

# Chester's amphitheatre after Rome: a centre of Christian worship?

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## Introduction

The Roman amphitheatre at Chester was discovered in 1929 and has since been a subject of fascination, speculation and controversy. Following a major excavation that uncovered the northern two-fifths in the 1960s<sup>1</sup>, it was long assumed that there was little more to be said about the site. However, when the present writer began work on a Research Agenda for the site during the 1990s, it rapidly became apparent that there were many questions left unanswered, not least about the late Roman and post-Roman history of the site. In an attempt to deal with some of these questions, Chester City Council approached English Heritage in 2000 for permission to undertake small-scale excavations. As a result, English Heritage commissioned the City's Archaeological Service to undertake fieldwork, which has lasted for four seasons, from 2000 to 2003.

This is not the place to report on those excavations (which will be fully dealt with at a future date elsewhere), but it has become important to put a number of new discoveries and reinterpretations into the public realm. In particular, new evidence for the late Roman and early medieval use of the site renders it of potentially national (if not international) significance.

## The amphitheatre and its Roman history

The site chosen for the establishment of an amphitheatre lay to the south-east of the Roman fortress on a terrace above the River Dee that had previously been occupied by a large building that may have been a bathhouse<sup>2</sup>. Established AD c 100, it had fallen out of use by the mid 120s and became a rubbish dump. Although no evidence has so far been recognised for the condition of the building at that time, it must have become severely dilapidated. Towards the end of the third century (and certainly after AD 274), it was brought back into use<sup>4</sup>, which led to a series of major modifications, including a reduction in the width of the outer door into the East Entrance, the insertion of a colonnade inside the same entrance, the laying of a sandstone rubble 'surface' in the arena and the insertion of a new staircase in at least one of the *vomitoria* (entrances for spectators).

This late refurbishment poses a number of problems of interpretation. Firstly, the laying of a rubble surface in the arena would have rendered it unusable, as a thick deposit of sand was necessary for absorbing the blood generated by the 'sports' performed in amphitheatres (military amphitheatres were used for exactly the same spectacles as civilian examples, not weapons training, as most British archaeologists have tended to believe<sup>5</sup>). However, the 1960s excavation in which this 'surface' was discovered was conducted by bulldozing away the post-Roman deposits<sup>6</sup> and only two small patches of the rubble were saved from the jaws of the mechanical excavator: it is not known what lay above. It is entirely possible that the rubble was not a 'surface' at all but a layer consolidating the accumulated rubbish beneath and providing a base with good drainage for a layer of sand above.

Secondly, it is not clear how long the refurbished amphitheatre remained in use. The earliest rubbish that began to be deposited in the disused arena dated to the first half of the fourth century; it is possible that the abandonment occurred as early as c 290 or as late as c 350<sup>7</sup>. However, the new staircase inserted into *vomitiorium* 4, discovered in 2002, shows little wear. Although the leading edge of the steps is not crisp, it is nevertheless only slightly rounded. Given that each *vomitiorium* was designed to serve up to a thousand individuals, this slight wear is consistent with either a very short-lived re-use (based on the assumption that the amphitheatre was operating at near full capacity) or a longer period of re-use but with fewer spectators and perhaps also fewer spectacles. Indeed, the degree of wear on the steps could perhaps be accounted for by a single spectacle showing to a full capacity audience.

Thirdly, this refurbishment occurred at a time when there is no evidence for major reconstruction elsewhere in Chester. The late third century does not seem to have been a period of new building work and it has often been assumed that it was a period of slow decline<sup>8</sup>, with reductions in the size of the garrison and the failure to maintain all the barrack blocks<sup>9</sup>. Why, after a century and a half of neglect, would a diminished garrison have refurbished its derelict amphitheatre (assuming the work to have been undertaken by the soldiers for their own purposes)? Might the restoration have been for a one-off event and if so, what might this event have been?

### *Christian martyrs at the amphitheatre?*

There has been a tendency to view Chester's amphitheatre as a monument with a purely local and purely military context<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, there seems to be a general unwillingness to look to the rest of the Roman Empire for anything other than structural parallels. However, there is one context in which amphitheatres figure prominently in the historical documentation surviving from the Late Roman Empire, that of Christian martyrdom. Indeed, Alban's martyrdom, conjectured by Gildas c 500 to have occurred at *Verulamium* (St Alban's) in the Great Persecution of Diocletian beginning in 303, is related by Bede to an *harena*, implying that it took place close to an amphitheatre<sup>11</sup>.

