

# FARMERS AND WEAVERS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT KINGSWAY  
BUSINESS PARK AND CUTACRE COUNTRY PARK, GREATER  
MANCHESTER

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Front cover: *top, excavating the farmhouse at Ashes (Cutacre); bottom, recording the archaeological remains at Near Moor (Kingsway)*

Rear Cover: *top left, Wharton Hall following excavation (Cutacre); middle left, the excavated cellars at Higher Moss Side Farm (Kingsway); bottom left, recording a seventeenth-century cellar at Ashes; right, the weaver's cottage at Castle Farm (Kingsway)*

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# Abbreviations

aOD	Above Ordnance Datum
AMS	Accelerator mass spectrometry
BA	Bolton Archives
CfAA	Centre for Applied Archaeology
CL	Chetham's Library
CNDR	Carlisle Northern Development Route
CPR	Charred plant remains
GMAU	Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit
GMAAS	Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service
HER	Historic Environment Record
LA	Lancashire Archives
L&YR	Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway
MA	Manchester Archives
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
NML: MAL	National Museums Liverpool: Maritime Archives and Library
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England
RLSL	Rochdale Local Studies Library
SCA	Salford City Archives
SEM	Scanning electron microscope
SUERC	Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre
UMAU	University of Manchester Archaeological Unit
WSI	Written Scheme of Investigation

## Foreword

The redevelopment sites at Cutacre and Kingsway gave archaeologists a rare opportunity to investigate and record two large-scale post-medieval farming landscapes in the northern half of Greater Manchester. At Cutacre, south of Bolton, extensive historical open-cast coal mining had denuded much of the site of archaeological potential, whilst also leaving a massive and unsightly spoil heap. Yet, remarkably, archaeologists found significant remains from several periods including some dating to the prehistoric and medieval eras. Of particular note was the discovery of Greater Manchester's first example of a Middle Bronze Age roundhouse; medieval iron smelting, together with a seventeenth-century hall and farm site, were also of great importance.

Kingsway, near Rochdale, differed in that the landscape had remained pretty much intact, with a mixture of extant farm complexes as well as sites of demolished buildings. Building surveys and excavations combined to allow archaeologists to chart this farming landscape's evolution over the last 400 years. This saw the emergence of a prosperous farming and weaving community in the seventeenth century that continued to develop across the eighteenth and earlier part of the nineteenth centuries, before entering into a period of decline. It is also worth noting that the Kingsway Business Park saw one of the most extensive archaeological surveys in Greater Manchester of post-medieval/industrial-period rural buildings.

Oxford Archaeology, supported by a range of specialists and consultants, has done an amazing job of maximising archaeological information from sometimes unpromising physical remains. One of the most rewarding aspects of the archaeological investigations has been the successful appliance of a variety of modern scientific techniques to maximise understanding of the excavated evidence. The work has been secured through the planning system via archaeological conditions attached to planning consent, and the developers are to be thanked for funding this wide-ranging suite of archaeological works. Dissemination of the impressive results of these two major landscape studies is a crucial element for advancing research and providing public benefit. The Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service is pleased to note that this academic monograph is part of suite of dissemination measures that also include heritage information boards and two popular publications.

*Norman Redhead*

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## Summary

During the first years of the twenty-first century, two areas in Greater Manchester were subjected to extensive schemes of redevelopment, which provided an important opportunity to investigate the archaeology in two distinctive landscapes. One of these now forms the site of the Kingsway Business Park (centred on SD 918 120), some 3 km to the south-east of Rochdale, whilst the other is at the Cutacre Country Park (centred on SD 698 040), approximately 4.75 km to the south-west of Bolton. Historically, both landscapes were within Lancashire and, significantly, they allow the historical trajectories of the region's rural landscapes to be examined in some depth.

Within each of these landscapes, a combination of non-intrusive and intrusive archaeological techniques was employed to explore the archaeology. These techniques included desk-based assessment, geophysical, topographical, and standing-building survey, trial trenching, and open-area excavation. Importantly, in a number of instances, archaeological excavation followed on from standing-building survey, and this integrated approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the history and development of the respective site. In addition, palaeoenvironmental coring was undertaken in both areas as a means of examining the form and character of the early environment.

