

BEWSEY OLD HALL, WARRINGTON, CHESHIRE: EXCAVATIONS 1977-81 AND 1983-5

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Front cover: *The Atherton Survey, Bewsey Demesne, 1724; detail from a terracotta garden feature, late seventeenth century*

Rear Cover: *The conservation of a terracotta garden urn; Bewsey Old Hall in c 1900 and c 1982; the inventory from the 1724 Atherton Survey*

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Abbreviations

BAR	British Archaeological Reports
CBA	Council for British Archaeology
CL	Chetham's Library
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office
LRO	Lancashire Record Office
OA	Oxford Archaeology
OD	Ordnance Datum
PRO	Public Record Office (now the National Archives)
SM	Scheduled Monument
U/S	Unstratified
WL	Warrington Library

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Summary

Bewsey Old Hall (SJ 589 895) has a long and archaeologically well-documented existence. It is a Scheduled Monument (SM13488), but was effectively derelict in the late 1970s, when plans for sympathetic restoration and redevelopment of this important moated site gave the opportunity for the standing buildings (some dating back to the seventeenth century) to be recorded. The extensive archaeological excavations examined a large part of the moated platform, and were intended to place the house within its physical and chronological context. In addition, this was supplemented by detailed documentary research, which offered an unusual chance to place the site within its regional socio-political context. Excavations took place in 1977-81 and again in 1983-5. Analysis of the large body of data recovered, begun in 1985 but laid aside in 1987, was resumed in 1993 and finally completed in 1996, at which point a draft report was submitted to English Heritage. A revised version of that draft forms the basis of this publication.

Bewsey's origins lay in the thirteenth century, perhaps originating as a hunting lodge in the royal forest of Burtonwood. It became the principal seat of the Butlers, Barons of Warrington, after their original hall, Mote Hill in Warrington, was destroyed by fire in the late thirteenth century. The earliest coherent archaeological evidence from the site suggests that a large timber-built aisled hall and a range of smaller service buildings were erected on the site at about that time, presumably to house the baron and his household. The Butlers were to stay at Bewsey until the sixteenth century, rebuilding their hall on stone foundations in the fourteenth century, after a substantial fire, and modifying it and maintaining it as circumstances required. By the mid-sixteenth century, some of the principal buildings had fallen into disrepair, but a new northern range was built shortly before 1586, when Bewsey changed hands, passing briefly to the Earl of Leicester. When Robert Dudley died in 1588, the house, although probably intended for his illegitimate son, Robert, passed first to his brother Ambrose, earl of Warwick, who died shortly afterwards. For a decade, the ownership of the property was disputed, but in 1597, Robert Dudley sold the estate to the Ireland family, and it remained with them and their successors, the Athertons, until the mid-twentieth century.

The origins of the fine brick hall still standing on the site probably lay in the early seventeenth century, representing the fashionable aspirations of the new owners, seeking to add comfortable modern accommodation to the extant medieval hall, thereby initiating the piecemeal demolition of the medieval southern range. The appearance of the new house was later much enhanced, by the excavation of a formal terraced garden, decorated by large and impressive terracotta urns and other garden furniture. It did not, however, last long, and the garden had been backfilled and levelled by 1724. The Atherton family often had cause to lease Bewsey to tenants, and on occasion it was left empty for long periods. Indeed, it was not until c 1765 that Elizabeth Atherton and her husband Robert Gwilym moved back to Bewsey, which had almost certainly been empty since 1754. As a fire is thought to have destroyed part of the main range in the 1740s or early 1750s, it is hardly surprising that they initiated a substantial programme of rebuilding, including the demolition of the medieval hall, and the addition of rooms in the Georgian style. A brick-built farmhouse may have been added to the western side of the seventeenth-century hall during this period, but it could equally have been built much later, possibly around 1819. By 1833, the Georgian buildings had been demolished, leaving the hall more or less in the form in which it survives today. In 1863, a 'New' Hall was built some 400 m away, and Bewsey Old Hall was left in the hands of a succession of tenants, until, in a state of considerable disrepair, it was acquired by Warrington Development Corporation in 1974.

The large amount of medieval and earlier post-medieval material from the site, particularly the pottery, is of particular significance to local and regional studies. It remains one of the largest collections in the North West outside of urban centres such as Chester and Carlisle.

