CHAPTER 9
Developments 1945 - 2005

In line with much of Britain, this period saw dramatic growth in house building. The demand overcame difficulties with ground conditions - ponds were filled, undulations levelled and streams drained into underground culverts. Most of the former agricultural and nursery land within the ring road became available for house building. Today, we have reached the point where Upton is now part of Chester's suburbia and there is little available ground remaining for residential development.

Several new housing estates, cutting into former fields, were underway when the war effort suspended housing development. In the immediate post-war years rationing and building licences restricted the continuation of developments such that only modest size houses were initially allowed. By the late 1940s the maximum floor size was increased and other restrictions relaxed. By the 1950s development was well underway. The war and food rationing had taken some land back into agricultural use but other areas lay waste with no take-up since the demise of Dicksons nursery. Much of the land was still in the beneficial ownership of the Lord of the Manor – Sir Philip Grey Egerton – at the time of his death in 1937. His Upton land had been heavily mortgaged and the aftermath of handling his estate started the mass sale of Upton land to building developers – with some conveyances completed during wartime. Arthur Hinde was farming in the Dale area. Lloyd-Jones still occupied Newton Cottage on



Plas Newton Lane (shown here), and farmed the land spreading over the Style (or Stile) fields towards the Village Hall. Frank Hinde was farming just north of Lloyd-Jones. The latter two saw fit to sell up from farming in the 1950s - the large estates were underway.

The first few years after the war

The late 1940s were years of 'getting back to normal' during 'ration conditions' before modern developments got underway in the 1950s. Some building did soon restart. One such case was to extend the cul-de-sac of Woodlea Avenue, named by the builder's wife, Mrs Morgan, due to the small run of woodland as shown on the 1936 O.S. map. Similarly Capstick & Owen continued with Upton Drive. A few one-off properties were built such as one in Upton Park built by Frederick Oldham – very much limited in size due to the post-war restrictions.

One minor new building, remembered nostalgically by some, was a shippon built on Ben Roberts' smallholding on the site of the former tennis court and pavilion, where the teen shelter now stands on Wealstone Lane playing fields. This was built immediately post-war with the help of local children who shifted the bricks and were then rewarded with pony rides.



Other haunts for children were the various derelict sites. The former Dickson's home of Stanton House had been owned, since the 1920s, by the Rev. Algernon Ernest Grimes – a former Head of the Kings School - and used as a small private prep school until the mid-1930s. By the late 1940s it was derelict with cellars that offered a play area for the children.

The post-war new thinking started with a Council decision to finally convert all the gas street lights to electric (most recent lamps on the new roads were already electric). Councillor Furley (see page 163) convinced the Council to use 100 watt lamps rather than the lower power initially proposed.

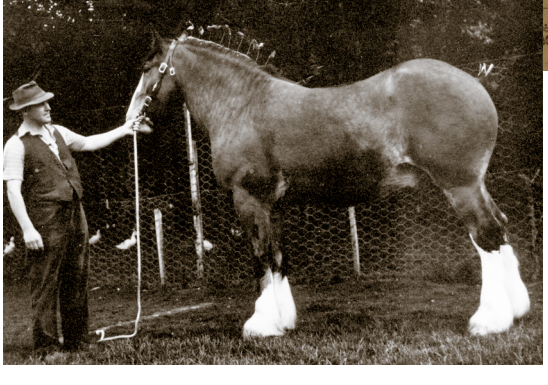
The 1936 Ordnance Survey shows allotment gardens behind the Men's Institute. These were privately owned and by the end of the War are understood to have become overgrown resembling an orchard. The Horticultural Society supplied names of residents requiring allotments and one proposal was for the letting of the old orchard at Upton Heyes. However it appears that Upton never acquired Council allotments and the few private ones were absorbed for housing development. The private allotments, mentioned above, became Endsleigh Close in the 1990s.

In 1948 a talk was given on 'The Welfare & Social Facilities for Old People' but not until 1953 was a committee set up to organise 'The Upton Old Friends Association', able to look after the welfare of the elderly. What became of this Association is not known but it may have been influential in the fact that the RDC built housing suitable for the elderly in the early 1960s.

As the population grew and land was being developed for housing, concern was expressed for more recreation areas and the Cheshire County Playing Fields Association was viewing possible sites in Upton. The Parish Council was still struggling to find a suitable building for a library. They had been offered a former wartime military hut but declined. Some of these were however being used for other leisure activities such as the scouts & guides.

Meanwhile many of Upton's residents still looked out on rural scenes – with cattle in the fields and agricultural events such as the annual gymkana for the Upton & District farmers.