The work was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North and the former University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, and at the Kingsway Business Park it resulted in the detailed archaeological examination, in the form of building survey and/or open-area excavation, of 12 sites, whilst five sites were subjected to open-area excavation and/or building survey at Cutacre. The majority of the sites produced good evidence for post-medieval and later rural occupation, though important evidence for prehistoric and medieval activity was also found in both landscapes.

At Kingsway, pollen analysis provided insights into the prehistoric environment, with evidence of episodes of human clearance dating to the late Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, whilst at Cutacre, more direct evidence for late Mesolithic activity was represented by a small collection of worked-stone tools. In this latter landscape, a Bronze Age settlement was also excavated at Cinder Hill, dating to the latter half of the second millennium cal BC. This comprised a post-built roundhouse, and two sequential four-post structures that may have functioned as malting houses, the first to be recorded in Greater Manchester.

At Kingsway, the evidence for medieval activity was slim, but it is possible that two early routeways may date to this period. Cutacre produced more substantive evidence for medieval activity. This included pollen signatures, suggestive of woodland clearance, cereal cultivation, and pastoral farming, dating to the early medieval period, along with evidence for the changing farming regimes that were in operation in the late medieval period. A late medieval iron bloomery was also excavated, which was associated with furnace bases, and other features associated with the production and working of iron.

Open-area excavation, building survey, and documentary research in both of the landscapes produced valuable evidence relating to the different types of post-medieval rural houses and farm buildings that existed across a wide swathe of northern Greater Manchester. The investigated buildings dated to the early seventeenth- to mid-eighteenth century, and included a gentry house at Wharton Hall, Cutacre, and a selection of smaller rural houses that were occupied by freehold yeoman farmers at Kingsway, and tenant farmers at Cutacre. These latter house types included several two-cell houses and double-pile houses, along with a three-cell house, and a T-shaped house. Several associated barns/shippons were also investigated. Some of these were detached structures, whilst others adjoined the dwellings and, in some instances, the linear layout of dwelling and barn/shippon mimicked that found in a Pennine laithe house.

Both areas also revealed important evidence for late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century activity. Whilst in many instances this entailed the modification and rebuilding of the post-medieval properties, at Kingsway evidence of several distinctive types of semi-domestic buildings was recorded, intimately linked to the production of textiles. These were weavers' cottages, and comprised both dwelling and workshop, where handloom weaving of woollen cloth was undertaken.

## Acknowledgements

The archaeological investigations undertaken at the Kingsway Business Park and Cutacre Country Park owe their success to many individuals, and the close co-operation of the different companies involved in the two respective projects. With regard to work at the Kingsway Business Park, Oxford Archaeology North would like to thank Forbes Marsden and Paul Gajos, then of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, for commissioning and supporting the various stages of archaeological fieldwork, on behalf of Wilson Bowden Developments Ltd. The archaeological evaluations were completed by Paul Gajos, David Tonks, and Pip Kok, whilst the open-area excavations were directed by Chris Healey, Paul Clark, and Jeremy Bradley, who were assisted by Emily Betts, Caroline Bulcock, Mark Chesterman, Jason Clarke, Pip Howarth, Philip Jefferson, Andy Lane, David Tonks, Caroline Raynor, and Alastair Vannan. All surveys were undertaken by Chris Wild, Chris Ridings, and Peter Schofield, and the palaeoenvironmental work was completed by Elizabeth Huckerby, Denise Druce, and Sandra Bonsall. Ian Miller was responsible for project management. The Kingsway archaeological building surveys were undertaken by Michael Nevell, Ivan Hradil, Brian Grimsditch, and Carolanne King of the former University of Manchester Archaeological Unit. This element of the project was managed by Michael Nevell, who would like to thank DLA Landscape & Urban Design for commissioning and supporting the work. The post-excavation analysis and publication of the Kingsway dataset was commissioned by CgMs, on behalf of Wilson Bowden Developments Ltd, and thanks are extended to Paul Clark, who acted as the CgMs archaeological consultant on the latter stages of the project. The post-excavation work was managed by Ian Miller, when at Oxford Archaeology North, and thanks are extended to the numerous staff from Oxford Archaeology North who completed the stratigraphic, artefactual, and palaeoenvironmental analyses and reporting.