Résumé

L'ancien logis de Bewsey (SJ 589 895) a une existence longue et bien documentée archéologiquement. Il est inscrit sur la liste des Monuments Historiques Anglais (Scheduled Monument (13 488), mais a été de fait abandonné dans les années 1970, bien que des projets pour une restauration et le redéveloppement de cet site de motte aient été l'occasion d'étudier et d'enregistrer le bâti (dont une partie remonte au XVIII^e siècle) et de réaliser d'importantes campagnes de fouille. Ces dernières se sont concentrées sur la plateforme et se sont efforcées de définir l'environnement physique et chronologique du bâtiment. De plus, elles ont été accompagnées d'une recherche documentaire minutieuse qui a permis de replacer le site dans le contexte socio-politique de la région. Les fouilles ont été réalisées de 1977 à 1981 puis de 1983 à 1985. Les analyses de l'ensemble, assez conséquent, des données recueillies ont commencé en 1985 et après une interruption en 1987 et une reprise en 1993, elles ont été finalement complétées en 1996. Un rapport préliminaire a alors été soumis à English Heritage. La version revisitée de ce premier travail a servi de base à la présente publication.

Les origines de Bewsey remontent au XIII^e siècle, sous la forme, peut-être d'un relais de chasse dans la forêt royale de Burtonwood. Il est devenu le siège principal des Butler, Barons de Warrington après que leur demeure, Mote Hill à Warrington, a été détruite par un incendie vers la fin du XIII^e siècle. Les traces archéologiques les plus anciennes suggèrent la construction d'un corps de logis en bois accompagné d'une série de dépendances plus petites, probablement pour héberger le baron et sa maisonnée. Les Butler restèrent à Bewsey jusqu'au XVI^e siècle ; ils reconstruisirent le logis avec une fondation en pierre au XIV^e siècle, après un incendie important, en en modifiant ou en conservant des éléments selon les circonstances. Dès le milieu du XVI^e siècle certains des bâtiments principaux n'étaient plus entretenus mais un ensemble est construit au nord, peu après 1586, lorsque Bewsey change de main, devenant brièvement la propriété du Comte de Leicester. Quand Robert Dudley mourut en 1588, la demeure, bien que probablement prévue pour son fils illégitime, Robert, passa tout d'abord à son frère Ambrose, Comte de Warwick, qui mourut peu après. Pour une décade, la propriété du domaine fut disputée, mais en 1597, Robert Dudley le vendit à une famille irlandaise, qui le conserva et le transmit à ses successeurs, les Athertons, jusqu'au milieu du XX^e siècle.

Les origines du logis en brique fine, présent sur le site, remontent probablement au début du XVII^e siècle et représentent l'effort de propriétaire de suivre la mode, en ajoutant des éléments de confort moderne au bâtiment médiéval existant, initialisant ainsi la démolition progressive de l'ensemble au sud. L'aspect de la nouvelle demeure fut ensuite amélioré, par l'aménagement du jardin d'apparat en terrasse, décoré de grandes urnes en terre cuite et autre mobilier de jardin. Celui-ci fut utilisé peu de temps et le jardin fut remblayé et nivelé dès 1724. Les Atherton, louèrent souvent Bewley et le bâtiment fut même occasionnellement délaissé sur de longues périodes. Et ce ne fut qu'en 1765 qu'Elisabeth Atherton et son mari, Robert Gwilym, s'installèrent à Bewley, qui était certainement resté inoccupé depuis 1754. Il est possible qu'un incendie ait détruit en partie l'habitation principale dans les années 1740 ou au début des années 1750 ; les propriétaires auraient alors mis en place un programme de reconstruction, incluant la démolition des parties médiévales et l'ajout de pièces de style géorgien. Une ferme construite en brique a pu être ajoutée sur le côté ouest du bâtiment du XVII^e siècle dès cette époque, mais il a pu aussi être construit à une époque plus tardive, autour de 1819 ; les bâtiments géorgiens étaient démolis en 1833, laissant l'ensemble approximativement dans l'aspect qu'il conserve aujourd'hui. En 1863, la nouvelle demeure fut construite à quelques 400 m de l'ancienne et celle-ci fut laissée à une succession de locataires jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit achetée par la société Warrington Development Corporation en 1974 dans un mauvais état de conservation.

