

DUNHAM MASSEY, CHESHIRE **A HISTORY (*REVISED*)**

THREE NOBLE DYNASTIES IN A RURAL TOWNSHIP



A REMARKABLE COURSE OF EVENTS

Edited by Don Bayliss and David Miller

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Edited by Don Bayliss and David Miller

Foreword by Dr. M Nevell

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Frontispiece: Dunham Hall from the air (South Trafford Archaeology Group)

Back page: The Big Tree, Dunham Town (David Martin Groves)

Introduction

This is a second edition of the *Dunham Massey, Cheshire: A History*, first published in 2010. Before Don Bayliss died in April 2017, he wanted our next project to be a reprint of the Dunham Massey book and I have called this edition *Dunham Massey, Cheshire: A Revised History*. Two of the eighteen authors of the book, Don Bayliss and Ron Higginbottom, have passed away since it was published and I must make it clear that their contributory sections of the book have been unchanged in meaning and only corrections to errors have been made. As far as possible other authors have been consulted and have changed their own sections where necessary. Part of the editing process has involved the conversion of chapter-end notes to footnotes.

David Miller, August 2018

Donald Gordon Bayliss (1924-2017)

Don was born in Fallowfield, Manchester and graduated from Manchester University, gaining his doctorate from Leeds University. He lectured in Geography at Carnegie College (now Leeds Beckett University) and then became Head of Geography at John Dalton College (now Manchester Metropolitan University).

Don served with the Royal Navy on a mine sweeper during World War II, ending up in the Far East.

On retiring, Don and his wife Hilda took a keen interest in the town's history and development. He founded Altrincham History Society in 1989 and was the society's first chairman, holding that office for 27 years, later becoming president. He published a dozen books including *Altrincham a History*; *Altrincham in 1841*; *Buildings of Central Altrincham in the Year 2000*; *Historical Atlas of Trafford*; *A Town in Crisis: Altrincham in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*; *Dunham Massey Cheshire, a History*; and *The Changing Landscape of Bowdon, Cheshire*.

Vice-President and former Chairman of Altrincham & Bowdon Civic Society and a member of the South Trafford Archaeological Group, Don was involved in the development of the town, making an outstanding contribution to the well being and advancement of Altrincham in his work for the Civic Society and other organisations.

Don and Hilda were awarded a joint Honour by the British Association for Local History for their work in Local History in June 2007. Don Bayliss died on 26 April 2017 aged 92.

David Miller, May 2017



CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS.....	5
PREFACE.....	10
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	11
Chapter 2. Landscapes and Archaeology to Roman Times.....	24
Chapter 3. From Roman Times to Domesday.....	35
Chapter 4. The First Dynasty: The de Mascy Barony.....	48
Chapter 5. Life in Dunham Massey in the Later Middle Ages.....	63
Chapter 6. The Second Dynasty: The Booth Family, the Earls of Warrington.....	69
Chapter 7. The Third Dynasty: The Grey Family, the Earls of Stamford.....	78
Chapter 8. The Manorial Courts of Dunham Massey.....	89
Chapter 9. Dunham Hall.....	96
Chapter 10. Farming and Other Rural Land Use.....	108
Chapter 11. Farms in Dunham Massey.....	124
Chapter 12. Housing in Dunham Massey from 1700.....	135
Chapter 13. Life in Dunham Massey 1600 - 1760.....	146
Chapter 14. The Duke and his Canal; The Countess and her Land.....	154
Chapter 15. Dunham Massey at Work.....	163
Chapter 16. Transport In Dunham Massey.....	173
Chapter 17. Public Utilities.....	186
Chapter 18. Some Personalities of Dunham Massey.....	193
Chapter 19. Churches, Chapels, Schools & Colleges.....	199
Chapter 20. Dunham at War.....	209
Chapter 21. The End of the Third Dynasty and the Beginning of the Fourth.....	214
CONTRIBUTORS.....	228
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	231
INDEX.....	233

ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover illustration - aerial photograph of Dunham Hall taken in 1996 by Barri Jones, late Professor of Archaeology, University of Manchester, kindly loaned by Pat Faulkner of the South Trafford Archaeology Group.

Chapter and figure number

- 1.1 *Location of Dunham Massey in Cheshire*
- 1.2 *Dunham Massey township*
- 1.3 *Map of the village of Dunham Town in 1950*
- 1.4 *Modern view of Dunham Town*
- 1.5 *Map of the hamlet of Dunham Woodhouses in 1950*
- 1.6 *Modern view of Dunham Woodhouses*
- 1.7 *Map of the 'urban' hamlet of Oldfield Brow in 1920*
- 1.8 *Modern view of Oldfield Brow*
- 1.9 *Map of the hamlet of Sinderland Green in 1950*
- 1.10 *Modern view of Sinderland Green*
- 1.11 *The boundary made by the (straightened) Sinderland Brook*
- 1.12 *Near the north-east corner leading on to Carrington Moss*
- 1.13 *The western boundary*
- 1.14 *A view of fashionable Victorian villas formerly in eastern Dunham Massey*
- 1.15 *The River Bollin*
- 1.16 *Dunham Hall in the twentieth century*
- 1.17 *Census details for Dunham Massey*

- 2.1 *Solid geology sketch map*
- 2.2 *Hypothetical cross-section through Dunham during the last advance of ice*
- 2.3 *Drift geology*
- 2.4 *Pollen column from Warburton Moss*
- 2.5 *Single-rivet Bronze Age dagger*

- 3.1 *Place-names in Trafford*
- 3.2 *Imaginative reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon palisaded site*
- 3.3 *Details from Domesday Book (1086)*
- 3.4 *The area of the Avranchin round Macey, Normandy*

- 4.1a *Arms of the de Mascys*
- 4.1b *The de Mascy seal*
- 4.2 *Impression of an effigy*
- 4.3 *Impression of Dunham Castle as a motte-and-bailey*
- 4.4 *A possible de Mascy line*
- 4.5 *Birkenhead Priory*
- 4.6 *Map of the de Mascy holdings in Cheshire, Lancashire and North Wales*

- 6.1 *The link between the de Mascys and the Booths*
- 6.2 *The coat of arms of Booth, Earl of Warrington*
- 6.3 *'Old' Sir George Booth*
- 6.4 *Sir George Booth, the first Lord Delamer*
- 6.5 *George Booth, the second Earl of Warrington*

- 7.1 *The coat of arms of the Greys, Earls of Stamford and Warrington*
- 7.2 *The Fifth Earl of Stamford*
- 7.3 *The Sixth Earl of Stamford*
- 7.4 *George Harry Grey, the Seventh Earl of Stamford*
- 7.5a *Poster advertising Sports Day, 1848*
- 7.5b *Harry Grey, the Eighth Earl of Stamford*
- 7.6 *William Grey, the Ninth Earl of Stamford*
- 7.7 *Roger Grey, the Tenth Earl of Stamford*
- 7.8 *Dunham Hall as a hospital in World War I*

- 8.1 *Extract from a Dunham court roll of 1401/2*

- 9.1 *Possible remains of a motte*
- 9.2 *Original entrance of the hall facing south*
- 9.3 *South prospect of the hall*
- 9.4 *Building plan sketch outline*
- 9.5 *The east front with bowed windows*
- 9.6 *The north front and staircase*
- 9.7 *The front portico*
- 9.8 *The kitchen courtyard*
- 9.9 *The west front*

- 10.1 *Ploughing in the mid-14th century*
- 10.2 *Part of Burdett's map of Cheshire 1777*
- 10.3 *The Tudor house completed in Jacobean times*
- 10.4 *Dunham Hall and park in 1750*
- 10.5 *Part of the tithe map of 1839*
- 10.6 *Dunham Great Park, 1961*
- 10.7 *Mechanised farming in the early 20th century*

- 11.1 *Brookheyes Farm*
- 11.2 *Map of Brookheyes Farm 1897 showing farm buildings*
- 11.3 *Cast-iron marker on the south side of the former railway line*
- 11.4 *Dovecote and yard at Home Farm*
- 11.5 *Pedigree Dairy Shorthorns*
- 11.6 *Home Farm crops in 2008*
- 11.7 *Bollington Hall Farm buildings*
- 11.8 *Bollington Hall Farm OS map, 2008*
- 11.9 *Part of Kenneth Owen's Day Book from 1932*
- 11.10 *A panoramic view of Dairyhouse Farm in 2008*
- 11.11 *Little Heath Farm and the canal, 1910*
- 11.12 *Redhouse Farm*
- 11.13 *Map of Redhouse Farm*
- 11.14 *Sinderland House Farm*
- 11.15 *Sinderland House Farm fields in 1898*
- 11.16 *Stamford Farm*
- 11.17 *Stamford Farm on the 1910 OS map*

- 12.1 *Hope Cottage and Big Tree Cottages*
- 12.2 *Park Cottage and Dog Farm*

- 12.3 *Manor Farm, Dunham Woodhouses*
- 12.4 *Beech Grove of 1837, one of the earliest villas*
- 12.5 *Woodleigh, one of the mansions, 1873*
- 12.6 *Map of part of the mansions area*
- 12.7 *Victorian terrace property on Sinderland Road*
- 12.8a,b *Maps of Oldfield Brow in 1910 and the 1920s*
- 12.9 *Council property on Taylor Road, Oldfield Brow*
- 12.10 *Council property on Craven Road, Sinderland, Broadheath*
- 12.11 *A small row of private housing on Paddock Lane, 1929*
- 12.12 *Council property at Dunham Woodhouses, 1936*
- 12.13 *Private housing on De Quincy Road, 1952*
- 12.14 *Houses on Woodcote Road, 1964*
- 12.15 *Post-Second World War private housing on Hill Rise, 1978*
- 12.16 *Broadheath Retail Park*
- 12.17 *Property site recycling: Woodend Nursing and Residential Home, 1994*
- 12.18 *The latest housing built in Dunham Town, 1995*
- 12.19 *National Trust housing, 2003 onwards*

- 14.1 *The Duke of Bridgewater*
- 14.2 *Mary, Countess of Stamford*

- 15.1 *Part of Dunham Woodhouses tithe map, 1839*
- 15.2 *Holt Brothers, brickyard workers*
- 15.3 *Some of the main firms in Broadheath in 1960*
- 15.4 *The main Linotype building*
- 15.5 *Budenberg Haus Projekte, the 1833 warehouse and the Bridgewater Canal*
- 15.6 *A pre-World War I Kearns boring machine being restored in Australia*
- 15.7 *George Richards' application for membership of The Institution of Mechanical Engineers, 1882*
- 15.8 *Curtis Sparkes*
- 15.9 *Dunham Massey Brewery*

- 16.1 *The Dunham Massey railway system*
- 16.2 *Station House, Dunham Woodhouses*
- 16.3 *Train with coal from Lancashire pits*
- 16.4 *Bananas for Yorkshire*
- 16.5 *Excursion train from the west coast*
- 16.6 *A Sentinel-Cammell steam railcar at Skelton Junction*
- 16.7 *The vandalised railway line across northern Dunham Massey*
- 16.8 *An engined barge loaded with coal pulling a butty boat*
- 16.9 *Little Heath wharf and bridge*
- 16.10 *Canal wharf above the Woodhouse Lane aqueduct*
- 16.11 *The wharf at the Bay Malton*
- 16.12 *Cattle passage under the canal at Little Bollington aqueduct*
- 16.13 *Roads in Dunham Massey*
- 16.14 *Negotiating the 'Big Tree'*
- 16.15 *Barns Lane, Dunham Woodhouses*
- 16.16 *SSG642 scaling the canal bridge on Back Lane*
- 16.17 *Special bus to pass under Woodhouse Lane aqueduct*

- 17.1 *Dunham Woodhouses sewage farm*
- 17.2 *Blue plaque commemorating the first gasworks in Altrincham*
- 17.3 *A substation replaced the Broadheath power station in 1955*
- 17.4 *The original Altrincham telephone exchange*
- 17.5 *Dunham Massey crematorium*