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More generally, the post-excavation process has been greatly assisted by Rachel Newman (Oxford Archaeology North's Senior Executive Officer: Research and Publication), who edited individual reports and also this volume. Rachel also edited the content on two information boards that have been erected at the Kingsway Business Park, outlining the archaeological remains there, along with two popular publications, in the *Greater Manchester's Past Revealed* series, respectively detailing the archaeology at Cutacre Country Park and Kingsway Business Park. These latter publications were produced by staff from Oxford Archaeology North and are available from the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service.

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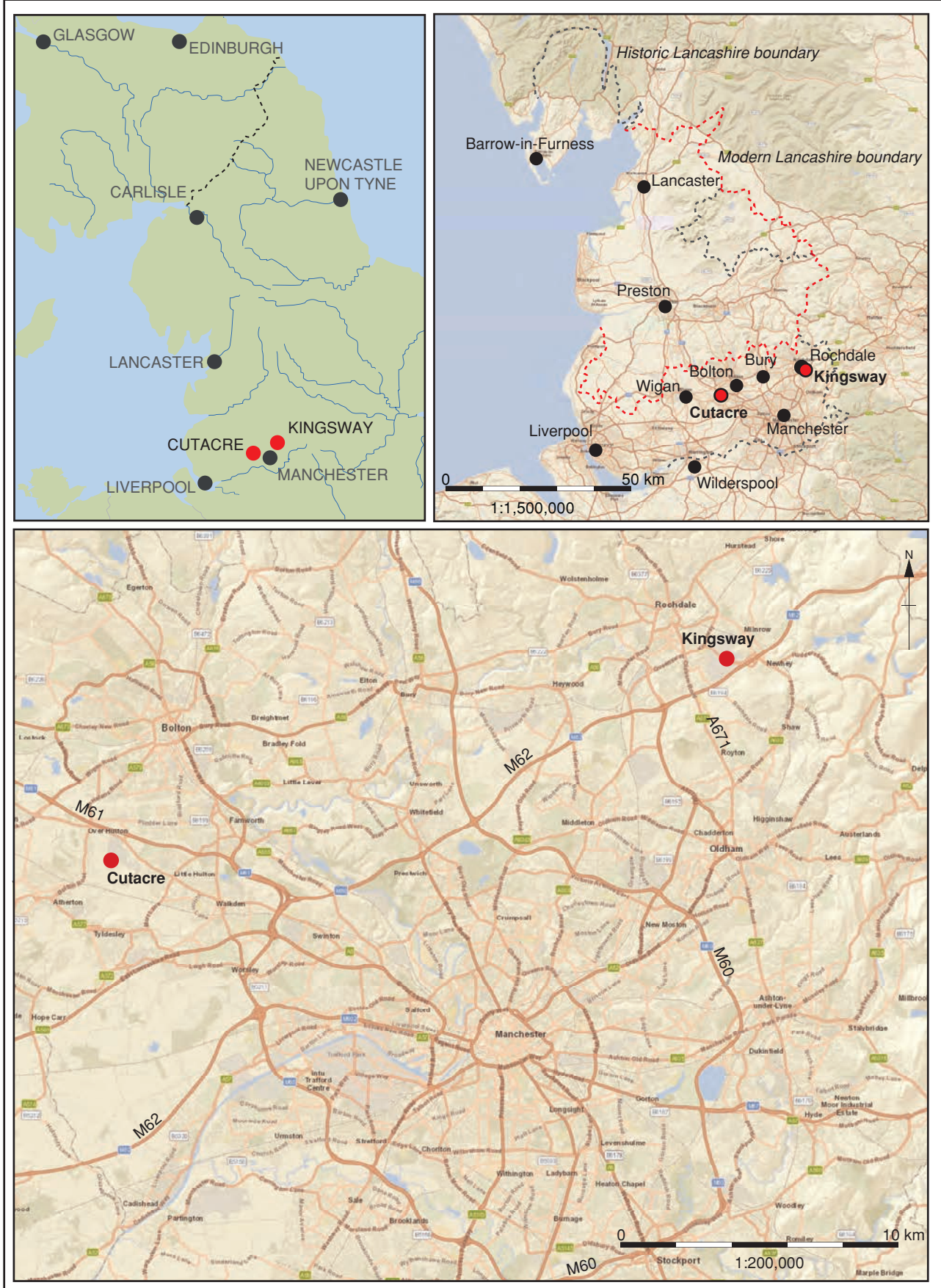


Figure 1: The locations of Kingsway and Cutacre