La grande quantité de matériaux médiévaux et post-médiévaux présents sur le site, en particulier la céramique, est particulièrement importante pour les études locales et régionales. Elle forme la plus grande collection dans le Nord Ouest de l'Angleterre, en dehors des sites urbains, tels Chester et Carlisle.

Zusammenfassung

Bewsey Old Hall (SJ 589 895) kann eine lange und archäologisch gut dokumentierte Geschichte aufweisen. Das Anwesen ist als geschütztes Denkmal (SM13488) registriert, welches allerdings in den späten 1970er Jahren verfiel. Trotz dieser Tatsache boten Pläne für die behutsame Restaurierung und Sanierung dieses wichtigen, von einem Wassergraben umgebenen Anwesens die Möglichkeit, die stehenden Gebäude (von denen manche aus dem siebzehnten Jahrhundert stammen) zu erfassen und ermöglichten umfangreiche archäologische Ausgrabungen. Diese Ausgrabungen untersuchten einen großen Teil der von einem Wassergraben umgebenen Plattform, mit dem Ziel, das Haus in seinen physischen und zeitlichen Kontext zu stellen. Dies wurde durch detaillierte Forschung ergänzt, die die seltene Möglichkeit bot, das Denkmal in den Rahmen seines regionalen sozio-politischen Kontextes zu stellen. Ausgrabungen erfolgten von 1977 bis 1981 und erneut zwischen 1983 und 1985. Die Analyse der großen Anzahl von Daten, begann 1985, wurde jedoch 1987 unterbrochen, um 1993 wieder aufgenommen, und schließlich im Jahr 1996 abgeschlossen zu werden. Im Anschluss darauf wurde English Heritage ein Berichtsentwurf vorgelegt. Eine überarbeitete Fassung dieses Entwurfs bildet die Grundlage dieser Veröffentlichung.

Die Ursprünge von Bewsey lagen im dreizehnten Jahrhundert, möglicherweise als Jagdsitz im königlichen Wald von Burtonwood. Es wurde zum Hauptsitz der Butlers, Freiherren von Warrington, nachdem ihr ursprüngliches Anwesen, Mote Hill in Warrington, durch einen Brand im späten dreizehnten Jahrhundert zerstört wurde. Die ältesten zeitgenössischen archäologischen Zeugnisse von der Stätte suggestieren, dass ein großer, hölzerner, unterteilter Saal und eine Reihe kleinerer Wirtschaftsgebäude auf dem Gelände etwa zur gleichen Zeit errichtet wurden, vermutlich, um den Baron und seinen Haushalt zu beherbergen. Die Butlers blieben bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert auf Bewsey wohnen, und im vierzehnten Jahrhundert bauten sie nach einem ausgiebigen Feuer ihre Residenz erneut auf ein Fundament aus Stein, und modifizierten und restaurierten sie den Umständen entsprechend. Mitte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts waren einige der Hauptgebäude baufällig geworden, jedoch wurde ein neuer nördlicher Komplex kurz vor 1586 errichtet, als Bewsey für kurze Zeit den Besitzer wechselte, und an den Graf von Leicester ging. Als Robert Dudley im Jahre 1588 starb, ging das Haus, obwohl es wahrscheinlich für seinen unehelichen Sohn, Robert bestimmt war, zunächst an dessen Bruder Ambrose, Graf von Warwick, der kurz darauf starb. Für ein Jahrzehnt war das Eigentum an der Immobilie umstritten; im Jahre 1597 verkaufte Robert Dudley jedoch das Anwesen an die Familie Ireland, und es blieb bis Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts in ihrem Besitz sowie in dem ihrer Nachfolger, der Athertons.