UPTON AND DISTRICT FARMERS'
Agricultural Show & Gymkhana
FIRST PRIZE
Whit-Monday, May 17th, 1948
Awarded to No.
Judges



Shire horse'Dawpool Trooper' with Charlie Howell of Dawpool Farm Thurstaston.

Post-war creeping ribbon developments and strategic planning

Fred Owen had been selling plots around the former Upton Lawn estate. The village folklore tells of the cash offers being £500 a plot and £750 if bordering the golf course. The houses along the west side of Heath Road were completed

around 1949, preserving many of the Upton Lawn boundary trees, although some had to be felled. With Deeside Sawmills relocating to Mickle Trafford (see page 162) the rubbish tip on the Heath Road / Upton Lane junction opposite the Wheatsheaf was filled in; allowing property development bordering onto the golf course to continue round into Upton Lane.

Much of this early post-war housing development was on a small scale, building on individual plots and gradually extending recent pre-war roads. The post-war period, however, was a time for Cheshire County Council to look strategically at developments. This 1945 proposal shows the shaded possible development areas as well as the hatched existing or committed developments . It seems to have responded to traffic concerns in the Long Lane / Caughall Road area, pushing the greenbelt further out to the north-east. Interestingly, the Plas Newton estate provided a green belt wedge between Upton and Newton. By the early 1960s this idea had been dropped.



A 1945 Cheshire County proposal

1951 saw the Festival of Britain celebrations (see page 182) and a spirit of optimism for the future. Flowering trees were donated by various village organisations and planted on the grass verge between Upton Cross and the Village Hall. Flower beds were planted on vacant spaces on Long Lane corner.

The new school – initially known as Upton County Primary - was built in 1951 to a modern style and using redundant wartime materials such as aluminium which converted from aircraft bodies to windows. As well as catering for the increasing number of children, demand was growing for the new school to offer a range of evening classes.



Upton County Primary School during its 1951 construction – see also page 242

Much of the expansion in housing was either in extending or completing the small estates that were started pre-war, or in ribbon development along the established roads. The bungalows, built by Warringtons in the mid-1950s, on the east side of Heath Road, were set well back due to proposals to make the road into a major through route – possibly even dual carriageway. This also explains the well set-back Wealstone Lane properties, built early 1960s, since this road was also part of main through route proposals. These Heath Road and Wealstone Lane properties enjoyed a few years of looking out, over their back gardens, at corn fields from which foxes would be disturbed at harvest time. The Wealstone Lane properties, from Upton Cross to approaching Weston Grove, had very high Witch Elm trees that were lost c1980 to Dutch Elm decease.

