

NORTH WEST WETLANDS SURVEY 5

THE WETLANDS OF
Shropshire and Staffordshire

M D Leah
C E Wells
P Stamper
E Huckerby
C Welch

With contributions by

R Chaffer
R White

GIS mapping and
management by

S-A Cherchali

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Contents

List of illustrations	v
List of tables	vi
List of plates	vi
Contributors	vii
Abbreviations	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Foreword	ix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
History of the survey	1
Aims and objectives	3
Methodology	3
Organisation of the volume and division of the county's wetlands	7
Artefactual evidence	10
2 SHROPSHIRE	11
Introduction	11
3 FENN'S/WHIXALL/WEM MOSSES	15
Introduction	15
Survey results	17
4 THE ELLESMERE MERES REGION	25
Introduction	25
Survey results	28
5 BAGGY MOOR	35
Introduction	35
Survey results	39
6 THE MID-SHROPSHIRE WETLANDS.....	51
Introduction	51
Survey results	55
7 BURY WALLS AND TOP MOSS (INCLUDING BROWN MOSS)	65
Introduction	65
Survey results	65
8 THE WEALD MOORS	69
Introduction	69
Survey results	73
9 MARTON POOL	87
Introduction	87
Survey results	89
10 THE WETLANDS OF STAFFORDSHIRE	93
The wetlands of north Staffordshire	93
Survey results	98
The wetlands of south Staffordshire	113
Survey results	115

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 Meeting House Lane
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 (Phone: 01524 848666; Fax: 01524 848606)
 (E-Mail: ARCHUNIT@lancaster.ac.uk
 C.Wells@lancaster.ac.uk; Sid-Ali Cherchali@lancaster.ac.uk)
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Contents

List of illustrations	v
List of tables	vi
List of plates	vi
Contributors	vii
Abbreviations	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Foreword	ix
1 INTRODUCTION	1
History of the survey	1
Aims and objectives	3
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Introduction	15
Survey results	17
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Introduction	25
Survey results	28
5 BAGGY MOOR	35
Introduction	35
Survey results	39
6 THE MID-SHROPSHIRE WETLANDS	51
Introduction	51
Survey results	55
7 BURY WALLS AND TOP MOSS (INCLUDING BROWN MOSS)	65
Introduction	65
Survey results	65
8 THE WEALD MOORS	69
Introduction	69
Survey results	73
9 MARTON POOL	87
Introduction	87
Survey results	89
10 THE WETLANDS OF STAFFORDSHIRE	93
The wetlands of north Staffordshire	93
Survey results	98
The wetlands of south Staffordshire	113
Survey results	115

11 CONCLUSIONS.....	119
Introduction.....	119
Mesolithic, Neolithic, and early Bronze Age.....	120
Later Bronze Age and Iron Age.....	121
Romano-British period.....	123
Post-Roman period.....	124
Medieval period.....	125
Future prospects for the region's wetland archaeology.....	128
The status and future of environmental archives in the two counties.....	129
Glossary.....	133
Appendix 1 Site gazetteer: archaeological survey sites, Shropshire.....	137
Appendix 2 Evaluation of medieval pottery found at Cockshutt, Shropshire.....	153
Appendix 3 Gazetteer of the Shropshire environmental archives assessed.....	157
Appendix 4 Palaeoecological investigations at Top Moss, Shropshire.....	173
Appendix 5 Shropshire's wetlands: a list of extant and improved landscapes.....	181
Appendix 6 Gazetteer of SMR sites on and around Shropshire wetlands.....	185
Appendix 7 Site gazetteer: archaeological sites, Staffordshire.....	197
Appendix 8 Gazetteer of Staffordshire environmental archives assessed.....	199
Appendix 9 Staffordshire's wetlands: a list of extant and improved landscapes.....	211
Appendix 10 Gazetteer of SMR sites on and around Staffordshire wetlands.....	215
Appendix 11 Details of radiocarbon dates quoted in the text.....	223
Bibliography.....	225
Index.....	235