Die Ursprünge des eleganten Backsteinsaals, welcher noch immer erhalten ist, gehen wahrscheinlich zurück ins frühe siebzehnte Jahrhundert. Er spiegelt die modischen Ambitionen der neuen Besitzer wider, die versuchten, dem erhaltenen mittelalterlichen Saal die Atmosphäre einer komfortablen, modernen Unterkunft hinzuzufügen, und führten damit die stückweise Abtragung des mittelalterlichen südlichen Komplexes herbei. Das Erscheinungsbild des neuen Hauses wurde später durch die Anlage eines formellen Terrassengartens verstärkt, welcher mit großen und eindrucksvollen Terrakotta-Urnen und anderen Gartenmöbeln ausgestattet wurde. Die Anlage blieb jedoch nicht lange bestehen, und bis zum Jahr 1724 wurde der Garten wieder verfüllt und eingeebnet. Die Atherton Familie hatte häufig Grund und Anlass Bewsey zu vermieten, und gelegentlich stand das Anwesen für lange Zeiträume leer. In der Tat, zogen Elizabeth Atherton und ihr Ehemann Robert Gwilym erst 1765 zurück nach Bewsey, welches mit grosser Wahrscheinlichkeit seit 1754 leer stand. Ein Feuer soll in den 1740er oder frühen 1750er Jahren einen Teil des Hauptbereiches zerstört haben, und daher ist es kaum verwunderlich, dass ein umfangreiches Programm für den Wiederaufbau, einschließlich Abriss des mittelalterlichen Saals, und den Zusatz von Zimmern im Georgischen Stil eingeleitet wurde. Ein gemauertes Bauernhaus wurde möglicherweise in diesem Zeitraum auf der Westseite des Saals des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts hinzugefügt, es könnte jedoch genausogut viel später, vielleicht um 1819, errichtet worden sein. Im Jahre 1833 wurden die Georgischen Gebäude abgerissen, was die Form des Anwesens mehr oder weniger so ließ, wie es heute zu sehen ist. 1863 wurde ein "neues" Anwesen in etwa 400m Entfernung errichtet, und Bewsey Old Hall fiel in die Hände einer Reihe von Mietern, bis es 1974 in einem Zustand erheblichen Verfalls, von Warrington Development Corporation erworben wurde.

Die große Menge an mittelalterlichem und früherem nach-mittelalterlichen Material von der Stätte, insbesondere an Keramik, ist von besonderer Bedeutung für lokale und regionale Studien. Das Material bleibt eine der größten Sammlungen im Nordwesten Englands außerhalb von städtischen Zentren wie Chester und Carlisle.

Acknowledgements

Any archaeological excavation undertaken over a protracted period ultimately represents the expertise, knowledge, and enthusiasm of a large number of people. In this case, the excavations began in 1977 and research, in the form of further excavation (in 1983-5) and various phases of post-excavation analysis, continued sporadically until almost the present day. The original excavation, undertaken between 1977 and 1981 by the North Cheshire Archaeology Group, was directed by Pauline Bearpark. All participants are thanked for their contribution to the understanding of the development of Bewsey Old Hall. Rebecca Smart (Liverpool University Rescue Archaeology Unit) directed the 1983-5 excavations; assistant directors were Jen Lewis and Alan Mouldsdale. The subsequent two-year programme of post-excavation analysis was managed by Jen Lewis, with assistance from Penny Brown. The 1983-5 seasons of excavation and the post-excavation work in 1986-7 were funded as Job Creation Schemes, under the auspices of the Manpower Services Commission; again, all participants are thanked for their contributions. This post-excavation project, managed by the North West Archaeological Trust, came to an end in 1987.

Post-excavation analysis was resumed in 1993, and the project has, since then, been funded by English Heritage. Thanks are due to Kath Buxton, and to Tony Wilmott, Mark Bowden, and Helen Keeley, successively Project Assurance Officers for English Heritage. Based at the University of Liverpool, Jen Lewis and her team undertook the enormous task of organising the archive and undertaking the bulk of the post-excavation analysis, producing a first draft of the publication in 1996. In 2002, Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) was commissioned by English Heritage to revise the text and bring the report to publication. Revision of the stratigraphic text was largely undertaken by Richard Heawood, and that of the finds by Christine Howard-Davis. Both collaborated in the production of a discursive synthesis of the results. The original illustrations were by John-Gordon Swogger (wall paintings); Mark Cook ('Developed Cistercian' wares and the fine blackware); and Paul Roberts (Midland Yellow, Beauvais and Martincamp stonewares). The beautifully detailed pottery drawings of Kay Lancaster and Christine Phillips proved difficult to reproduce at a reduced scale, and were therefore redrawn in a simpler style by Emma Carter. Kay Lancaster redrew the 1724 tithe map and Christine Phillips was responsible for the detailed illustrations of the seventeenth-century garden wares. Mark Faulkner was funded by English Heritage to provide assistance in developing the phase plans for the 1996 draft. Subsequent revision of other textual illustrations was by Emma Carter and latterly by Adam Parsons. Rachel Newman managed this latter part of the project and acted as academic editor throughout; Richard Gregory took on the management of the final revisions. Jo Dawson undertook the initial copy editing in 2003.