- 18.1 *John Ireland*
- 18.2 *Juliana Horatia Ewing*
- 18.3 *Edith le Breton*
- 18.4 *Rev. Hewlett Johnson*
- 18.5 *Mrs Esmé Duckworth*

- 19.1 *St Mark's Church*
- 19.2 *St Margaret's Church*
- 19.3 *Possible Quaker Meeting House*
- 19.4 *Bowdon Downs Congregational Church*
- 19.5 *Trinity United Reformed Church*
- 19.6 *Dunham Woodhouses Primitive Methodist Chapel*
- 19.7 *Sinderland Green Wesleyan Methodist Chapel*
- 19.8 *St Alban's Church*
- 19.9 *The Church on the Brow*
- 19.10 *St John's Mission Room*
- 19.11 *The 1759 Little Heath School*
- 19.12 *A class at Little Heath School in 1939*
- 19.13 *Oldfield House*
- 19.14 *Former Seamon's Moss School*
- 19.15 *Captain Scott's sketch*
- 19.16 *A class at Seamon's Moss in the 1920s*
- 19.17 *Altrincham Girls' Grammar School*
- 19.18 *Oldfield Brow Primary School*
- 19.19 *Class of children at Oldfield Brow Primary School in 1935*
- 19.20 *St Alban's School*
- 19.21 *Broadheath Primary School*
- 19.22 *South Trafford College*

- 20.1 *Site of the depot near Dairyhouse Farm*
- 20.2 *The five-bayed building*
- 20.3 *Type 24 pillbox at Higher House Farm*
- 20.4 *The prisoner-of-war camp in Dunham New Park*
- 20.5 *A wooden hut in Dunham New Park*
- 20.6 *The reservoir from the air*
- 20.7 *A Bavarian castle model made by German POWs*
- 20.8 *St Mark's War Memorial*
- 20.9 *Altrincham and Dunham Massey War Memorial*

- 21.1 *The return of the ninth Earl and Countess of Stamford from Enville in 1906*
- 21.2 *The Countess of Stamford*
- 21.3 *Altrincham's plan to absorb the whole of Dunham Massey in 1919*
- 21.4 *Map of the historic township showing the loss of 600 acres of land to Altrincham in 1920*

- 21.5 *The Oldfield Brow estate*
- 21.6 *Dunham Thespians in 'Scrap of Paper', 1936*
- 21.7 *The additional loss of land given to Altrincham in 1936*
- 21.8 *The tenth and last Earl of Stamford relinquishes his hold on the mayoralty of the Urban District of Altrincham in 1936 and becomes the first mayor of the chartered Municipal Borough of Altrincham in 1937*
- 21.9 *The small administrative units which made up the south part of Trafford Metropolitan Borough in 1974*
- 21.10 *Ward boundaries in 2001*

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Don Bayliss (DB), Hilda Bayliss (HB), Ron Bragg (RB), Michael Davies (MD), David Eastwood (DE), Chris Hill (CH), Pat Faulkner (PF), Colin Graham (CG), David Groves (DG), Jill Groves (JG), Chris Hill (CH), David Miller (DM), Maureen Mulholland (MM), Mike Nevell (MN), Sue Nichols (SN), Derek Pierce (DP), Hazel Pryor (HP), Doug Rendell (DR), National Trust (NT), Ordnance Survey (OS), John Rylands Library (JRL), Trafford Local Studies (TLS), Altrincham Area Image Archive (AAIA). For a few illustrations the names of donors are not abbreviated.

PREFACE

This book is about a small place in northern Cheshire, Dunham Massey near Manchester, which has had an intriguing history out of all proportion to its size. It was the base for three noble dynasties, each lasting about 300 years from the time of the Norman invasion to the 20th century, each of which possessed large estates. There have been pictorial histories of this place before but this is the first mainly historical account of its development, although this work too is well-illustrated.

Its history included a period when it was the centre of a medieval barony and subsequently two periods when it was occupied by earldoms and experienced all sorts of events - murderous wars, imprisonment in the Tower of London and an earl marrying a circus bare-backed rider. The dynasties were based first in a castle, later in a series of halls on the site. The last hall and its grounds are now Dunham Hall in the safe-keeping of the National Trust and one of the most popular visitors' venues in the region.

The book has twenty-one chapters divided into three sections. The first part provides an overview of its history; the second covers a number of thematic subjects such as the history of farming or housing; and the third and final part discusses some of the radical changes during the 20th and 21st centuries. The book is a series of contributions mainly by members of two societies local to the area: Altrincham History Society and the South Trafford Archaeological Group, with some contributions from other experts in their particular fields. Most of the contributors have published books or articles in journals. Much research has been carried out for this volume and I am sure every reader will find the book readable as well as informative.

Dr Michael Nevell, FSA, MIFA, University of Salford, September, 2009

Chapter 1. Introduction

Don Bayliss and David Miller

About this book

This book is a collection of essays about Dunham Massey, a small rural area in north Cheshire, *Fig. 1.1*, which happens to be extremely rich in history. The outcome is the story of a once very important place which later suffered a devastating series of experiences which led to a serious change in its fortunes. Some such as losses of land were due to external local authorities which coveted it, others were through the actions of certain residents, particularly the chief landlords. The book is by a number of authors who have a special interest in themes which they explore and are members of Altrincham History Society and South Trafford Archaeological Group, and a few others who are, or were, attached to universities or colleges. It was realised it would not be easy to obtain a sense of uniformity in style and number of illustrations in each chapter and readers will find variations from essay to essay and for this we hope for forbearance.

References in the text show in brackets the names of the author of the source mentioned and the page number in the source from where the information came. The title of the source can be found at the end of each chapter. The illustrations are indicated by the number of the chapter followed by the number of the illustration, e.g. the first illustration in Chapter 1 is *Fig. 1.1*. Credits to donors of illustrations are indicated by initials; details of donors can be found in the Acknowledgments at the end of the book. Most measurements are in standard English, metric or occasionally ancient Cheshire measure, 2.1 statute. Superscript numbers refer to footnotes.

About the district covered by the township

Dunham Massey is a mixed farming and residential district administratively in Trafford Metropolitan Borough in Greater Manchester since 1974 but historically it was a township central to a landed estate in Cheshire, about eight miles south-west of Manchester and next to the market town of

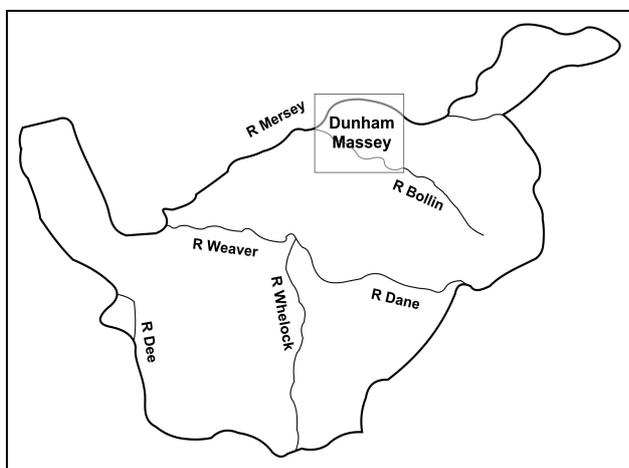


Fig. 1.1 Location of Dunham Massey in Cheshire

Altrincham. For the last two-and-a-half centuries, with other properties in east Cheshire and Lancashire, it was one of four estates belonging to the Grey family, Earls of Stamford (in Lincolnshire), the other estates being in Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire. Its core was Dunham Massey Hall, now a popular National Trust place. This book describes the history of the township of Dunham Massey, originally called 'Dunham'. 'Massey' was from 'Maci' the name of a baronial family who owned the place in medieval times.

A township is defined as a division of a parish which is, or was, a local administration unit. In the early 19th century, Dunham Massey was part of Bowdon ecclesiastical parish, later a civil parish

with a Rural District Council, a member of Bucklow Rural District Council under Cheshire County Council. Following local government reorganisation in 1974, it became a Minor Local Authority within Trafford MBC.

There is a central place in the township, Dunham Town, which belies its name 'Town,' because it is only a small village with a church, a village hall and shop-post office. There are three hamlets, Dunham Woodhouses in the west, Sinderland Green in the north and Oldfield Brow in the east; these four settlements, once wholly farming places, are all becoming more residential, Oldfield

completely so. Oldfield was built up ninety years ago with hundreds of council houses, has a shopping centre and is really an urban or perhaps 'rurban' village. The lozenge-shaped township of Dunham Massey of 3,470 acres, *Fig. 1.2*, was for centuries, one of several townships in the large parish of the Church of St Mary's, Bowdon which is an ancient church in an adjacent township to the east. As the population grew from the mid-19th century, an additional church was built in the east of Dunham Massey township, St Margaret's in 1855, and in 1866 another church, St Mark's, was built in the central village of Dunham Town. The south-east of the township was served by St John's, 1870, and the last to be built was St Alban's church and parish in West Timperley (in the north-east of Dunham Massey) in 1911. To complete the distribution of religious edifices, Methodist and other chapels were built at Dunham Woodhouses, Sinderland Green and in eastern Dunham Massey, now part of Altrincham.

From the mid-19th century a large part of the eastern centre of the township saw the erection of over 70 huge and imposing mansions with large grounds north and west from *d* in the parish of St Margaret's Church (*Fig. 1.2*) Additionally Dunham possessed part of one of the most well-known heavy- engineering areas in Britain for a century from 1880 called Broadheath, noted the world over for making machine tools, in particular drilling and with associated industries, employing at its peak 10,000 skilled personnel. The creation of Broadheath was based on good transport facilities of road, canal and rail. It is located on the map east of Lower Houses where the canal and southern railway enter the township from the east through some block-shaped buildings. Associated housing was built round it, first late-Victorian and Edwardian terraces then local authority estates at Oldfield Brow and at Sinderland. There has been some 20th century building of private property in the extreme north-east corner in West Timperley, an area of Edwardian and later housing for workers commuting to nearby towns; the area also has some industry and the district's technical college. A major development has been the building of several hundred residences in the Sinderland area by the National Trust in the first decade of the 21st century.

A prominent landscape feature is the Bridgewater Canal which passes through Dunham Massey on its way from Worsley in north-west Salford via Manchester, Stretford and Altrincham to Runcorn in west Cheshire near the mouth of the river Mersey. For part of its journey across Dunham Massey it travels along a high and impressive curving embankment. Once important for carrying coal and other cargoes, it is now used mainly for pleasure boating. Two railways formed straight avenues striking across the landscape but are no longer used for their original purpose: the southern one is now a footpath, linking up with other footpaths and the canal tow path to make part of the Trans-Pennine Trail (for walkers); the northern line is vandalized and derelict. The minor roads of Dunham are notorious for their bends. The only straight road is the A56, which is believed to follow the line of a former Roman road from Chester to Manchester, locally called Watling Street.

Thirty medium-sized farms with their farmsteads and fields make a very attractive rural landscape. Half of these farms are now not working but are just residential. Those which still work carry mixed farming or specialise in dairy products. The latter industry has dominant for a long time with the demand from Altrincham town, Bowdon and Hale residential areas to hand, and Manchester only a few miles away.

Fortunately for farming, Dunham Massey is mainly low-lying country between 13 metres (approx.42 feet) above sea level (a.s.l.) in the south-west and north-west but rising to 68 metres (211 feet) a.s.l. in the north-east on the road to Altrincham. The highest land is mainly parkland, wooded, or built over, the lowest tends to be farmland. The soils of the area were light and some areas were not well-drained resulting in the past in the existence of several wetlands or bogs called 'mosses' such as Carrington Moss in *Fig. 1.2* and Sinderland Moss in the north (north-east of Sinderland Green) which had to be drained before the land could be farmed, and there were other small mosses farther south.