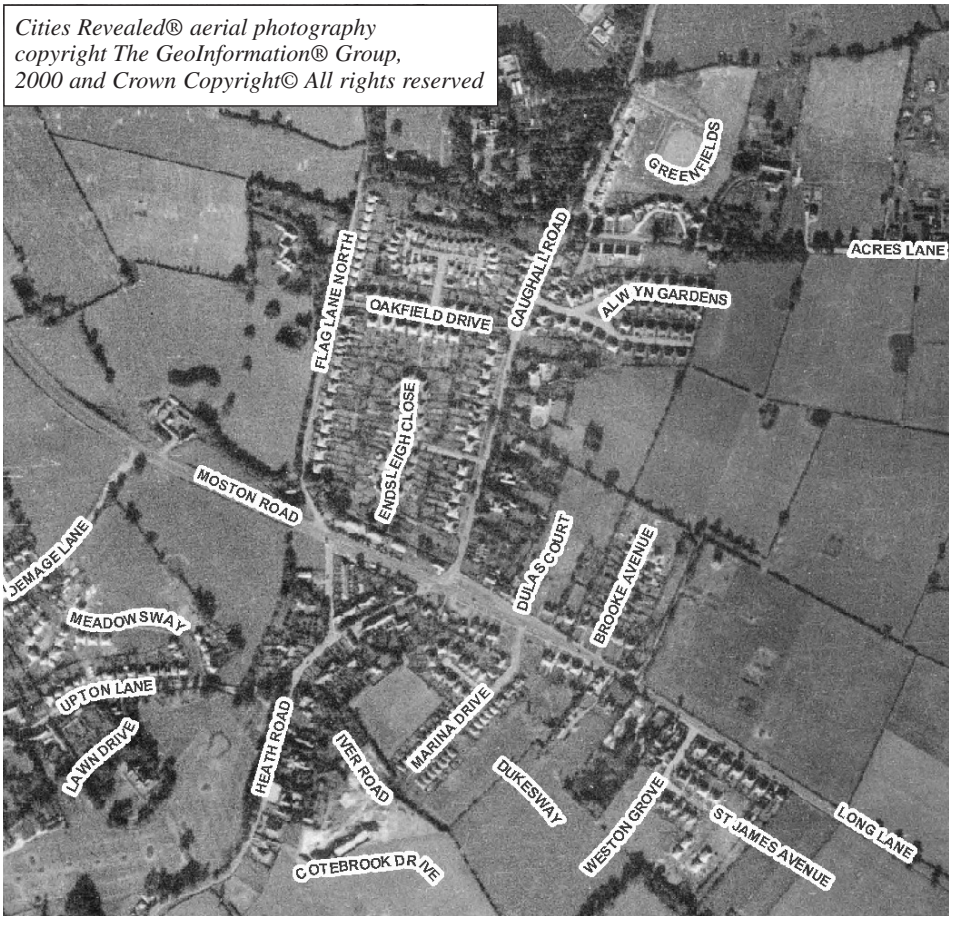




October 1963 – *aerial photograph with acknowledgement to the former 'Krissair of Leeds'*

Council housing & sheltered accommodation development

Upton's first council housing development started just pre-war in the Acres Lane area of Upton Heath. Immediate post-war RAF survey photography shows the Caughall Rd houses between Acres Lane and Greenfields as well as the Acres Lane crescent. Greenfields however was only marked out roads. The crescent on Acres Lane – now a filled-in 'green' – was a deep sandpit used by local children for play and the annual bonfire. Chester Rural District Council (CRDC) had acquired this land pre-war from the Egerton estate and by 1949 they had built Greenfields and improved access by widening the roads. Greenfields was able to house those families temporarily using the war-time huts near Weston Grove.



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The Council's next area of development was the land generally defined by the boundaries of Marina Drive, Newhall Road and Plas Newton. The boundary between the CRDC and Chester City ran through this – broadly Cornwall Road and north of it being CRDC and to the south Chester City. The CRDC side was refered to as their 'Upton Estate' and on completion amounted to some 100-150 properties. The City side was refered to as their 'Plas Newton Estate'. Aldford Road crosses this boundary and the change in housing style can be detected.

For the ‘Plas Newton’ estate, work started around 1959 with Bolesworth Road, Dunham Way and Chirk Close. Newhall Road followed with some 2-storey blocks of flats and garage blocks. The full Plas Newton estate was planned to comprise 160 dwellings of various types with 100 garages. By 1965 there were ten roads – besides those mentioned above, this gave – Peckforton, part of Aldford, Shipbrook, and Shocklash. Handford Road has a large 3-storey block of flats shown here shortly after being built.



Newhall and Bolesworth are on the right of the picture. Clearly the naming convention was after local villages. Newhall Road was initially a cul-de-sac off Plas Newton Lane and the buses were provided with a shale turning area at its cul-de-sac end.



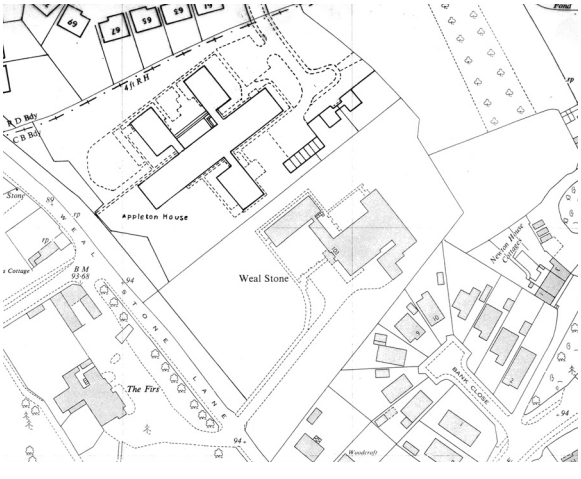
The early 1960s ‘Upton estate’ built by the CRDC was of a slightly smaller size. Building began at the southern end of the private housing which had started pre-war. By the late-1950s, Weston Grove was complete – having initially stopped at the southern boundary hedge just past the 1954 short stub cul-de-sac of Cornwall Road. Woodlea Avenue was similarly extended south and at the southerly end the houses were allocated for Deva hospital staff (shown here as new builds c1964). Cornwall Road with Dorset Road and the rest of Aldford Road were all completed in the early 1960s.

To the north-west of Weston Grove the early 1960s CRDC estate encompassed Dukesway, Queens Crescent and Marl Heys – the latter for elderly citizens. To the north of Marl Heys is a land locked area of approximately 1 acre which was transferred from the CRDC to the Upton Parish Council in 1968. The area still maintained by the Parish Council is simply grassed over and with pedestrian access from Marl Heys.