It has been thought that Britain, like the remainder of the western Empire, did not suffer the Diocletianic persecution<sup>12</sup>, as it was under the rule of the more tolerant Maximian and more specifically, Constantius I, father of the first emperor to adopt Christianity as his religion, Constantine I. If this were the case, the British martyrs recorded by Gildas cannot have perished later than the reign of Valerian (253-60, with the persecution occurring in 257-9); given the chronology of Chester's amphitheatre, the execution of Christians in his reign is too early to be the reason for the refurbishment, which must have taken place after c 274. Can a religious persecution therefore be discounted?

Not entirely. Shortly after the accession of Diocletian in November 284 and shortly after the elevation of Maximian to be his colleague in April 286, the usurper Carausius took control of Britain and northern Gaul<sup>13</sup>. In one of the most poorly-documented episodes of Roman history, there is no evidence to show the attitude of Carausius (or his successor Allectus, 293-6) to Christianity. Although it had been a *religio licita* ('permitted religion') since the Rescript of Gallienus in 260<sup>14</sup>, the actions of Valerian show that persecutions were still possible. Given that our knowledge of third-century persecutions derives solely from Eusebius of Caesarea, it is quite possible that he thought it not worth recording a minor persecution by a globally insignificant usurper, even if he had heard about it.

In the light of Gildas's statement about *aaron et iulium legionum urbis ciues* (Aaron and Julius, citizens of the City of Legions)<sup>15</sup>, such a possibility must be raised. Taken since the twelfth century (on the very dubious authority of Geoffrey of Monmouth<sup>16</sup>) to have been Caerleon in south Wales, *Legionum Urbs* was almost certainly used in the Late Roman period as a term for Chester. Indeed, the Old Welsh name of Chester, *Cair Legion*, is a direct translation of *Legionum Civitas*. There are therefore no *a priori* reasons for rejecting Chester as the location of the martyrdom of Aaron and Julius. However, is there any potential evidence from the archaeology of the amphitheatre to indicate that it might have been the scene of executions?

In the centre of the arena, a group of irregular postholes set in shallow gullies was taken by Thompson to indicate the presence of a timber platform<sup>18</sup>. He suggested that it was a formal ceremonial platform for military use, but this is unlikely in a monument designed for public spectacles; it has no parallels elsewhere. The precise date of the structure was not established, owing to the methods of excavation employed in the 1960s, and it is not clear whether it was a permanent or merely temporary structure (indeed, if it could be erected and dismantled as required). It may not be unreasonable, for instance, to think of it as similar to a late medieval scaffold, on which a condemned prisoner might be beheaded.

If the postholes of the supposed 'central platform' are Roman in date, as Thompson believed, an explanation may perhaps be sought in one of the forms of execution attested in early Christian literature. According to a letter from the churches of Vienna and Lyons to the churches of Asia and Phrygia quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* v.1, "*Blandina was hung up fastened to a*

*stake and exposed, as food to the wild beasts that were let loose against her. Because she appeared as if hanging on a cross and because of her earnest prayers, she inspired the combatants with great zeal*". This took place in an arena. In a subsequent passage (VIII.6), an unnamed Christian is "*raised on high naked and ... his whole body torn with scourges ... a gridiron and fire were then produced...*" This took place in Nicomedia in the Great Persecution of AD 303/4. The possibility that the wooden uprights at Chester were not structural but were part of the apparatus of public execution deserves further exploration. There are further possible parallels in accounts such as *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (Chapter 13), in which the martyr is burned on a pyre that had been constructed in the centre of the arena expressly for his execution.

The 'timber platform' may therefore have been associated in some way with executions. It is also possible that those executed here were Christians, although the chronological difficulties relating to known dates of persecutions and the dates at which the amphitheatre was in use mean that an otherwise unrecorded persecution needs to be hypothesised. This may be one hypothesis too far; is there an alternative (and more parsimonious) explanation?