The main stream, the River Bollin, in the south flows from south-east to north-west. It formerly meandered across its mile-wide valley and eroded its terraced banks but has been contained

between man-made flood-resistant embankments resulting today in cultivable land on each side. There are brooks - in the north, Sinderland Brook flows from east to west; south of it a smaller brook the Caldwell Brook also runs in the same direction and then north to join Sinderland Brook before flowing into Warburton, the next township, and, like the Bollin, eventually into the Mersey. Two smaller brooks also flow across central Dunham. The larger streams have fertile floodplains.

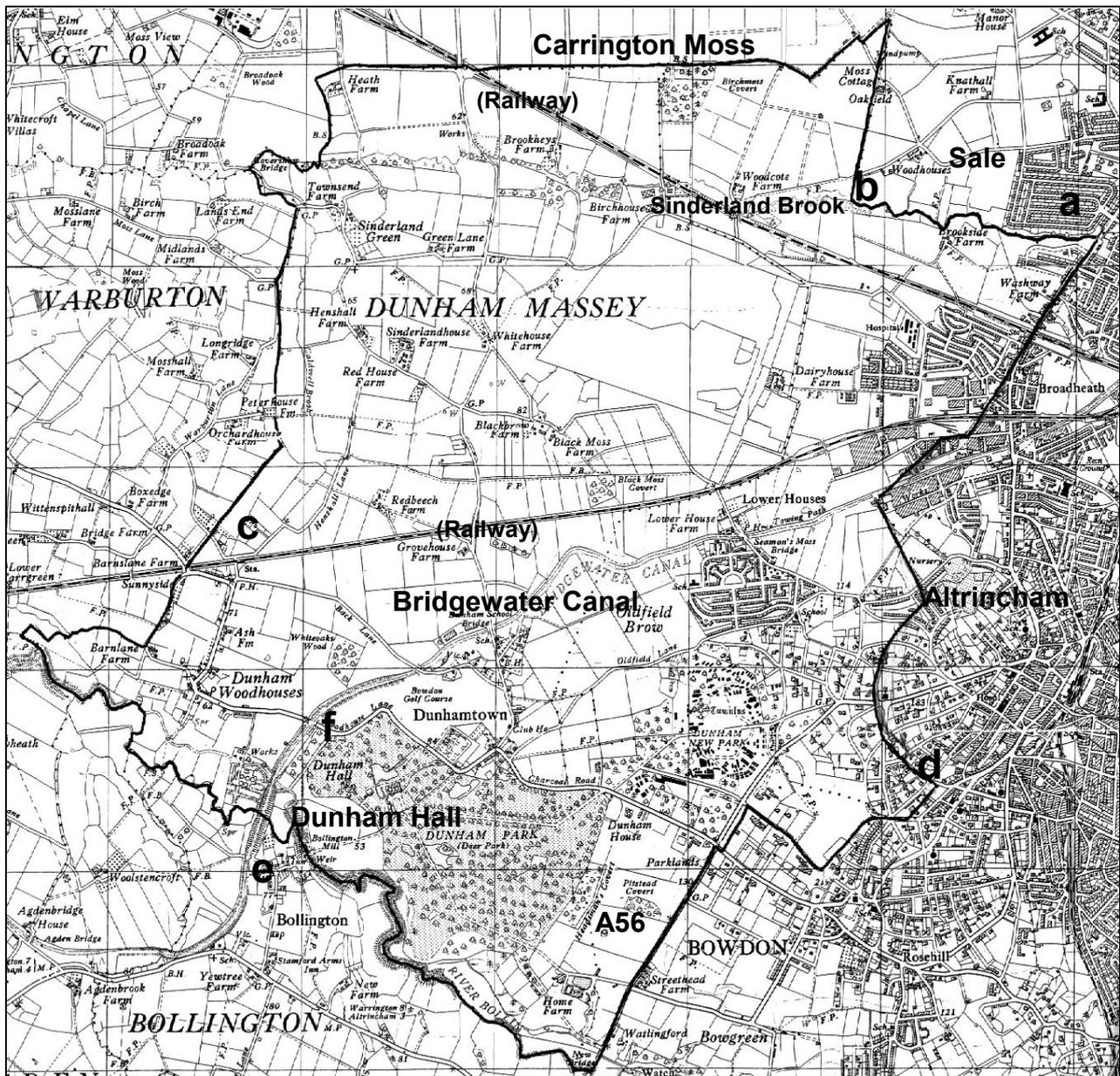


Fig. 1.2 Dunham Massey township from mid-20th century Ordnance Survey 1:25000 maps (reduced). The boundary is shown by the thick black line, **f** is Dunham Hall. Other points will be referred to in a section on Boundaries¹.

¹ The southern boundary, the river Bollin was constant from ancient times and the western from the 15th century, the northern, across a bogland, was stabilized in the 19th century. The eastern boundary with Bowdon township was variable, probably first using the line of the Roman road, locally called Watling Street. The boundary shown on Fig 1.2 was taken from Ordnance Survey 1:25000 maps of the 1950s and shows the outline of the 'civil parish' created in the late-19th century, an area administered by a parish council, part of Bucklow Rural District Council until 1974 but believed to be representative of the area of the township before 1920. For as much consistency as possible, the pre-1920 area outlined in Fig 1.2 will be considered as Dunham Massey township throughout the book except at the end when reference is made to modern times.

The many fields show the district is rural. An important focus is Dunham Hall shown at *f* in *Fig. 1.2*, and in *Fig. 1.16* below.

Dunham lost a thousand acres to its larger neighbour Altrincham in 1920 and 1936 by acts of parliament, which included not only part of Broadheath but also Oldfield and West Timperley in the north-east, and parts of the township in the south-east, to increase the area of Altrincham to give that place room to build houses, eventually to become a Municipal Borough Council in 1937. Dunham as a civil parish was reduced in size by a third and this unit became part of Trafford Metropolitan Borough, part of Manchester Metropolitan County in 1974.

The site of Dunham Hall, the historic administrative focus of the township and estate was first used, judging from the meaning of place-names, by the Celts (interpreting a river name) and Anglo-Saxons. Subsequently it was the base of three noble dynasties, first the barons de Macis (Mascys or Masseys) after the Norman invasion until the 14th century, second by the Booth family, Earls of Warrington to the 18th century, and third by the Grey family, the Earls of Stamford. There has been a castle or hall on this site for over a thousand years. On the death of the 10th and last earl in 1976, the estate passed to the National Trust which has allowed the hall and park to receive thousands of visitors each year.

For consistency this book will consider, as far as reasonably possible, events which happened in the *historic* township,² the area shown outlined in *Fig. 1.2*.

About the village and hamlets

Dunham Town

This small village is the largest nucleated settlement in Dunham Massey and is situated at the gates of Dunham Hall. The place may have been more important in the middle ages when the hall (or castle) resounded to the noise of military feet but in recent decades it has remained quiescent with a few farms and is mainly residential, its 1920s village hall being the centre of the community. Dunham Town has a 19th century parish church and a population of a few hundred. It has a few farms, many cottages and a few recent fine private houses. In medieval times there were no scattered farms but it had a single large communally-farmed open field of unenclosed strips farmed from cottages in the village. In the 17th and 18th centuries the strips were enclosed and farms created, and several farmsteads were built in the village. By the 20th century it was, like the original hamlets of the district, a straggling place which on the continent would be called a *strassendorf* or 'street village'. Its nucleus was round the road T-junction by the huge lime tree or 'Big Tree', *Fig. 1.4*, and it is likely the settlement originated here before expanding along the road north towards the canal.

There are three farms – Big Tree Farm, Dog Farm and, farther out, Little Heath Farm which was built when its environs were improved from heath. There was a Quaker cemetery near Dog Farm. Close to the entrance to Dunham Hall there is a large walled garden, now mainly for flowers, earlier for vegetables for the hall. A chapel in a field behind Dog Farm for the Quakers was used as an observer's post in the Second World War. The parish church of 1866, St Mark's, is situated at a road fork off School Lane with a graveyard opposite. Near the canal is the Axe and Cleaver pub and a school of the 1700s, built by money from the will of a saltmaster at Dunham Woodhouses, less than a mile to the west. There was formerly a wharf on the canal here, the land of which now contains the village hall, formerly the 18th century school, and a car park. Two warehouses (shown shaded) in *Fig. 1.3* by the canal have been replaced by recent housing. From the mid-19th century the place was in reach of a railway line from Warrington to Stockport by

² The word 'township' means a relatively small area of human habitation which was, in northern England, frequently part of a large ecclesiastical parish (Freeman, 59). It may have its own administration and clear boundaries and character. The word has no connection with the word 'town' though some townships, or parts of them became urban in character over time.

Lymm and had a station but the line was axed by Dr Beeching in the 1960s. There are no garage services.

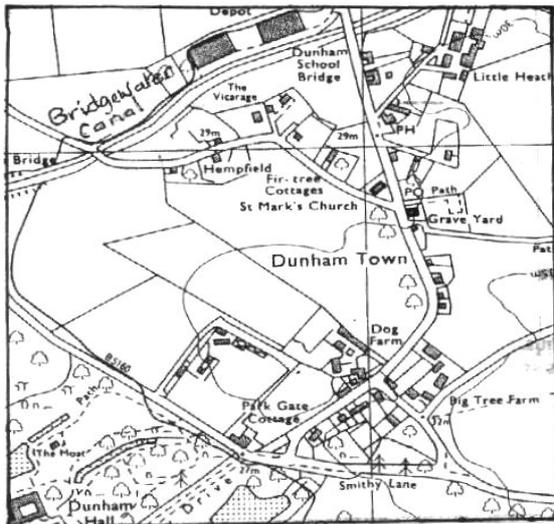


Fig. 1.3 Map of the village of Dunham Town in 1950 (OS)



Fig. 1.4 Dunham Town today (DB).

Dunham Woodhouses

This hamlet, lying on the boundary with Warburton village to the west, may have had a later origin than Dunham Town above. Its name may signify there was an ancient woodland here. There are not enough remains of an open field strip field system to identify one here but several small patch-shaped fields, the names of which signify some post-medieval cultivation. Today there is a handful of farms, some former salt workers' cottages, local authority houses and 1920s private homes. It is noted for two severe road turnings, one on the road from Altrincham westwards to Warburton and the other a skew bridge across a railway over the now defunct railway which served the place with a station. The line of the railway has been made is part of the Trans-Pennine Trail. Today, like Dunham Town the hamlet is served by bus services from Warrington to Altrincham and there are no garage facilities.

The hamlet lies at the south-east corner of a distinctive rectangle of roads. The western road in the rectangle was a straight part of the boundary of Dunham with Warburton, the next village to the west. The focus of the hamlet is a cluster of houses at a minor junction of two roads and two lanes. The hamlet may have housed not only some farmers but also workers in the small late-medieval salt-making industry, processing brine from springs in the Bollin valley 300 metres away to the south, the enterprise ending in the 18th century. There were three farms along the road north from the centre of the crossroad hamlet. One, now called Manor Farm, was the home of a former salt master, Thomas Walton, whose money was used for the small school in Dunham Town. A later celebrity who lived here was Tilghman, the American founder of the large sandblasting firm at Broadheath, the industrial area in the north-east of Dunham Massey in the early 20th century. A field nearby was the Matchfield where contests of all varieties took place from football to wrestling.

Three farms on the top left of the map lie north of the railway in Warburton and one is in Dunham, significantly named Boundary Farm. The houses on Paddock Lane were built in 1929 on the northern limb of the rectangle of roads in Fig 1.5 below and were private detached and semis. The Bucklow Rural District Council and the last Earl of Stamford built a number of council houses for less well-off people on Station Road and Woodhouse Lane.

