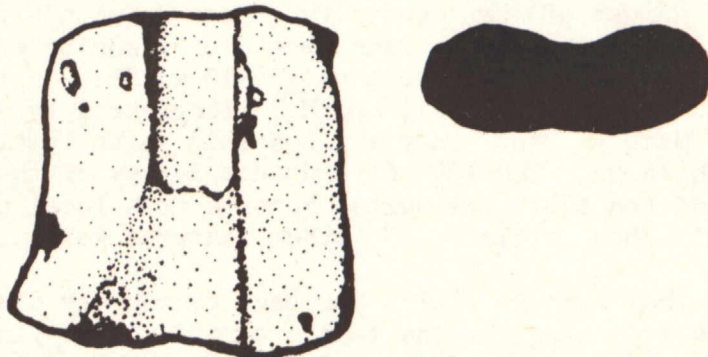
Fragment of Medieval Pottery, Wavertree, Merseyside

Upper portion of a strap handle. Coarse gritty fabric, with 2mm average quartz and black inclusions. Reduced medium grey core (5 Y 5/1), oxidised exterior (7.5 YR 6/6). Yellowish-green glaze (5 Y 5/6) on the upper surface between the 'straps'.

This type of fabric is quite a common find on sites in the south Lancashire/Cheshire area and was probably manufactured in that region. 13th - 14th century.

Specific colours as given are from the Munsell Color Charts.

D. E. M. Morgan.



Actual Size