List of illustrations

Figures

1	The location of Shropshire and Staffordshire in the North West Wetlands Survey.....	x
2	Shropshire: the extent of the areas covered by individual chapters.....	2
3	The location of GIS maps contained in the Shropshire section of the volume.....	7
4	The location of archaeological and historical sites mentioned in the text.....	8
5	The northern portion of the modern county of Shropshire: soils.....	9
6	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 3.....	15
7	Fenn's/Whixall Moss: the modern landscape, the extent of the surveyed area, field conditions and archaeological data.....	<i>rear of volume</i>
8	The Moat Field moated site.....	16
9	Whixall Moss in 1821.....	20
10	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 4.....	25
11	The Ellesmere meres region: the modern landscape, the extent of the surveyed area, field conditions and archaeological data.....	<i>rear of volume</i>
12	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 5.....	35
13	Baggy Moor: the modern landscape, the extent of the surveyed area, field conditions and archaeological data.....	<i>rear of volume</i>
14	A selection of worked flint from the Baggy Moor and Ellesmere areas.....	40
15	The Wykey Weir flint scatter.....	41
16	The distribution of burnt mounds around Baggy Moor.....	43
17	Baggy Moor: the Abbot's Moor earthwork.....	45
18	Baggy Moor: lands proposed to be drained and improved 1861.....	46
19	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 6.....	51
20	The Fenemere pools and the Berth: the modern landscape, the extent of the surveyed area, field conditions and archaeological data.....	52
21	Berth bank, pool and surrounds in the eighteenth century.....	63
22	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 7.....	65
23	Top Moss and Bury Walls: the modern landscape, the extent of the survey area, field conditions, and archaeological data.....	67
24	Top Moss in the later 1830s.....	68
25	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 8.....	69
26	The Weald Moors: the modern landscape, the extent of the survey area, field conditions, and archaeological data.....	<i>rear of volume</i>
27	The distribution of burnt stone sites around the Weald Moors.....	72
28	The Weald Moors: selected flint work.....	74
29	The Weald Moors c 1580 (sources as text).....	84
30	The extent of the area covered by Chapter 9.....	87
31	Marton Pool: the modern landscape, the extent of the survey area, field conditions, and archaeological data.....	88
32	The Binweston water meadow system.....	91
33	Location of areas of survey undertaken in Staffordshire.....	94
34	The location of archaeological and historical sites mentioned in the text.....	96
35	Aqualate Mere: the modern landscape, the extent of the surveyed area, field conditions, and archaeological data.....	99
36	Earthwork north of Aqualate Mere.....	111
37	Features at Wall, Staffordshire.....	117
38	Selection of hone-stones and worked bone from the wetlands of Shropshire.....	125
39	The distribution of lowland peat in Shropshire and its relationship to parish boundaries.....	127
40	Pottery from Cockshutt kiln, Shropshire.....	155
41	Balmer Heath: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment.....	157
42	Bomere Wood: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment.....	158
43	Cole Mere Site 3: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment.....	160
44	Marton Pool: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment.....	165
45	Morton Pool: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment.....	167
46	Wolfshead Moss: preliminary assessment.....	170

47	Wolfshead Moss: percentage pollen diagram from charcoal band at Flandrian I/II transition ...	171
48	Top Moss percentage pollen diagram—trees	175
49	Top Moss percentage pollen diagram—selected herbs	176
50	Top Moss macrofossil diagram	178
51	Aqualate 4: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment	199
52	Aqualate 5: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment	200
53	Aqualate 11: simplified pollen diagram for palynological assessment	201

A key for Figures 7, 11, 13, and 26 is located on a flap on the inside of the back cover