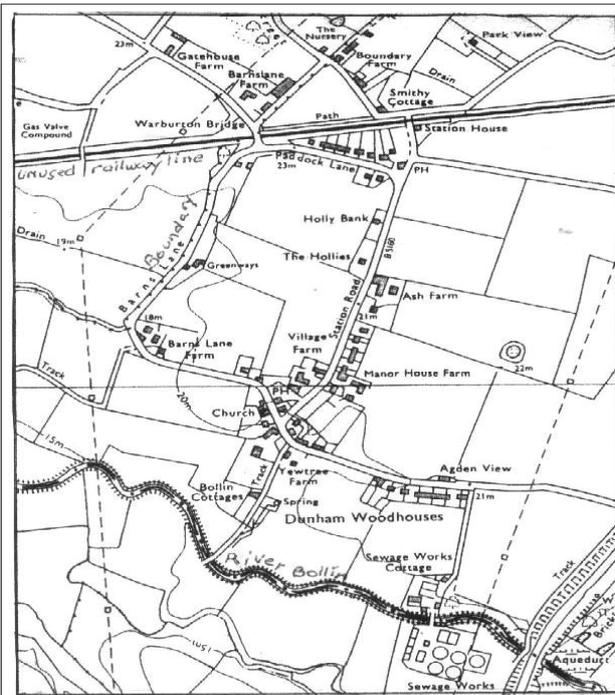


Fig. 1.5 Map of the hamlet of Dunham Woodhouses in 1950 (OS)



Fig. 1.6 Modern view of Dunham Woodhouses (DB).

Oldfield Brow

By the turn of the 19th century, Oldfield was a small farming hamlet north-east of Dunham Town with a farm focus. In historic times it had a single open field of strips adjacent to that of Dunham Town and was mentioned in documents of the middle ages. It lay on a north-facing slope (the 'brow') with a linear group of cottages, Oakwood Farm and a small school near Two Gates, an important local road junction in early times. The houses and cottages had vegetable gardens and orchards and a map shows there was a pheasantry there. Several mansions were built in the south of the area in the last quarter of the 19th century after which the place was radically altered by the building of a huge council estate of several hundred houses in 1920s, making it 'urban' in character. From that time the place became part of the neighbouring town of Altrincham. Other council housing was built in the district of Sinderland to the east.

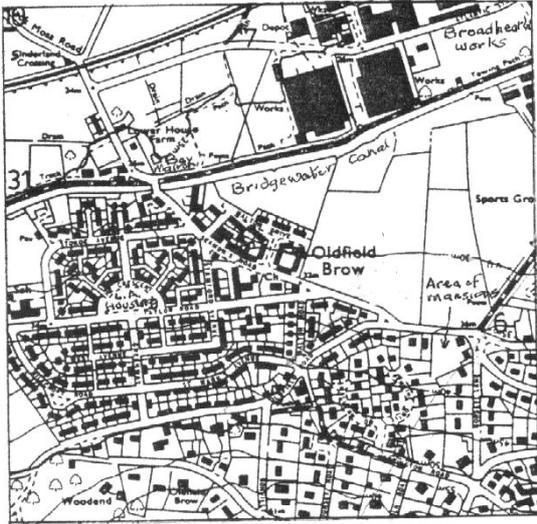


Fig. 1.7 Map of the hamlet of Oldfield Brow after 1920 (OS)



Fig. 1.8 Modern view of Oldfield Brow (DB).

Sinderland Green

This small hamlet is a street-settlement of three farms and a few scattered cottages, lying along a lane in the north of the township. The place has a very long history. Its place name 'Green' possibly means it was an area connected with animals, perhaps for droving to distant markets. In early times each household had a small enclosed croft and an allocation called a 'tenement' of a few strips in the hamlet's single open field. Eventually the strips were hedged and enclosed into ring-fenced farms. Townsend Farm probably means 'the end of the 'tun' (Anglo-Saxon for 'farmstead(s)', not 'town'). To the south there was a bog or 'mossland' called Sinderland Moss. When this was drained about 1800, five new tenements of a few acres each were created and with other existing plots later made a new ring-fenced farm Sinderland House Farm and this was equipped with one of the new brick-built farmsteads of the period. There were some other cottages and farms in the hamlet and a few other farms farther out such as Henshall Farm and Redhouse Farm (not shown) but the group was not nucleated in any way. Redhouse Farm, built about 1750 is situated adjacent to Sinderland House Farm on the same small terrace which is interesting as one might expect farmsteads to be separated one from another. The scattered hamlet acquired a Methodist chapel and the district's first sewage works in the 1860's. Most recently, and near the housing district of West Timperley to the north-east, 600 hundred new houses are being built by the National Trust.

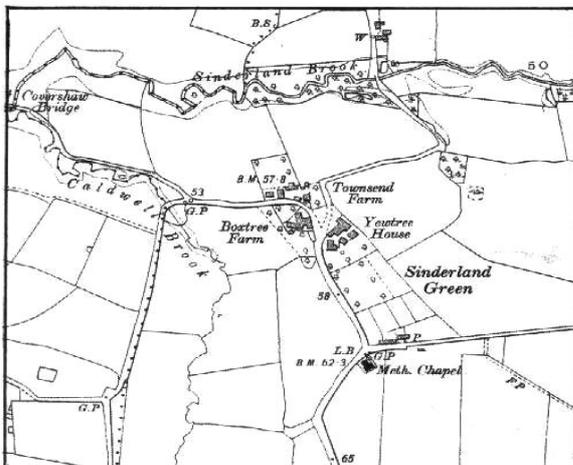


Fig. 1.9 Map of the hamlet of Sinderland Green in 1950 (OS)



Fig. 1.10 Modern view of Sinderland Green (DB).

The large industrial area in the main eastern area of Sinderland in north-east Dunham at Broadheath, specialised in machine-tool heavy engineering from the late-19th century. The growth of this area eventually employing ten thousand men, led to the building of several housing areas around Broadheath and along the main Manchester to Altrincham road at West Timperley. The area was served by a railway until the cuts of the 1960s. Several works closed down after the Second World War due to lack of orders and have been replaced by smaller-type industrial and commercial firms. One works was replaced by a large retail park supplying DIY goods.

About the boundaries of Dunham Massey

(Points **a-f** on the map Fig. 1.2 and Figs 1.11-1.15)

In the distant past, inhabitants of many townships depended for food on what could be gleaned within the township boundaries and had to protect their land from encroachment by neighbours. Boundaries were periodically 'beaten' to identify a township's limits. Dunham's interesting boundaries, outlined in the map Fig. 1.2, can be described moving anti-clockwise from the north-eastern corner of the township where the A56 crossed Sinderland Brook in West Timperley on the road from Chester to Manchester. From here there was a short stretch west along the brook from point **a** on the map, shown on photograph Fig. 1.11. The boundary then turned north up a path at point **b** across part of the former wetland, Carrington Moss, photo Fig. 1.12 and after half a mile turned west across the mossland. Once this area was shared in common by the inhabitants of surrounding places for grazing, cutting peat, fishing and fowling and is now partly farm land, part woodland, and also down to other uses such as a site for Altrincham Sewage Works, horse riding and a practice ground for Manchester United Football Club. The boundary between Dunham and Carrington to the north was artificial created by a straight line drawn across a map some time before the tithe map was drawn.

From the north-western corner of Dunham Massey, the boundary between Dunham and its western neighbour Warburton township ran fairly straight from north to south, passing by point **c** on the map, Fig. 1.2 shown in photograph Fig. 1.13 past the hamlet of Sinderland Green through farmland to Dunham Woodhouses. It was never a satisfactory boundary until designated by a late-medieval man-made ditch and bank about ten yards wide following litigation between the de Duttons, lords of Warburton, and the de Mascys, lords of Dunham, in the fifteenth century.

Fig. 1.11 The boundary made by the (straightened) Sinderland Brook at a north-east point, looking west, after leaving the A56 (Watling Street). Sale township lies to the right (north), Dunham Massey to the left (south). The road bridge from where the photo was taken was rebuilt in 1765 to raise the quality and status of the Manchester road to a turnpike to compete in trade with the Bridgewater Canal which was built in the same year and which runs parallel to the Manchester Road, half a mile to the east (off the map Fig. 1.2) (DB).

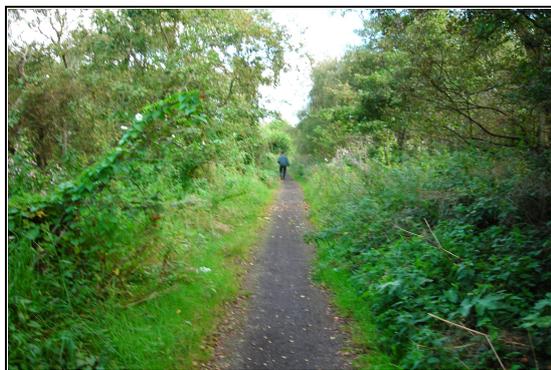


Fig 1.12 Near the north-east corner of Dunham Massey leading north on to Carrington Moss. The bridle path is now part of the Trans-Pennine Trail. Carrington Moss is thickly wooded in parts with a few improved cornfields, market gardens and other uses such as for Altrincham Sewage Works (in trees on the left) which actually lies in Dunham Massey. The township of Sale lies to the right. In the distance the boundary turns left (west) to cross the Moss passing by Manchester United Football Club's practice ground (DB).

Fig. 1.13 The western boundary near point c on Fig. 1.2 looking south between Warburton (to the right) and Dunham Massey (to the left) is a rather unclear bank and ditch on the right of the picture. It was created in the fifteenth century after disputes between the de Duttons of Warburton and the de Mascys of Dunham. The building ahead is called Boundary Farm (DB).

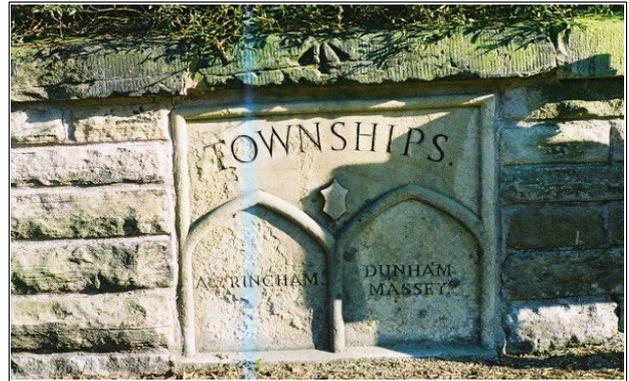
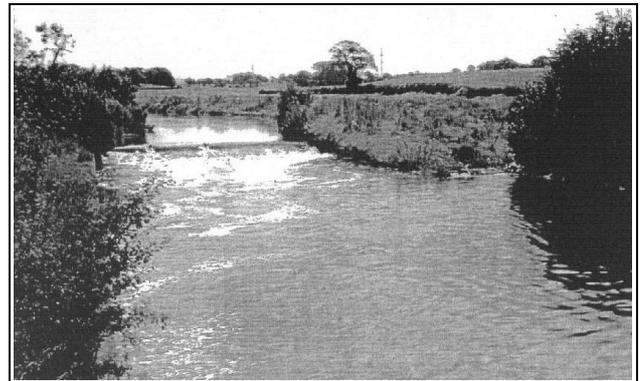


Fig. 1.14) A row of fashionable Victorian villas formerly in eastern Dunham Massey, now in Altrincham due to boundary changes (DB). One of the houses has an old boundary stone in its front garden wall (DM).

Fig. 1.15 The River Bollin was a good southern boundary for the township. Looking south-east from a bridge at Bollington Mill near point e on Fig. 1.2 close to Dunham Hall. A leet ran from the weir in the background to work the mill at a bridge over the Bollin (DA Cardin).