It has long been recognised that the last attestation of *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*, the garrison of Chester, is on coins of the usurper Carausius that imply that it supported his régime<sup>19</sup>. The fate of legions that supported toppled régimes was usually disbanding and merging with other units and it is conceivable that this happened to *Legio XX*. Might an alternative scenario for the refurbishment of the amphitheatre be for an assembly of the entire Legion to witness the execution of its senior officers (and perhaps others) in retaliation for their support of the rebellion? This is an attractive possibility that does not involve special pleading about the chronology and which is consistent with all the evidence.

## Post-amphitheatre structures

The post-Roman history of the site and its environs once again raises the possibility of a connection with Christianity, however. The amphitheatre's location outside the former Roman fortress has been thought a significant factor in the development of the Middle Saxon town<sup>20</sup>. Seventh-century occupation is hypothesised to have lain outside the Roman fortress, typical of the *wic* sites identified in contemporary cities such as London and York. What is suggestive here is the location of the amphitheatre; that at Cirencester was used during the sub-Roman period as a defensive enclosure<sup>21</sup>, and it is possible that St John's was deliberately sited next to an existing high-status dwelling and/or fortification. The establishment of this church has traditionally been dated to 689, in the reign of Æthelræd I of Mercia (AD 675-704) and an otherwise unattested Bishop Wilfric<sup>22</sup>.

The post-hole 'structure' in the centre of the arena mentioned above as a possible scaffold or other apparatus of execution may be better regarded as post-Roman and contemporary with evidence from the 1960s excavation of post-Roman structures in the arena. Although profiles of the postholes were drawn after excavation, no sections were made and the mechanical clearance of arena fills in 1964 meant that there is no record of their stratigraphic position. As they were in part of the arena where the late third-century paving was removed before it was recognised, it is not known, for instance, if these features cut through or were sealed by it.

The arrangement of postholes is rectilinear, although there are two distinct alignments, suggesting that they were part of a two-phase structure rather than individual scaffolds for executions. The main alignment consists of two trenches with postholes inside them, together with a row of three postholes not set in a trench. There is one alignment of postholes (including one excavated for the first time in the 2000 season) perpendicular to this alignment. In addition, there are two lines of postholes that are not perpendicular to it, running on a slightly more southerly bearing and one trench on a different alignment. This suggests that, unless the structure were rhomboidal rather than rectangular, which does not seem at all likely, two separate structures are represented here.

It is possible that the slots and postholes belong to a post-Roman building rather than a platform (or platforms) associated with the amphitheatre. The construction of timber 'halls' on former Roman sites is a well-known phenomenon (one of the best known examples being the hall erected on the site of the north granary in the fort at Birdoswald, on Hadrian's Wall)<sup>23</sup>, while the defensive use of amphitheatres in the sub-Roman period is attested in Britain, France and Italy (*below*). We can

suggest, tentatively, that the postholes might represent such a timber 'hall' with two separate phases; their massive nature is certainly out of place for a simple platform.

Further evidence for sub-Roman activity on the site was found during the 1960s excavations, one hint of which was published but not commented upon<sup>24</sup>, while the other remains unpublished in the site notebooks. The first consisted of part of the rectilinear stone foundation of a lean-to building against the arena wall, south of the East Entrance. This was found in the east end of Trench 1C at the start of July 1960. The site notebooks record that a coin of Tetricus I was found associated with it<sup>25</sup>, but it cannot be earlier than the abandonment of the arena; the notebooks also record that, according to the workmen who first uncovered it, it was associated with an arch that collapsed during excavation.

The second was also a lean-to structure, six feet (1.83 m) east of the North Entrance, cut into a dark brown loam<sup>26</sup>. Once again, a coin of Tetricus I was recorded as coming from this deposit (which must be coincidence and nothing more). The section drawing makes it clear that it was cut into what was later recognised as the secondary sandstone surface of the arena. As with the sandstone structure, its context must post-date the abandonment of the amphitheatre (or, at any rate, of the arena). However, it was little more than a metre in length and cannot have been a habitation (at least, not for humans).