Tables

1	Quantification of sherds by weight and number	153
2	Percentage of rim forms by sherd numbers (99 sherds)	154

Plates

1	Caer Caradoc and its hillfort as seen from the Long Mynd	12
2	White Mere, a characteristic wetland in the Ellesmere region	13
3	Modern peat-cutting tools, Whixall Moss	18
4	A modern, hand-cut peat cutting, Whixall Moss	19
5	Fieldwalking around Cole Mere	28
6	Arable land to the west of Whattal Moss	29
7	The relict mire at Balmer Heath	31
8	Cole Mere	32
9	A view across Baggy Moor	36
10	Wasted peat overlying shell marl, Baggy Moor	38
11	Gravel rides and wasted peats to the south-east of Rednal Airfield	42
12	A felled lime tree, Shropshire	54
13	The small basin mire at Lower Hopton, mid-Shropshire	56
14	The small raised mire at Coton Side, mid-Shropshire	57
15	Morton Pool	58
16	Iron Mills	59
17	Bomere Wood	60
18	Bomere Pool	61
19	John Buckler's field sketch of the Berth (1821)	62
20	Palaeoecological sampling at Top Moss, Shropshire	66
21	Burnt stone (SMR 772) on the northern fringes of the Weald Moors	71
22	Peat wastage on the Weald Moors, as revealed by exposed tree roots	75
23	Skirtland around Buttery Farm, Weald Moors	76
24	Fieldwalking underway on the peat/mineral soil boundary near Kynnersley village	77
25	Weald Moors before improvement	80
26	Weald Moors in 1820	81
27	Large hillock formed from glacial deposits on the fringes of the peat around Marton Pool	90
28	The gravel crest of Anc's Hill to the south of Aqualate Mere	97
29	Doleygate. A linear mire thought to occupy the site of a glacial overflow channel	100
30	Eccleshall basin mire	101
31	The intriguingly named Hell Hole	102
32	The most recently terrestrialised section of Loynton Moss	103
33	A small relict moss exists to the east of the village of Seighford	104
34	The reclaimed fen at Kingstone, Staffordshire	105
35	Rounding up peewits at Shebdon Moss (Plot 1686)	106
36	Wasted peats in the valley to the west of Wall Roman site	115
37	Stebbing Shaw's Reconstruction of finds from Pipehill	116

Contributors

Rebecca Chaffer
c/o IENS, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YW

Elizabeth Huckerby
NWWS, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, IENS, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YW

Mark Leah
Cotswold Archaeological Trust, HQ Building, Unit 9, Kemble Business Park, Cirencester, GL7 6BQ

Paul Stamper
English Heritage, (Gardens and Landscape), 429 Oxford Street, London, W1R 2HD

Colin Wells
NWWS, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, IENS, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YW

Christopher Welch
Development Services Department, Staffordshire County Council, Riverway, Stafford, ST16 3TJ

Roger White
The Wroxeter Hinterland Project, Birmingham University Field Archaeological Unit, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

Abbreviations

CRO	County Record Office
EH	English Heritage
GIS	Geographic Information System
LUAU	Lancaster University Archaeological Unit
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NWWS	North West Wetlands Survey
OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey
PRO	Public Record Office, London
ShRO	Shropshire Record Office
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
StRO	Staffordshire Record Office

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Foreword

The lowland wetlands of Shropshire and Staffordshire are rich, diverse and fragile. Their unique properties of archaeological preservation and environmental sequences provide a crucial resource for charting landscape change and human activity within the region over the last 10,000 years.

This volume describes the archaeological and palaeoecological studies undertaken in and around the wetlands of the two counties during 1994–96 as part of the North West Wetlands Survey. This project was established by English Heritage in 1989 to survey and assess the archaeology and environmental history of north west England, an area from Cumbria in the north to Shropshire and Staffordshire in the south. No comprehensive survey of the wetlands of the two most southern counties of the study area had been carried out before. What work had been undertaken was both piecemeal and site specific. Indeed the archaeological fieldwork detailed here represents the most extensive exercise of its kind ever attempted in the two counties — the project has literally trod new grounds.

The result is an important synthesis and overview of current knowledge, and a major contribution to our understanding of the human exploitation of these wetland areas. New discoveries and research provide some fascinating insights into previously little understood aspects of the wetlands story. In Shropshire for instance, the finding and recording of prehistoric lithic assemblages has provided valuable information on the earliest phases of human activity in and around the wetland fringes. For the more recent past, historical research has been demonstrated the diversity of human activity within wetlands from the Middle Ages onwards and it has documented the important but much neglected subject of their demise and destruction.

None of this could have been achieved without the multi-disciplinary approach of the project. Archaeological, palaeoecological and historical research have all been successfully employed to produce the comprehensive and complementary studies contained within these pages. For this, the authors are to be congratulated for their sterling efforts both in the field and in the researching and writing of the report.

The survey in Shropshire and Staffordshire has proved to be a model of collaboration and partnership. English Heritage, Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, Shropshire County Council and Staffordshire county Council have all combined and contributed their own particular expertise and knowledge. The success of this collaborative venture will be plain to see for all those who read *The Wetlands of Shropshire and Staffordshire*..

Above all the report highlights the fragility and vulnerability of our wetland environments, while at the same time presenting a firm foundation on which to devise a long-term framework for their future investigation and management. In so doing it has issued a challenge to all those involved in the curation and management of the wetland resource of our two counties. If this challenge is met then the publication will have admirably fulfilled its purpose.

Michael Watson
head of Archaeology
Shropshire County Council.