Research on the Butler and Ireland families was undertaken by Roger Dickinson in 1983-5, and he produced an authoritative report on their history in 1993, lodged in the project archive. His work was drawn on extensively for this publication. He also took aerial photographs during the 1984 season of excavations (Pls 24 and 26), and photographed the garden urns (Pls 60 and 68). Ian McAlpine contributed research on the history of the Atherton, Gwilym, Powys, and Lilford interests in Bewsey. John-Gordon Swogger was funded by English Heritage to produce a report on the wall paintings. A F Roberts produced the report on the history of the gardens at Bewsey and their possible association with other contemporary gardens.

Inevitably, in a project such as this, with a long genesis and considerable interruptions, the original reports have been revised and reworked, and added to on a number of occasions. The present text reflects that brought together by Jen Lewis and her colleagues and submitted to English Heritage in 1996. Since then, changes have been largely editorial, intended primarily to give this publication a greater cohesion and fluency, rather than to make substantive academic alterations.

There has proved to be no easy way to attribute much of the material incorporated in this publication to the many individual reports or elements of finds reports, nor to their successive authors, with clarity, and, in an attempt to give credit where it is due, the following list attempts to chart the genesis and development of individual reports. In 1986, S Manning produced reports on the Roman pottery and the 'Developed Cistercian' wares; R Goodwin and R Henderson wrote a report on the medieval pottery, and D Biezanek contributed a report on the medieval German stonewares from the site. Elements of the post-medieval pottery were commented upon by D Harthen (Slip-coated black finewares), M Cook (Slip-coated black coarsewares), R Goodwin (early post-medieval Yellow wares), D Biezanek (brown salt-glazed stoneware, white salt-glazed stoneware, scratch-blue stoneware, and Oriental porcelain), and K J Brown (eighteenth-century fine Blackwares

and thrown slip-decorated wares). Her report on Agate wares was subsequently updated by E A Southall, who also produced the report on the English and Dutch tin-glazed earthenwares.

In 1992, E A Southall revised and enlarged the medieval pottery report; Jeff Speakman contributed reports on the Beauvais earthenware, the Martincamp flasks, the Surrey Borderware, and the Cistercian-type wares, and revised the original reports on slip-coated blackwares. In 1993, E A Southall wrote reports on the cream-coloured earthenwares and the Whieldon-type wares, and, in 1995, Jeff Speakman added a further report on the mottled and speckled wares. In the same year, J Barry contributed an extensive report on the oriental porcelain.

Ceramic roof tiles were reported upon in 1986 by A Fityo, and E A Southall produced a report on the ceramic floor tiles in 1992. In 1995, A F Roberts contributed a report on the horticultural wares. Reports on the metalwork were all produced by A Fityo in 1986; coins and tokens were analysed by A F Roberts. Clay tobacco pipes were originally analysed by David Higgins in 1986, and this report was revised in 1998 by the same author. The drawings of the clay tobacco pipes reproduced in this volume were also produced by David Higgins. Leather was reported upon in 1986 by R Smart. The glass report was written in 1986 by the late Ruth Hurst Vose. The pollen diagram (Fig 90) was created by Jim Innes.

Philippa Tomlinson wishes to thank Dr Allan Hall for help with macrofossil identifications and Professor Terry O'Connor for identifying and commenting on the molluscan remains. Dr J Baker (Department of Veterinary Pathology, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Liverpool) is thanked for his contribution to the animal bone analysis, having examined the bones for signs of disease and congenital factors and A F Roberts produced the report on the mammal bones. The bird bone was identified by Clem Fisher (National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside).