A further possible feature of unknown significance was recorded in the north-facing section of Hugh Thompson's Trench 1 (A60/1C), the foundation trench for the massive wall separating the Guardianship site from the garden of Dee House. Following slight infilling of the arena, a layer of sandstone cobbles was recorded<sup>27</sup>. Stratigraphically, it is slightly later than the partial collapse of the arena wall at an unknown date and much earlier than post-medieval activity, including eighteenth-century brick walls. Its date is probably therefore early medieval or high medieval; at any rate, logic suggests that it is earlier than the subdivision of the site into burgage plots for domestic colonisation c 1200. It appears to consist of a level surface, about 1.5 m above the level of the Roman arena and up to a metre below the contemporary ground surface over the ruined structure. Its function is completely obscure, but if it covered the entire hollow left in the former arena, it suggests a public or community function rather than domestic.

These hints suggest continued occupation of the site following its abandonment and, given the nature of the structure implied by the postholes at the centre of the arena (if, indeed, they belong to a structure and not to a scaffold), this is likely to have been sub-Roman rather than Late Roman. Other evidence uncovered in the 1960s may confirm high-status occupation: part of the east entrance to the amphitheatre contains massive masonry that is clearly secondary to the primary amphitheatre and which the recent excavations have suggested cannot have been part of the third-century refurbishment, either. Hugh Thompson considered the masonry to have been support for a *tribunal*, an official box that would have been used by senior officers of the Legion<sup>28</sup>.

There are numerous problems with this interpretation. Firstly, the masonry is clearly secondary (as he originally recognised<sup>29</sup>) and its character is quite different from any other Roman masonry in the amphitheatre or elsewhere in Chester. Secondly, the steps on the south side show a degree of wear that is incompatible both with the length of use of the amphitheatre and with their interpretation as leading to an official box. Moreover, the top step has clearly been worn by people moving to the south, rather than north onto a platform above the masonry 'support'; other amphitheatres do not have this type of connection between the axial entrances and the seating. Thirdly, in other amphitheatres *tribunalia* were not located over the axial entrances, but adjacent to them. Finally, the section drawings make it clear that an area of paving interpreted as belonging to the third-century refurbishment in fact overlies a post-Roman deposit. In short, the accepted interpretation of the east entrance cannot be upheld.

It is now evident that the massive masonry belongs to a later phase of activity than the late third-century refurbishment. This being the case, it must belong to a time when the amphitheatre had ceased to function as an amphitheatre. Might it then be associated with the possible timber hall in the centre of the arena? The construction of the sub-Roman hall at Cirencester was associated with the construction of a palisade on the earthen seating-bank<sup>30</sup>; with the more elaborate structure at

Chester, the possibility that the masonry belongs to some sort of defensive structure is worth exploring.

At Arles, early medieval towers that were added to the amphitheatre still exist, whilst the amphitheatres at Capua, Spoleto, Amiens, Nîmes, Périgueux and Avenches are also known to have been fortified<sup>31</sup>. The massive masonry at Chester could therefore have served as the foundations for a tower controlling access to the arena and the buildings it contained. If this were the purpose of these blocks, it would then be reasonable to expect similar evidence from the three other axial entrances, or at least to find that they had been blocked. Of the remaining entrances, only the northern has so far been examined archaeologically and this produced no evidence for blocking or for late alterations. This need not be conclusive evidence against the hypothesis of fortification, but it is certainly damaging and it is necessary to explore other possibilities.

### *An early church hidden in the ruins?*

One such possibility is that this later masonry is early medieval<sup>32</sup>, as it resembles neither Roman nor high medieval masonry in Chester. This is an interesting possibility given the traditional date for the foundation of St John's church in 689. The location of the present St John's outside the walled enclosure of Chester is anomalous and there are four possible (and not necessarily mutually exclusive) explanations for this. Firstly, as already discussed, the amphitheatre may have formed the focus of a sub-Roman high-status fortified dwelling that became the focus for population in the early medieval period. Secondly, if the supposed foundation date for St John's is more-or-less correct, it may have been an important topographical feature in an early medieval *wic* site to the south-east of the old Roman fortress. This area may have suffered depopulation and contraction following the establishment of the *burh* inside an enlarged walled enclosure in 907. This would parallel the sequence of development in London, where seventh- and eighth-century *Lundenwic* lay to the west of the old Roman city, along The Strand, but the late ninth-century urban development of *Lundenburh* returned to the walled area. Thirdly, the church may have developed from a Late Roman *martyrium*<sup>33</sup>, a point of some significance if the martyrs Aaron and Julius can be attributed to Chester. Fourthly, as already indicated, there may be evidence from the excavated and consolidated part of the Roman amphitheatre that the original St John's Church occupied part of its eastern side.