There was a clear natural, southern riverine boundary between Dunham and Little Bollington, a township which lies to the south across the River Bollin, which flows north-westwards from the Pennine foothills past point e in Fig. 1.2 to join the river Mersey. However, over time the river Bollin has meandered from the course it had when it was perhaps first used as its boundary (perhaps in the eighth century) and the boundary was never adjusted, so there are now some minor differences in course between the river and the township boundary (see the Dunham Tithe map). The township's ancient eastern boundary was probably the line of Roman Watling Street until altered perhaps in the thirteenth century when Altrincham was created a borough by one of the early barons de Mascy. The date of the curvature in the middle may also reflect a change in parish boundaries when the seventh Lord Stamford of Dunham created a new parish in the middle part of the eastern stretch d, (Fig. 1.2) for his new church, St Margaret's of 1855. There were also changes in the east because 19th century parishes were created for St Mark's (Dunham Town), St John's (south-east) and St Alban's (north-east). Other alterations to the eastern boundary occurred in both 1920 and 1936 when land was ceded to Altrincham and altered the boundary. What is clear about the boundaries is they were constant for centuries on two sides, north and south, because these were based on natural features, Carrington Moss and the Bollin. The western and eastern sides were the weakest naturally with no physical features to form their

bases. These were altered by administrative and ecclesiastical foundations able to adjust the boundaries to suit their needs.



Fig. 1.16 Dunham Hall in the twentieth century. The south front shown here was considerably altered at the beginning of the century for the home-coming of the ninth Earl in 1906. The family had lived at Enville in Staffordshire for fifty years after the Seventh Earl and family left Dunham in 1855 (AAIA).

About the people

The earliest printed information about the population in what may be taken as Dunham township, is from Domesday Book written in 1086, in which King William had all his conquests recorded. The manor of Dunham was stated to have belonged to a Saxon Aelfweard in the time of King Edward the Confessor who reigned before the Battle of Hastings, twenty years previously. The Normans actually took the place over in 1070. Of the Norman population we learn that the Norman lord Hamo had acquired the place and there were five other people in this 'manor' (Morgan, 13, 266c, d). Even at this date there was clear economic and, by implication, class distinction, because two men were ploughmen, two were villagers and one a smallholder. Probably the last was of higher status, the others being of villein (peasant) or serf (slave) status farming together in common. These were people assessable for taxes; there may have been others, untaxed for some reason or other, for example a military group and a few cottagers. We may adopt an arbitrary size for these known households, say five persons each, and Hamo would have an additional entourage of unknown size, but at this date it is likely there were many more than 40-50 people in the township.

Rentals in the mid-14th century, 1347 (EGR2/1/1/1), inform us there were two classes of people, the free who were free of commitments to the lord of whom there were now twelve, and the unfree who had to perform tasks on the lord's land and carry out other duties or boons, of whom there were forty-one. However, three of the free tenants did not reside in the township, no doubt holding land because they agreed to do military or important civil service for the lord of Dunham, and ten of the unfree also possessed no messuage (house and a croft) in Dunham, perhaps coming from neighbouring villages to work. In total the figure of resident householders was 53, possibly 265 people including members of households but excluding the lord of the manor's entourage of unknown size. A plague, the Black Death, occurred in the following year. A rental in 1410-11 over half a century after the Black Death shows the free tenants numbered 16, four more than in 1347, whereas the tenants-at-will, now called 'termors', totalled only 24, a reduction of 17. The population therefore might have been about 200. A simple calculation suggests population had

fallen after the Black Death by 40% and that the plague had affected the poorer (unfree) people more than the 'free' inhabitants.

By the 16th century everybody was 'free' if not equal. Rural tenants occupied tenements, at first scattered groups of strips in medieval open fields, the precursors of ring-fenced farms. The poll tax of 1667 listed about 330 inhabitants including the 21 serving the Earl of Warrington, Lord Delamer, at the hall. The 16th to 18th centuries saw the flowering of the yeomen class of substantial farmers especially following enclosure of the open fields when the farmers became tenants of ring-fenced farms created by the landowner from previously scattered strips of farmland. This gave them a clearly located personal stake in the land. Some of the new farms were owned by absentee landowners but, taking the total number of tenements, there were 76 in 1701 implying a basic rural population of 380. The number of tenements rose eventually to over 100 through the century as new tenements were created by the drainage of several mosslands, chiefly Sinderland Moss (south of Carrington Moss), suggesting the farming population had risen to over 500 by 1800. More accurate figures appear in the first census of 1801 when it was recorded as 872 which would include people at the hall and non-farmers.

Figures for the subsequent decades were:

Population	Number	Population	Number
1801	872	1901	2644
1811	936	1911	2928
1821	1090	1921	1668
1831	1105	1931	1694
1841	1257	1941	-
1851	1255	1951	523
1861	1533	1961	525
1871	1790	1971	535
1881	1977	2001	475
1891	2079		

Fig. 1.17 Census details for Dunham Massey

It appears Dunham was experiencing steady growth in the 19th century. By 1873 the township had become an ecclesiastical parish of its own separate from the ecclesiastical parish of Bowdon and in 1888 the township was a civil parish in Bucklow Hundred with a few administrative powers such as levying a rate, road improvement and primary education. A factor which cannot be discounted in the second half of the 19th century was the absence of the landowner, the Seventh Earl of Stamford, who had moved his family to a Staffordshire house. Had he remained in Dunham, he might have convinced his tenants of the virtues of more incorporation of Dunham with Altrincham to take advantage of improvements which followed that borough's Board of Health status in 1850 (Bayliss, 1994, 57). In the following period Dunham was administered by agents such as the Worthingtons from their Altrincham office but few public services resulted for Dunham even when a sewage works was built on Woodcote Farm in Dunham, this only serving Altrincham. In the late 19th century Dunham did not have a representative on Cheshire County Council from 1888, though neighbouring Altrincham, Bowdon and Timperley did, but it was represented by the Guardians of Bucklow Union (with Bowdon, Timperley and Hale) who levied a rate and dealt with roads (Ingham, appendix) and was part of Bucklow Rural District Council. The continued administrative independence from Altrincham meant that Dunham Massey did not benefit from the advantages which might have accrued had it been within its larger neighbour; its small population also left it vulnerable to encroachments.

The numbers at work in industry were the main cause of an increase in the population of Dunham from 1977 people in 1881 to 2928 in 1901. The Linotype Company of Broadheath built a small garden suburb of 170 houses just south of their works in 1897 which lifted the population in the

census of 1901. The reason for the fall in population 1911-1921 and 1931-1951, was due to abstractions of areas of land from Dunham (complete with population) which were attached to Altrincham UDC in 1920 by the Altrincham Extension Act (Hilda Bayliss, xv), allowing the building of Oldfield Brow and Sinderland council estates (Fitzpatrick in Bayliss, 1992, 97) to be built in land ceded to Altrincham. Another area was also ceded to Altrincham at the Charter of Incorporation of the latter to make it a Municipal Borough in 1937 (French in Bayliss, 1992, 47). Dunham was unable to resist these changes because of its low population and therefore a low administrative status but without Dunham's input, Altrincham would not have got its MB status. Dunham Massey was moved from Cheshire in 1974 after a thousand years in that county to help create the Metropolitan Borough of Trafford in the conurbation of Greater Manchester, again another contribution made by this small township.

The steady rise of population from 1801 to 2298 in 1911 followed by the dramatic fall to 475 in 2001 is a fascinating population history but it all depends on what is meant by 'Dunham Massey'. To be able to compare population numbers they must apply to an area of constant size. It is quite possible on the basis of past increase rates, that the present population of the ancient township could now be many thousands had part not been taken for Altrincham, but this will never be known. In 1974, Dunham Massey was abstracted from Cheshire where it had been for a thousand years and added with other small places to make up a population of a few hundred thousand for the new Metropolitan Borough of Trafford.

To have only 475 people in 2001, almost half of the population in 1801 is not only incredible but an exceedingly low second millennium population for any district within any Metropolitan Borough but, as above, this was mainly due to administrative changes; also merging farms and increasing mechanisation and thus reduced the numbers of agricultural workers. In modern times some of its area became geographically as well as administratively part of Altrincham and estates built adjacent to it since the Second World War, including on three sites recently by the National Trust, are gradually encroaching on the former open lands of Dunham Massey.

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Chapter 2. Landscapes and Archaeology to Roman Times

Don Bayliss

The township of Dunham Massey, in terms of landscapes, had always been primarily a rural farming area in historic times and probably before³. In any farming area two of the natural features which are important are the climate and soils, the latter often based on the geology, the type of solid rock, or, if the case, unconsolidated rock of which this area is composed. The underlying rock may also be important for building, water supply or other direct or indirect use. The Dunham area is relatively low and has soils of fair quality which, with drainage and nurture, make good farming land.⁴

The solid rocks immediately under Dunham Massey include pink and red sandstones and marls (mudstones and clays) thousands of feet thick known as the Keuper and Bunter beds (named from a nineteenth century classification on the continent). The surface sandstone rocks, sometimes almost black with exposure, can be seen as footings of old buildings and in bridges or garden walls. They are comparatively young in the geological timescale, only two hundred million years old whereas the oldest rocks in the timescale can be over four thousand million years old, not visible; and well below the surface rocks.

The sandstones and marls were formed from the unconsolidated sands and silts of an arid, sandy, hot desert when the Dunham area was a muddy coastal shore of a tropical sea which once extended over this district. The only signs that life existed along this ancient coast are the remains of crustaceans and primitive plants, and a few fossil reptilian footprints, for example near Warburton cross (Edwards and Trotter, 3). Over millions of years, under pressure, the loose sands became solid rocks – sandstones⁵ and clays became marls, Fig. 2.1, and the beds were subsequently highly folded and faulted, deformed by movements of the upper layers of the earth's crust. Turned-up rocks overlooking the Bollin mark the broken southern rim of a folded basin of rocks known as the Manchester Basin, the northern rim of which is in the Rossendale Fells.

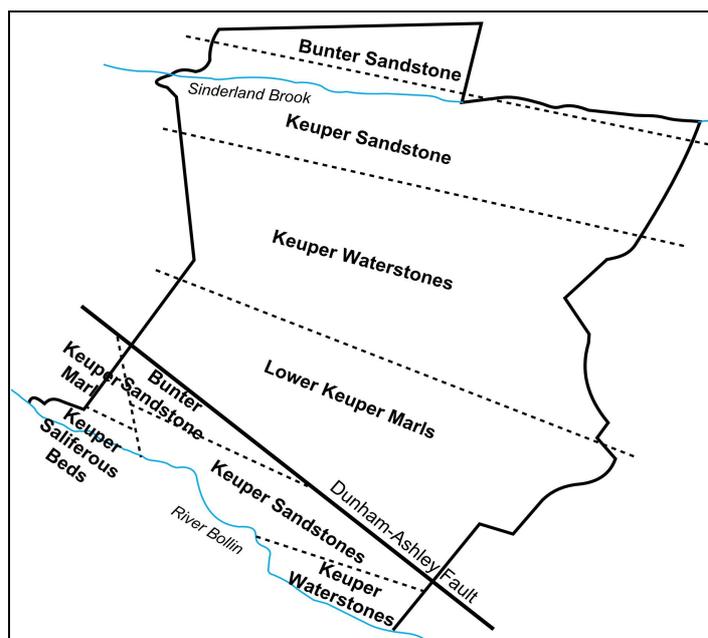


Fig. 2.1 Solid geology sketch map adapted from the 1960 Geological Survey of Stockport (DB).

The older rocks are shown on maps of the older Geological Survey as Bunter Sandstones and Pebble Beds, and Keuper Sandstones, Waterstones and Marlstones (including saliferous (salt-bearing deposits) earlier known as the New Red Sandstone group. Phillips and Phillips now refer

³ Another opinion is that farther back in time, a township was the area on which a small place depended for its sustenance by agriculture or other means and that neighbouring townships were allotted fairly equal measures of good soils for arable, and commons for grazing.

⁴ The solid or unconsolidated material on the surface breaks down under the influence of the sun's heat, wind, water, frost and other processes, into soil. Much depends on the mechanical and chemical interaction of these processes with the basic rock material.