The Atherton Survey is used courtesy of the Lancashire Record Office, and Lancashire County Council. Adrian van Diest's *Birds Eye View of Dunham Massey*, c 1697, from the Stamford Collection at Dunham Massey, is reproduced courtesy of The National Trust. The portrait of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, is used courtesy of English Heritage.

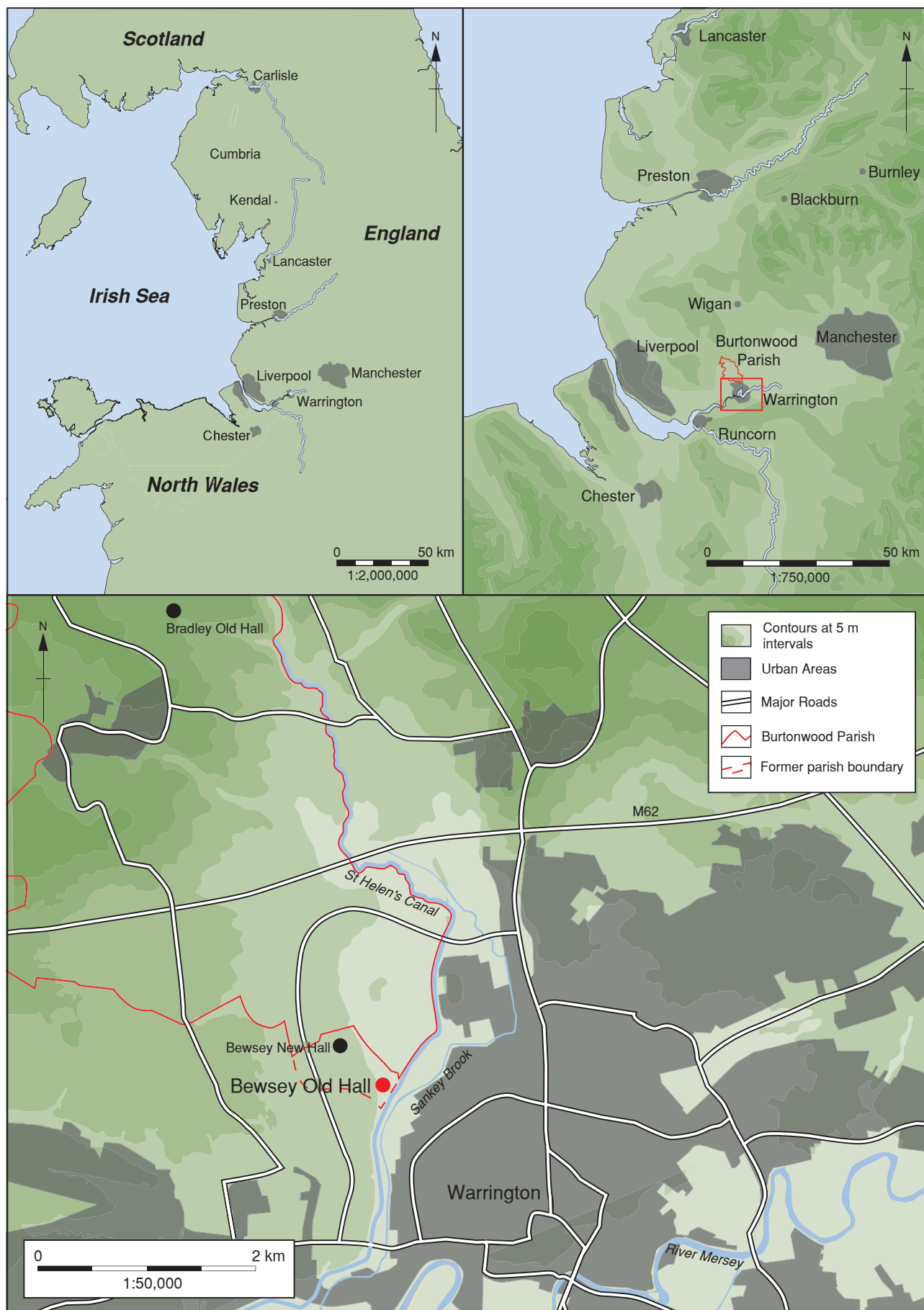


Figure 1: Location map, showing Bewsey Old Hall within its national and regional setting