Whichever of these possibilities is accepted, could there have been a direct or even causal relationship between the amphitheatre and St John's church? While it is possible that the ruined structure was merely a conveniently located quarry for building stone, other possible associations could be explored. Was there, for instance, a continuing tradition of Christian martyrdom on the site? May there have been a nearby cemetery (perhaps even including a ruinous late Roman *martyrium*)? Given the possible evidence for sub-Roman use of the structure, could St John's church have originated as an élite chapel?

The church lay in an area described by Domesday Book<sup>34</sup> as *in burgo episcopi* ('in the Bishop's borough'). That *burgum episcopi* lay hereabout can hardly be questioned, as St John Street and Little St John Street are referred to as *Bishopstrete* in 1499<sup>35</sup>. This is problematical as the same Domesday entry mentions the manor of *Redeclive* (Redcliff), a placename that survived into the thirteenth century and which is known to have described the area around St John's<sup>36</sup>. It is possible that the *burgum episcopi* was the part of Redcliff that lay in the Bishop's ownership. If this were the case, then the name ought not to predate 1075, when the See was transferred from Lichfield to Chester and has no bearing on the early medieval status of this part of Chester. On the other hand, if a recent suggestion that Chester was the base for an early medieval *chorepiscopus* (an assistant bishop) can be substantiated<sup>37</sup>, St John's may have lain at the centre of an early episcopal enclave that survived the refortification of the *burh* in 907. According to the High Medieval chronicle of 'Florence' of Worcester, Earl Leofric of Mercia rebuilt St John's church c 1054; this must be the structure that was used as the original cathedral church, as the present building can hardly be earlier than c 1100.

St John's was also associated in 1066 with a Minster church (*monasterium*) dedicated to St Mary<sup>38</sup>. Although there have been attempts to link it with the High Medieval nunnery that shared the

dedication, this was not associated with St John's. It is not known where the later eleventh-century St Mary's was located, but by 1377 the dedication had been absorbed by an altar-chapel in St John's<sup>39</sup>. There is certainly no evidence that this particular St Mary's was anything more than a church. Nevertheless, use of the term *monasterium* demonstrates that it was of some importance and antiquity. There is a possibility that it was an earlier building that had formerly been St John's Church, abandoned after Leofric's new church was completed. In similar cases elsewhere, the old dedication was transferred to the new building and the original church rededicated to St Mary<sup>40</sup>.

What might the old building have been and where was it? The massive inserted masonry in the east entrance has interesting parallels in the seventh-century crypt at Ripon cathedral and Hexham Abbey, both constructed from re-used Roman masonry. The masonry here is certainly of Roman origin (Lewis holes are visible on a number of blocks) and it may well have derived from the old fortress walls. Significantly, Ripon and Hexham were both built by St Wilfrid, whilst it will be recalled that St John's is associated with an otherwise unknown 'Wilfric'. As Wilfrid is known to have been in Mercia from 691 to 704, it is entirely possible to connect him with the foundation of St John's as an institution and perhaps also the masonry under consideration here. If accepted, this raises the status of this part of the amphitheatre to one of huge international importance.

It is clear from the numerous pits recorded during the 1960s that occupation of the site from at least 1200 onwards was principally domestic. The pits include stone-lined rubbish and cess pits as well as evidence for late medieval cellarage. However, the only Saxo-Norman material recovered from the site was residual and there are no pits or structures that show domestic occupation at this time. The evidence assembled here suggests that from the seventh to twelfth centuries, the former Roman amphitheatre was home to what was perhaps the city's earliest church.

## Christian traditions in late and sub-Roman Chester?

But why might an early church have been built there? There can be no certain answers, although some suggestions can be made. Firstly, there may well have been a tradition that the amphitheatre had been the scene of Christian martyrdom. As discussed above, this is possible, if difficult to substantiate, and poses chronological problems. However, it is not necessary that a seventh-century belief that martyrs had perished here was based on any authentic information; it may indeed have been an incorrect conclusion reached by someone who was familiar with the text of Gildas and wrongly assumed *Legionum Urbs* to refer to Chester.