⁵ The rocks are faulted and folded Bunter and Keuper Sandstones and Manchester Marls (in the old nomenclature, Edwards and Trotter, 6) of the Permo-Trias periods, 286-213 million years old (Broadhurst in Johnson, 27). Marlstone is a friable, bedded, limey, hard claystone. The rocks overlie Carboniferous rocks including Carboniferous Limestone, Millstone Grit and Coal Measures; none of the solid rocks occur on the Dunham surface.

to the lower beds as the Sherwood Sandstones Group and the upper ones as the Mercia Mudstones Group (Phillips and Phillips, 5b). The Keuper Saliferous beds are now known as the Northwich and Wilkesley Halite formations of the Mercia Mudstones (David Case). In the Alderley Edge area these Permo-Triassic rocks were permeated by plumes of heat which rose from hot areas of molten magma at great depth and deposited copper and lead in fissures through the rocks. So far these minerals have not been found in the Dunham Massey area, though the basic rocks are superficially similar in structure and age. The drainage pattern of the Tertiary era was different to the present, a buried valley system crosses the landscape under the glacial deposits from north-west to south-east in which streams flowed south-east in a diametrically opposite direction to the present Bollin basin drainage (Phillips and Phillips, 5d).

The sequence of rocks in the Permo-Triassic periods was:-

PERMIAN	modern names
Manchester Marls	
Collyhurst Sandstone	
TRIAS	
Keuper Marl	Northwich & Wilkesley Halite Formation & Bollin Mudstones
Waterstones	Tarporley Siltstones
Keuper Sandstones	Ormskirk/Helsby Sandstone Formation
Bunter Sandstone	
Upper Mottled Sandstone	
Pebble Beds	Sherwood Sandstone Formation
Lower Mottled Sandstone	

When the water in the salty sea evaporated, some of its salt became imprisoned in the Keuper Saliferous Beds and in earlier historic times appeared in brine springs along the Bollin valley in Dunham Massey giving rise to an early salt-making industry. The farmer at Home Farm has bored thirty metres down in his fields into the Keuper Waterstones and Marls but not for salt. The sandstone and clay strata contain imprisoned, but unpolluted, water which is better for cattle than the noxious water of the Bollin. Some of the sandstone rocks⁶ can be seen in brooks in Timperley and on the banks of the river Mersey at Warburton but not in Dunham because they have been covered by deposits brought by wind, water and ice (called, as a group, *drift geology*) creating different topsoils in different parts of the township.

A different type of landscape occurred in the last Ice Age when much of the present surface of the ground was formed. There had been several ice ages over time, but a world-wide fall in temperatures, 2 million years BP (*Before the Present*) was very important to our present scenery bringing about an ice age for the northern hemisphere which lasted until about 11,500BP. Several of the mountainous areas of Britain developed ice caps from which glaciers streamed out. The Lake District was the chief source of glacier ice affecting the wider Manchester region, including Dunham Massey (Jowett and Charlesworth, 317). The ice was about 600 metres (two thousand feet) thick at its source and a depth of about 100 metres of water (Case, personal communication) was removed from the Irish Sea (across which the ice stretched) to create such a thickness of ice, and the bottom of the sea would have become dry land. Four of five major glacial advances or 'stadials' have been noted at this time in Britain and there was a similar number of interglacial periods between the stadials when ice disappeared and temperatures were sometimes warmer than now.

At the greatest extent of ice from the north, the whole of the Dunham Massey township area lay completely concealed under probably a hundred metres (nearly a thousand feet) of ice, *Fig. 2.2*. The southern limit of this last major onset of ice, about 25,000BP, extended to south Wales, Wolverhampton and Lincolnshire but the front was not stable, extending and contracting. A late-

⁶ The quarries are no longer in use but lie built over at the back of the shops at the west end of Timperley. The rocks can be seen in Timperley brooks and where they crossed the Mersey; their hardness caused a shallowing of the river and the creation of an important ford.

Devensian ice surge reached mid-Cheshire (Yates and Moseley) leaving a long ridge of debris across the county at Woore, and reached Chelford where Simpson and West noted signs of a lake located between deposits left by the mobile ice front. Other glaciers flowed down eastern England and from North Wales. At the greatest extent the peaks of the Derbyshire hills protruded through the ice.

After the Secondary era ending with the Permo-Trias, the next period was the Tertiary (third) Era but none of these rocks are present in Dunham Massey. The last era is the Quaternary (fourth) Era, dating from 2 million years ago to the present, i.e., the Ice Age. It is divided into the Ice Age or Pleistocene dating from 2 million years BP (Before the Present) to about 13,000BP (Johnson, 161), or 11,500BP (more recent date from David Case, Univ. West of England), and the Holocene or Recent from 11,500BP to today. Glaciers in the Pleistocene had several forms, such as valley glaciers descending existing valleys from an ice field; a number of valley glaciers may then have unite on a plain to make an ice sheet.

Of the four or five recognised British ice advances or stadials (David Case) and interglacial temperate periods, only two pairs are recognised in the north-west (oldest at the bottom):-

- The present post-glacial period (possibly a warm interglacial - with a glacial advance to come) from 11,500BP (9,500BC) to today.
- The Devensian stadial (glacial advance), (110,000BP to 11,500BP)
- The Ipswichian Interglacial (1,000,000BP to 110,000BP)
- The Wolstonian glaciation (older than 1 millionBP)

There were two advances in the Devensian Glaciation, one to the Midlands, the last to mid-Cheshire, leaving the Stockport Formation deposits represented by two tills (boulder clays) separated by sands, which represent a slightly warmer phase in the middle of the last glacial advance. This was about 25,000 years ago, when the first phase of the last ice reached the middle Cheshire area. The interleaved sands are carbonaceous showing some vegetative life existed in the interim, and also some clays thought to be lake clays. These have been identified at a site at Chelford. The temperate interglacials were followed by increasingly cold periglacial conditions before the onset of ice, perhaps to -20F which assisted in fracturing rocks which could be carried away (as erratics) by subsequent ice formation or moulded into sheets and fans by meltwaters.

Most vegetation disappeared except for cold-tolerant species such as mosses, lichens, dwarf birch and hardy pines, as can be seen in the Alps today. Loose boulders, smaller rocks, sands, gravels and clay were worn off rocks over which the glacier had passed, e.g. from the Lake District, and were carried by the ice as it advanced. Some was deposited at Dunham as 'drift' under the flowing ice and also when melted about 11,500BP. The ice also deposited a ridge, possibly a moraine, on the north side of the Bollin valley from Warburton past Dunham Hall, rising through Altrincham and Hale along the line of the A538 towards Wilmslow. It was a good, dry, place on which early man could settle. Rock over which the glaciers passed was ground into fine 'rock flour' or clay which lodged under the ice and helped its flow. In this clay, rocks from the size of large boulders down to small fragments would also be transported from the areas being eroded. This 'boulder clay' is the most common deposit in Lancashire and Cheshire covering 30%

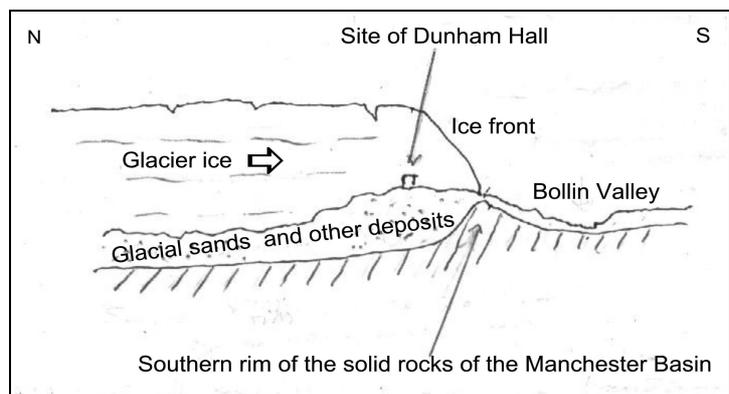
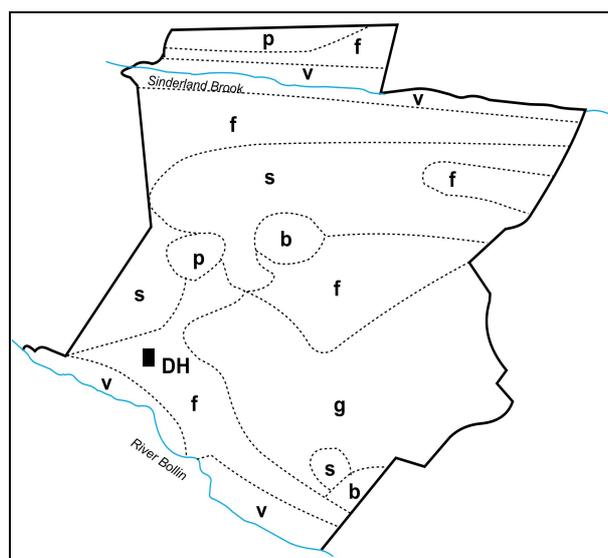


Fig. 2.2 Hypothetical cross-section through Dunham during the last advance of ice in the last Ice Age when a glacier was passing over. Unconsolidated drift rocks were deposited at the front and underneath (DB).

of the ground, and was potentially very fertile, certainly if it contained some lime from rocks farther north; it was also useful later for making bricks and, if calcareous, fertilizing ground as 'marl', making 'brown clay' soils ploughable for four years without rest. However, the final decay of the ice left only one significant area of fertile clay in the centre of Dunham township (**b** on *Fig. 2.3*) compared with large areas of it in Hale.⁷ Sands and gravels carried by the ice, meltwater or wind were dominant in Dunham, and were very important to settlement making dry sites. Loose sands were easy to cultivate but needed 'body' and fertilisation.

Erosion by ice coming from the north had left much of the underlying landscape relatively smooth, grinding down the solid rock into smooth slopes even though some may have been standing at a high angle because of earth movements before the Ice Age. Additionally the distribution of glacial deposits contributed to the creation of a hummocky soil landscape which varied considerably in constituents, shown on a map adapted from the 'drift' map of the Geological Survey *Fig. 2.3*. This map shows an amazing fact about Dunham Massey – none of the rocks on the surface of the township are solid, they are all unconsolidated material, mainly sands and clays. The nearest easily-seen solid rock, a sandstone, comes to the surface in Timperley and Warburton. *Fig. 2.3* shows that the township, from the boundary with Bowdon westwards to Dunham Hall and park, was covered partly with a thick sheet of sands and gravels (**g**) brought in the body of the ice, containing a variety of minerals, making fertile 'brown sand' soils easy to work, ploughable for three years. There were other sands and gravels brought by meltwater river courses (fluvio-glacial deposits, **f**), both in tunnels and under the ice. Spreads of these deposits, also useful for farming, are found across central and south Dunham Massey. There were also wide stretches of alluvium, mud from stream flooding, deposited by the Bollin after the ice melted and the river began to re-excavate its valley⁸. The Sinderland area in the north-east was a narrow plain of fluvio-glacial gravels with alluvium deposited on each side of the brook making rich land for meadows.



- v** alluvium
- p** peat
- s** Shirdley Hill Sand
- f** fluvio-glacial sands & gravels
- g** glacial sands & gravels
- b** boulder clay

- DH** Dunham Hall

Dunham has only one area of boulder clay (**b**) on the surface (though more clay might underlie other deposits). This is in the centre and, being good farming land, later formed the arable eastern field of Dunham Town and the western field of the hamlet of Oldfield. Another sand deposit, formerly sand from under the Irish Sea, was revealed by the withdrawal of seawater to form glacier ice, and when the sea floor was dry was subsequently blown eastwards over south Lancashire and north Cheshire in a series of storms at the end of the Ice

Fig. 2.3 Drift geology. Sketch map adapted from 1:63,360 Geological Survey Stockport sheet (DB).

Age before the sea returned. This was the Shirdley Hill Sand, (**s**) on the map (named after a type-site near Southport) which covered much of central Dunham Massey and Broadheath and was an important deposit for early man because it made a soil easily workable for farming.

⁷ In medieval times Hale was noted for growing grain, probably due to the productivity of soils on the boulder clay.

⁸ After the Ice Age the Mersey, the Bollin and brooks in the area may have been larger streams because of periods of heavier rainfall than now and may have cut downwards into their valleys filled with glacial or other deposits to reach lower sea-levels after the ice melted (or withdrew due to the sea water having been taken to make ice), creating river terraces.

Heaths

Though the Shirdley Hill Sand was fine and workable, it was easily stripped of nutrients and became heath-like, both naturally and by over-farming, possibly as at *Broadheath* and *Little Heath*, which heaths may have been partly man-made.

From the foregoing it can be seen the Pleistocene drift deposits of Dunham are extremely complex.

The Wetlands

After the ice disappeared, some hummocky hollows held sheets of water. Other hollows were made by collapse of the land because of the solution of salt-beds in the Permo-Triassic rocks below. Some of these hollows, in periods of wet climate, eventually became colonised by aquatic mosses such as sphagnum and other bog-loving plants. Eventually deposits of both live and dead moss plants built up into peat mosses (bogs, hags, or moors). In the north, stretching from west to east, north of the valley of the Sinderland Brook and on a terrace of the Mersey lay the largest expanse of peat moor, Carrington Moss, once over 1500 acres, 3x2 km according to the Wetlands Survey (Wetlands, 75), only a small portion of which was in Dunham. This developed over glacial sands and gravels. The depth of peat now ranges from about 3m to 0.3m., the lower levels being woody, passing upwards through *Eriophorum/Calluna* (heathery) peats into *Sphagnum* peat. It was once much deeper and was a 'raised bog' having grown several metres above the level of the surrounding countryside before it was finally drained in the 19th and 20th centuries. There were a few sandy better-drained ridges and also several pool areas. The bog grew, like the other mosslands, in a wet climate period in the Neolithic period of human culture (New Stone Age) 6000-4300BP (4000-2300 BC). In spite of the wet climate there must have been some drier areas because there are indications of by fire at human hands in some parts of the bogs. Later in the 19th century there was much dumping of night soil here from Manchester, including sherds of pottery and glass, cinders and excrement (Wetlands, 74). Other mosses in Dunham Massey were Sinderland Moss, Cuckridge (Seamons) Moss, Dunham Moss, Black Moss and White Moss (see *Fig. 10.2*, Chapter 10). They were all barriers to farming in early times but were useful for reeds, peat and turves, hunting wildfowl, fishing and some summer grazing.

Post-glacial landscapes and human cultures

Deposits of pollen in mosslands can show the general history of vegetation in the landscape following the decline of the ice in the Devensian period.⁹ There was a fairly rapid development from cold-tolerating arctic species such as mosses and lichens, to dwarf birch, pine, aspen and sallow (willow) in less-cold tundra conditions (named from landscapes in northern Russia) when temperatures rose slightly. When more temperate conditions ensued, deciduous trees appeared, five formerly recognised as native: oak, alder, elm, lime and pine but trees such as ash and hazel are now also now recognised as early (Rackham, 68). Pollen analysts can work out changes in the type of vegetation from thousands of years ago by analysis of pollen type, which is distinctive from each type of plant. In a bog or moss, plants such as sphagnum gradually turn into peat in the anaerobic situation without oxygen. Any pollen blown into a peat mossland is almost wholly preserved and recognisable today sometimes after thousands of years. In a column of peat, the oldest pollen will tend to be at the bottom when the bog first formed. Analysis of pollen-type and other detritus at different levels can be equated with time to show changes in the local ecological environment and landscape.

The peat column (see *Fig. 2.4*) can also assist in deciphering climate change because particular plants require different climatic regimes. Pollen analysts and climatologists have identified eleven different changes of climate from the Ice Age to the present affecting the north-west region.

⁹ Named after Deva, the Roman Dee or Chester. On the continent this phase is called the Wurm or Weichsel.

General altitudes

The Bollin west of Bollington Mill in the south-west lies at only 13 metres (42 feet) above sea-level. North-east of this there is a sharp terrace edge to 24 metres at Dunham Hall (and there is a similar rise at Newbridge Hollow). Farther north-eastwards through undulating land, terraces reach 68 metres (211 feet) a.s.l. at Highgate, the highest point (now in west Altrincham due to boundary change). However, from the hall towards Carrington Moss directly north, the land falls gently from 24 metres a.s.l. to 12 metres in the valley of the Sinderland Brook which has been cutting a shallow valley out of glacial deposits. Beyond the brook the land then rises from 12 to 23 metres a.s.l. on Carrington Moss, a mound-bog, which gradually grew on a Mersey terrace well above the level of the surrounding countryside. At the beginning of the 19th century it was higher than now, perhaps by another 3-5 metres, and it was described as not possible to see across from one side to the other but was reduced several metres by a late-19th century systematic programme of drainage.

The immediate postglacial climate, earth movements, action and river terraces

From the end of the glacial period there was a period when frost action (periglacial activity) was widespread, helping to break up rock fragments into soil, and river systems developed again across the landscape. The valleys were sometimes not in their pre-glacial positions (Phillips and Phillips, 5d) because these had become chaotically choked with glacial, drift and frost-shattered debris, and the streams responded by cutting new valleys. Some hollows had been made by ice blocks melting and others resulted from subsidence when salt areas gave way because of solution from below ground.

Following the removal of the weight of ice from the landscape, the land rose in a series of separate uplifts resulting in rivers having to cut down their courses to new sea-levels and local base-levels such as where the Mersey cuts through hard sandstone rock at Warburton. The uplift of the land in stages led to the creation of a number of level tracts, remnants of former valley bottoms which are now flat terraces lifted well above the present rivers, the flattish tops quite wide in many parts. At least three river terraces can be identified on the Bollin, a scarp from the river (the most recent) to about 3 metres above river level, the next a scarp 10 metres high above that, seen clearly at Tipping's Bank, a scarp west of Newbridge Hollow, part wooded, running as far as the canal aqueduct west of Dunham Hall, and a ten metre scarp above that at 30 metres a.s.l. under Dunham Hall, leading up to Highgate and Bowdon Church, approximately 3, 8 and 30 metres (10, 25 and 100 feet) above present river levels. These formed level areas useful for settlement such as the bluff at the edge of the terrace on which Dunham Hall is situated which also gave excellent views over the plain to the south. The general widening of the valleys was by the creation of meanders by streams. Stretches where these were cut off left 'ox-bow' lakes of which curved strip remnants can still be seen, dry or filled with water, in the Bollin valley. The old township boundaries originally laid along the Bollin, in some places now ancient courses due to the meandering of the river in historic times after the boundaries had been set out. Spreads of alluvium deposited when the streams were in flood were generally not suitable for early settlement but made fertile land for grazing or mowing meadows

The sequence of human cultures

The Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) hunting and collecting cultures, from 2 million years ago to 9,500BP

Life was adapted to cold glacial periods and warm interglacials. No evidence of the existence of such ways of life has yet been found in the Dunham Massey area, the nearest being in some Derbyshire caves. The people used crude, heavy stone weapons and tools and hunted the large animals of the time.

The Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) hunting and collecting cultures, 9,500BP to 6,000BP

Climates were getting gradually warmer. This was the microlithic ('small stone tool') period, which continued and characterized hunting and collecting way of life. People used very small flint arrow- and spear heads two or three cm long to hunt animals and birds, not the large heavy weapons of the Old Stone Age because the larger animals had been exterminated by Palaeolithic Man. The scraper tools were used to skin the animals. Artefacts found in Timperley and an arrowhead in Dunham Massey (see the SMR list – Sites and Monuments Record) and a recent microlith found at Timperley Old Hall site showed that humans of this culture lived in or passed through the district, hunting animals such as deer, boar and small birds.

Neolithic (New Stone Age) 6,000BP to 4,300BP

This was the period of the first farmers. From this stage forward in time we are fortunate in the Dunham Massey area to be able to use pollen analysis as a tool to assist in describing past climates and landscapes. In local lakes, peat bogs accumulated in hollows because of the warmth and wetness. In order to examine the type of vegetative landscape which evolved during and after the time of Neolithic man, a peat column about 2.5 feet (0.75m) deep was sunk into Warburton Moss, close enough to be similar to the Dunham mossland. The peat column, *Fig. 2.4*, shows, from the proportion of pollen at different times, that there were differing climates and landscapes from 6,000 years ago (BP) to the present, i.e. from 6,000BP (4,000BC). The column ends with the modern period at the top.

The peat column from Warburton Moss starts in the Mesolithic period, see 'c' below with birch, pine and hazel. It ends in the modern period, showing three of the climatic, vegetation and cultural zones, **d, e, f**:-

Climatic Period	Cultural Period approx. years before the present (BP)
f. The Sub-Atlantic cool wet phase leading to modern conditions with a dominant alder-oak-elm-birch-beech forest, including a second phase of bog-formation.	Iron Age (WM3) 2500-1500BP
e. The Sub-Boreal cold period and temporary decline of the elm, a reversion to cold and dry conditions.	Bronze Age (WM2) 4300-2500BP
d. The Atlantic period, a mild and wet period called the Post-Glacial Climatic Optimum with temperatures 2°C warmer than today, oak-elm-lime-alder forest, moist all year with warm oceanic influences, the main bog-forming phase.	Neolithic (WM1) 6000-4300BP
c. The Boreal Phase, like northern Scandinavia today, forests of pine, birch and hazel trees, shrubs and flowers in summer.	Mesolithic 9500-6000BP
b. The Late-Glacial -Tundra phase, a period of cold dry conditions, very cold in winter, cool in summer, named after conditions on an icy arctic plain in Russia with permafrost (permanently frozen subsoil) and a few stunted birch trees, shrubs and flowers in summer.	
a. Glacial conditions, which ended about 11,500 years BP; there was little or no vegetation.	Paleolithic pre-12750-9500BP

Starting near the bottom of the peat column, the landscape of the basic layer of the Warburton peat column named the WM1 Zone (Warburton Moss Zone 1 - **d** in table above) is thought to date from the Neolithic period, the frequency of pollen in the basal zone approximating to the warm Atlantic Period, the Climatic Optimum. It shows the landscape was covered with a dense forest of trees. Following this, the WM2 Zone (**e** above) is thought to date from the next cultural period, the Bronze Age, when much forest disappeared mainly by human felling or burning.

The landscape of the WM3 Zone (**f** above), probably dated from 500BC to 500AD, Zone **f**, covering the Iron Age and Roman periods and to the present, continuing the trend of clearance. The result was a landscape increasingly deforested by tools and fire for planting crops. There is a lesser proportion of sphagnum moss (a bog plant which eventually disappeared as conditions became drier), and of heather and hazel pollen grains, which suggests variable cool climatic conditions; the plentiful presence of birch, noted for its assistance in drainage, suggests much of this species had been planted by man.