Secondly, it is possible that the sub-Roman activity in the arena was not of domestic character, but ecclesiastical, which would fit with a growing body of evidence for the importance of Christianity in the region during the fourth century. The recently discovered inscribed salt-pans belonging to a fourth-century bishop Viventius in Cheshire has been well publicised<sup>41</sup> and it can scarcely be doubted that the only community in the region of sufficient size to maintain a bishop was at *Deva*, Chester. The creation of a bishopric at Chester is unlikely to have occurred before the Edict of Milan in March 313 and I have argued elsewhere that the survival of Chester as a nucleated settlement during the fifth and sixth centuries was based on its ecclesiastical status<sup>42</sup>.

This can be set into a wider context of Christian activity in the Late Roman *Civitas Cornoviorum*, with possible bishoprics at Chester, Wroxeter and Wall-by-Lichfield. The latter site is particularly interesting, as it has literary associations taking it into the very transition from British to Mercian control: the Middle Welsh cycle of poetry about Cynddylan, king of *Pengwern* (an unidentified site in the West Midlands close to Wroxeter<sup>43</sup>), includes a reference to the *pen esgob* (chief bishop) of *Caer Lwytgoed* (Wall-by-Lichfield or Lichfield itself) at a date before the establishment of the Mercian bishopric there in the 660s. In this vibrant church of the fourth-century *Civitas Cornoviorum*, it is quite plausible that a tradition of local martyrs developed and was maintained, surviving the collapse of Roman power until Chester, Wroxeter and Wall-by-Lichfield were taken over by the Mercians in later seventh century. In this model, the *chorepiscopus* at St John's might be a hangover from the sub-Roman bishopric.

## Conclusions

Work at the amphitheatre is ongoing and the issues discussed here must be regarded as provisional kite-flying and highly speculative. Nevertheless, they are sufficiently interesting to be

worth pursuing, as it is abundantly evident that the currently accepted model for the development of the site contains a number of major difficulties. Particularly exciting is the possibility that from the end of the Roman period, the site became a focus for Christian worship because, rightly or wrongly, the ruinous building was associated with local martyrs. A fuller exploration of the issues raised here must wait for the full-scale academic publication of the results of the current fieldwork campaign, which promises to yield further surprises.

## Notes

I am grateful to my colleagues at Chester City Council's Archaeological Service and the Grosvenor Museum for many fruitful discussions about the amphitheatre and for their work on the material found since 2000; many of the more interesting ideas floated here were originally suggested by them, but the errors remain my own. I am also grateful to English Heritage, Chester College of Higher Education and the University of Liverpool for supporting the fieldwork from 2000 to 2003, both financially and practically.

1 This is the excavation reported by F H Thompson 'Excavation of the Roman amphitheatre at Chester' *Archaeologia* **105** (1976), 127-239.

2 Excavation in 2002-3 revealed a masonry structure and associated massive drain that had been demolished to make way for the eastern entrance of the amphitheatre. Finds from the drain indicate that its period of use was in the later first century AD, which demonstrates that the timber framework thought to be an earlier phase of the amphitheatre is not in fact a separate structure, but the framework supporting the front rows of the spectators' seating.

3 Although Thompson, *op. cit.*, p 178, interprets abandonment débris of the 120s to 160s in the east entrance as evidence for continuing use.

4 Thompson, *op. cit.*, p 151.

5 Le Roux, P 'L'amphithéâtre et le soldat sous l'Empire romain', p 206. *Spectacula I: gladiateurs et amphithéâtres. Actes du colloque tenu à Toulouse et à Lattes les 26, 27, 28 et 29 mai 1987*, 203-214.

6 Thompson, F H 'The education of an archaeologist in a time of change: 1955-62', p 53. *J Chester Archaeol Soc* **72** (1992-3), 49-56.

7 Although Thompson preferred a date that "would coincide with the departure of the Twentieth Legion from Chester, probably some time after the middle of [the fourth] century" (*op. cit.*, p 182), the abandonment deposits included coins of Victorinus (269-270) and Carausius (286-293) as well as pottery belonging to the first half of the fourth century.

8 David Mason's recent *Roman Chester: city of the eagles* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001) characterises the period c 260-350 as one of 'Decline and resurgence', p 193.