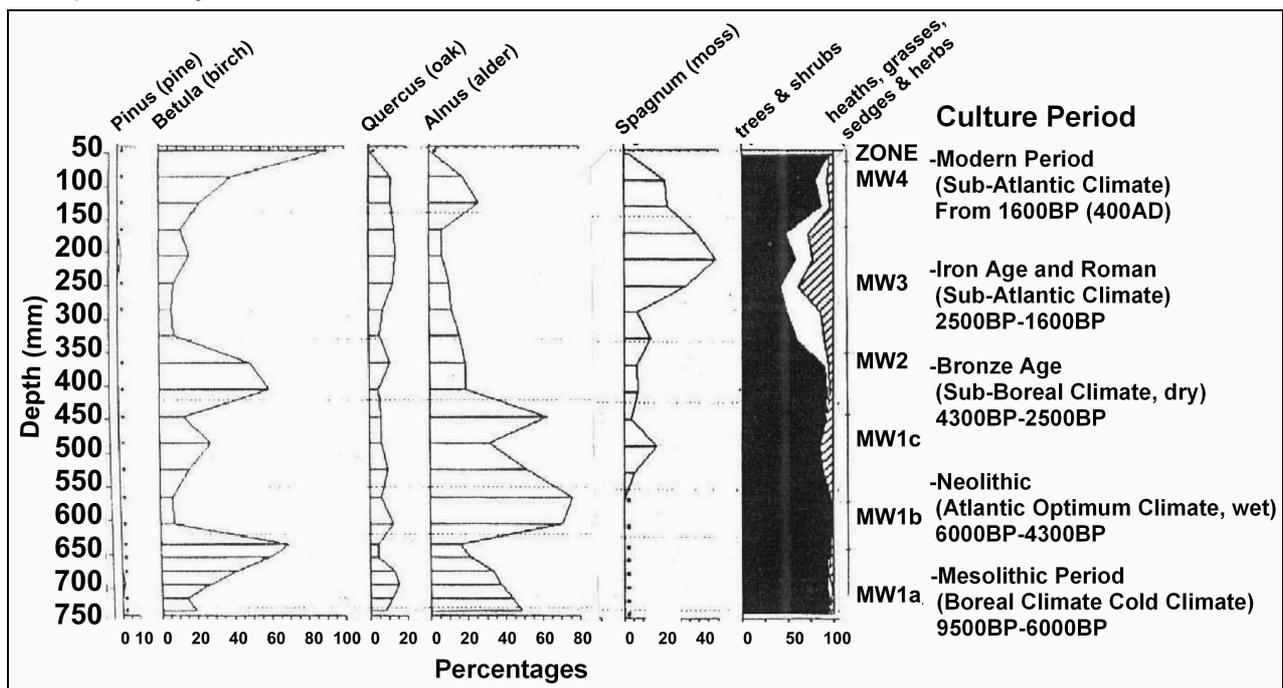


Fig. 2.4 Pollen column from Warburton Moss, adapted from Nevell, 6 (DB).

In the Neolithic period the farmers lived in small settlements, grew grains and herded animals such as cattle and goats. The climate was the Atlantic climatic period, 2°C warmer than now on average and (as above) referred to as the Post-Glacial Climatic Optimum. The land was heavily covered with a dense forest of oak, elm, lime, alder, ash and hazel. Note that Trees and Shrubs column of the graph is almost 100% black at this time which suggests there had not been immediate widespread clearance by the first farmers with fire and (polished) stone axes in order to make fields. Their technique was likely a slash-and-burn technique used in parts of Africa today. After farming cereals for a time the quality of the soil deteriorated and people would move into another part of the forest cutting down trees and burning a new patch of ground to farm (Barrowclough, 28). Evidence of the cultivation of barley and part of a building of this period were found at Tatton (Higham, 16) and there is little doubt similar work would have been carried on around Dunham. In the warmer and wetter conditions of the Climatic Optimum, bogs began to grow. A late-Neolithic/Bronze Age defended settlement site with hut circles was excavated in neighbouring Bollington parish (Nevell in Faulkner, 59) and a mace head and other effects found. A stone hand-axe has been found in the same district and a flint arrowhead in Dunham Park (NT SMR 50836). Neolithic people were the first to erect monuments such as henges, probably first in wood such as

the one found recently at Poulton in west Cheshire, and buried their dead in huge stone burial chambers though none exists at or near Dunham.¹⁰

The Bronze Age, 4,300BP to 2,500BP

This was the period of the first metal-working cultures which introduced an amalgam of copper and tin, a more effective material for making knives, swords, arrowheads and axes for felling trees, though flint was still used for some purposes. The presence of charcoal in the peat column suggests fire was important in clearing woodland for farming as well as for working foundries and forges for making bronze tools, weapons and horse accoutrements. Farming is likely to have been carried on in small rectangular fields in which grain was grown and animals managed at permanent farmsteads rather than by the former 'shifting cultivation'. The lower proportion of tree pollen in the sample at Warburton at this date suggests a large reduction in the proportion of forest trees due to felling; in particular there was a dramatic decline in elm, the leaves of which are eaten by cattle. Cereal pollen shows there was farming but apart from some funerary monuments there is little archaeology to suggest the Dunham area was a well-populated farming area.

As in the Neolithic period funerary monuments, cremation deposits in vessels or interments under large mounds or barrows were a feature of the landscape. Mounds near the north-east entrance to New Park in a prominent position in the landscape are thought to be burial mounds from this period and there is possibly another group north-west of Dunham Hall (Nevell, 14, SMR 50834/5).

In March, 1984 an excavation by Pat Faulkner and Derek Pierce of the South Trafford Archaeological Group on Fairy Brow, a low hillock in Bollington and part of an upper river terrace of the Bollin, revealed an Early Bronze Age cremation accompanied by a bronze dagger. The report by Pat Faulkner (Faulkner, 54) stated the hill consisted of fluvio-glacial sands and gravels overlain by a sandy-clayey soil. Names such as Fairy Brow were often given to "*ancient ritual and burial sites associated ... with hauntings, spirits and witchcraft*" (Faulkner, 55). The pit measured 90cm long by 66cm wide and 85cm deep. The cremation contained the remains of a single human skeleton, most probably of an adult male. Further excavation revealed charred timbers, perhaps from a funeral pyre.

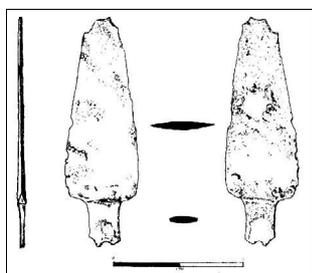


Fig. 2.5 *Single-riquet Bronze Age dagger from Fairy Brow (PF).*

The cremated remains and charcoal were dated by radio-carbon dating to between 3,530BP (1,530BC) and 3,485BP (1,485BC). Analysis of the metal by the British Museum showed there was 12.1% tin, 1.96% lead, 0.22% arsenic and 85.3% copper. Pollen analysis showed that locally the vegetation was birch, pine, oak, alder, hazel, willow, grasses, heaths, plantains, sorrel, docks, chickweed, dandelion, nettle, bugle and Devil's-bit scabious. No percentage proportions of each plant are available from this particular report to be able to say to what extent it was the same environment to that which could be found in local woodland today, but it was similar. The excavation is regarded of great regional importance to an understanding of north-west archaeology.

The Iron Age and Roman periods, 2,500BP to 1,500BP (c500BC to c410AD)

These periods occurred in a cool wet phase, known as the Sub-Atlantic Climatic Period, broadly like our own today in which the climate, without human interference, would lead naturally to an alder, oak, elm, birch, beech, hazel, pine and ash forest. Iron turned out to be a far more durable metal than bronze. The forest was much less dense than before and cereal and plantain pollen occur suggesting the presence of farming; also an increasing wetness was shown by an increase in heather, bog myrtle and buttercup. However, the peat column Fig. 2.4 shows less than 2% of the pollen grains were from cereals. This was a moist time when bogs grew for the second time with sphagnum moss and stands (groups) of oak, alder, elm, birch, beech, lime, ash, hazel and pine. At the moment there has been no archaeological exploration to reveal where any Iron Age

¹⁰ The nearest is at the Bridestones, near Congleton.

people lived (from 500BC to 43AD) or forged their tools and weapons except there are possible sub-circular land enclosures just north of Sinderland House Farm and in the valley of the Caldwell Brook immediately south-west, revealed by crop marks in aerial photographs which may be significant. They had circular houses and farmed small rectangular fields arranged in rows, in which they cultivated corn and reared cattle and horses.

The Dunham area in the Iron Age would have been occupied by members of the Cornovii tribe who were ruled from a capital near Wroxeter, Shropshire, and local tribesmen probably guarded the Mersey frontier against a tribe north of the river, the Brigantes, a very warlike tribe with a capital in north-east Yorkshire. There are no clear finds in Dunham from this period. The Romans reached this area in about 69AD and are reputed to have left about 410AD but the only finds from this culture are an amphora handle found near a former Roman crossing over the Bollin, and a Roman lamp by the roadside in Broadheath (SMR). Excavations along the line of the Roman road in Broadheath by boys of North Cestrian Grammar School in 1964 (Nevell, 18), by South Trafford Archaeological group at Newbridge Hollow and at Highgate, and by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit at Davenport Lane in 1995 have yielded details of the structure of the road as having a gravel or compacted stone surface. At Newbridge Hollow a wooden structure, probably part of a Roman crossing over the Bollin, was also found by STAG. That the line of Watling Street may run more northerly from the Bollin rather to the west of its commonly perceived course along the line of the A56 is confirmed by the farmer at Home Farm whose plough turns up cobbles and other stone just below the surface in the fields next to the A56. Of course they may be part of an adjoining Roman road.

A remarkable 'bog body' was found at Lindow Moss a few miles east of Dunham in 1984. It was of a young man who lived some time between 2BC and 100AD and the state of his body suggests the local people of that period whose culture may have been 'Celtic', perhaps inspired from the west with a priestly 'druid' class, were possibly predisposed to ritual murder of a gruesome kind. Other authorities suggest this may have been a robbery, ritual killing, or sacrifice (Joy, 44). Which practices were followed by the Dunham inhabitants in the late Iron Age and first part of the Roman period are not known. The man's last meal consisted of wheat and oats weed seeds and mistletoe, the remains of which were present in the man's stomach but it is argued these were not a typical diet. The mistletoe may have been introduced as a special food or medicine, allegedly used by druids. Pollen analysis of the peat in which he was found shows there was a period of deforestation in the area at the time for the cultivation of wheat, barley and oats. The man suffered from parasitic worms which may have been introduced in his body through the use of human excrement for fertiliser, which may have characterised farming of the period. Weatherwise, a variation in climate within the Sub-Atlantic cool wet period can be seen because, from pollen analysis, it is clear the bog was drier in decades before the time when the man died but became far wetter subsequently into Roman times.

A number of Roman finds including brooches have been found by metal detector in the neighbouring village to the west, Warburton, which prompted the examination of the area by the TV Time Team in 2008 in the belief there might have been a 'fortlet' there, guarding a Mersey ford across an outcrop of the hard rock, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, but with no success. It is possible the land here, in the Dunham area and elsewhere in the region would have been demarcated in a number of civil proto-townships (Richardson, 35) assuming each township would support the needs of a local group of people. A suggestion made later in this book (Chapter 16) from a brief study of the road pattern, is that the Dunham Massey area was very accessible by Watling Street to the fort and civitas (civil town) of Mamucium (Manchester) and could have been laid out as a number of Roman farms to feed its garrison and civil population. The farms may have been linked to a series of villages or small Roman towns about 10km apart as was the case in another county (Liddle in Bowman and Liddle, 63) but as yet no such pattern has been found in north Cheshire. Few though the actual finds are at present, there is little doubt Dunham Massey will eventually be found to have had a small but significant population and economy in Iron Age and Roman times.

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About Dunham Massey

Dunham Massey is a small parish formerly in Cheshire, now in Trafford, Greater Manchester and this book describes its history comprehensively from early times. The text is complemented by 180 pictures, diagrams and maps. It has been written by specialists in a variety of topics, who have used the most detailed research in their fascinating presentations. The book is divided into three parts. The first describes the changes in the landscape and the story of settlement from prehistoric times, the lives of the noble families, and events which happened from medieval to modern times during three aristocratic dynasties whose members lived on the site of the present Dunham Hall. The second part is devoted to a number of themes, for example life, housing, work, transport, cultural and social amenities at different periods. The third part is a brief set of conclusions bringing the whole together. In 1976, on the death of the last earl, the tenth Lord Stamford, the estate passed by his will to the National Trust who have created a gem of a place for the public, one of the most-visited in the country. The history of the hall, its occupants and estate makes absorbing reading.