9 Hoffman, B 'Where have all the soldiers gone? Some thoughts on the presence and absence of soldiers in fourth-century Chester', p 81. In: Carrington, P ed. *Deva Victrix: Roman Chester re-assessed*. Chester: Chester Archaeological Society (2002), 79-88.

10 Mason *op. cit.*, p 106, describes it as "an official structure".

11 *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.7, probably derived from the so-called *Turin Life* of St Alban (Morris, J R 'The date of Saint Alban' *Hertfordshire Archaeology* **1** (1968), 1-8).

12 Thomas, C *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*. London: B T Batsford (1981), p 48.

13 Faulkner, N *The decline and fall of Roman Britain*. Stroud: Tempus (2000), p 93.

14 Thomas *op. cit.*, p 46.

15 *de Excidio et Conquest Britanniae* 10

16 *Historia Regum Britannię* 1X.12

- 17 Or, more likely, *Legionum Civitas*, since *urbs* is a poetic word normally used only to refer to Rome.
- 18 Thompson, *Excavation*, p 154.
- 19 Carrington, P ed *English Heritage Book of Chester*. London: Batsford (1994), p 28
- 20 Ward, S *et al. Excavations at Chester: Saxon occupation within the Roman fortress. Sites excavated 1971-1981*. Chester: Chester City Council (Archaeological Service Excavation and Survey Reports 7 1994), p 119.
- 21 Wachter, J *The towns of Roman Britain*. London: Batsford (1974), p 314.
- 22 Thacker, A T 'Anglo-Saxon Cheshire', p 269. In: Harris, B E & Thacker, A T eds, *A history of the County of Chester: volume I*. London: Institute of Historical Research (The Victoria History of the Counties of England, 1987), pp 237-92.
- 23 Willmott, T 'The Late Roman transition in Birdoswald and on Hadrian's Wall' in: Willmott, T & Wilson, P (eds) *The Late Roman transition in the North: papers from the Roman Archaeology Conference, Durham 1999*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports (British Series 299), 13-23.
- 24 Thompson *op. cit.*, pl. XXXVI b
- 25 Site Diary Volume I, 8 August 1960. The site archive is held by the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, and I am grateful to Dan Robinson, Keeper of Archaeology, for access to it.
- 26 Site Diary Volume III, 27 August 1965.
- 27 Site Diary Volume II, sketch facing the entry for 24 October 1960.
- 28 Thompson *op. cit.*, p 76.
- 29 Site Diary Volume IV, 26 September 1967 etc.
- 30 Wachter, *loc. cit.*
- 31 Pinon, P 'Approche typologique des modes de reutilisation des amphitheatres de la fin de l'Antiquité au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', p 108. In: *Spectacula I: gladiateurs et amphithéâtres. Actes du colloque tenu à Toulouse et à Lattes les 26, 27, 28 et 29 mai 1987*, 103-127.
- 32 This term is preferable to the traditional 'Anglo-Saxon' and is winning near-universal acceptance. It refers to the period c 400 - c 900 (as it does elsewhere in Europe), rather than the Anglocentric meaning of 1066 - c 1200.
- 33 Thacker, *loc. cit.*
- 34 Morgan, P *Domesday Book 26: Cheshire, including Lancashire, Cumbria and North Wales*. Chichester: Phillimore (1978), C1
- 35 Dodgson, J McN *The place-names of Cheshire: part five (section 1:1). The place names of the city of Chester; the elements of Cheshire place-names a-gylden*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. English Place-Name Society 48 (1981), p 77.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p 80.
- 37 Matthews, S 'St John's church and the early history of Chester'. *J Chester Archaeol Soc* (2000-1), 63-80, p 77.
- 38 Morgan *op. cit.*, B11.
- 39 Dodgson *op. cit.*, p 83.
- 40 *Pers comm* Alan Thacker 19 October 2002.
- 41 For a recent summary, see Penney, S & Shotter, D C A 'Further inscribed Roman salt pans from Shavington, Cheshire' *J Chester Archaeol Soc* 76 (2000-1), 53-61.



42 Matthews, K J 'From Roman to Saxon: the late fourth to seventh centuries in *Cornovia*', p 24. *West Midlands Archaeol* **44** (2001), 17-25.

43 Usually identified with Shrewsbury, following what was probably no more than a guess by Giraldus Cambrensis (*Itinerarium Kambrię* I.10).