Newhall Road generally followed the route of the old 'stile path'. The route of this footpath from the Village Hall to Weston Grove can be seen on the 1963 aerial photograph (pages 122/123). This aerial photograph clearly shows the extent of the development at this time. The Dukesway & Queens Crescent area is understood to have been started by Rody's in the mid-1950s but continued by Halliwells. The photograph shows that by 1963, Warringtons had extended and developed the once cul-de-sac Weston Grove. Although the Westlea school had been built, the Cornwall Road /Aldford Road estate was still fields. It is understood that Shones of Buckley developed this area shortly after the aerial photograph.

Following the 1974 reorganisation of local government, these estates passed to the City Council and then after the 1980s 'Right to Buy' Act several properties passed into private ownership. On 27th November 2000 the Chester & District Housing Trust – a not-for-profit company – took over the Council's stock of property which by this time had reduced to about 50%, although a lower proportion of the houses and a higher proportion of the flats. The Deva hospital had built some 10 houses for staff on the north side of Deva Lane and these passed to the Council following a policy change. David Rooke of the Housing Trust has provided much of this information on their current and former properties.

In the mid1960s the City Council built 'Weal Stone' providing simple sheltered accommodation of a bedsit with bed, chair and wardrobe. In 1975 Appleton House, accessed from Appleton Road, opened as a new Children's Assessment Centre. This provided education as well as '30-bed' accommodation. By the mid-1980s it had become a Local Children's Centre eventually closing as child care policy changed. By the 1990s both properties were demolished and Bellways built Arradon Court and Bretton Close – named in accord with Upton's new French twinning. The field at the back of, and attached to, Appleton House had become known as the 'Donkey field'. The Council retained this piece of 'land locked' ground and it has become a small public area and fenced-off wild park area.



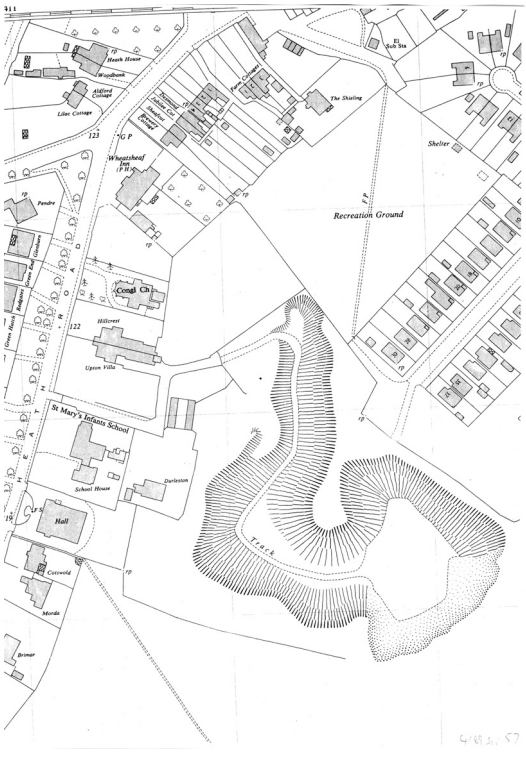
This marked up map, preceding the later Arradon Court/ Bretton Close area, shows Appleton House and Weal Stone to the east of lower Wealstone Lane. Base map – 1967 Ordnance Survey – Reproduced by kind permission of Ordnance Survey. © Crown Copyright NC/04/100035349. Marked up to show Appleton House by Chester City Council

Cheshire County Council were running the former Newton House as a care home for the elderly but by the late 1980s closed and marketed it in the belief that it had outlived its purpose. It was acquired by Chester City Council who after consideration of refur-

bishment decided to demolish it for purpose-built sheltered accommodation with a live-in warden. As part of the former Newton House estate, Tiverton Close was developed at around the same time, 1992, as sheltered accommodation under the wing of Newton House. Around 1972 the CRDC built Arderne House (Arderne is a famous mid-Cheshire family name). This provided 22 bedsit flats with a warden's accommodation and a communal lounge. After the 1974 reorganisation of local government this passed to Cheshire Council and subsequently to CLS – County Lifestyle Services – a not-for-profit company. Weal Stone House (previously Dorin Court) was built on the site of Government House (see page 68) and is also now with CLS. At the same time the Council acquired some of the former MOD land behind Government House and decided to build Deans Close (named after the Dean family of Upton Mill) as Council property. In 1981 they built eight flats with the four ground floor flats intended for those unable to climb stairs. Most of the flats are now under the control of the Housing Trust as sheltered accommodation with warden visits.

The 'back-of-school' Sand Pit

The brickyard behind St.Mary's school had closed before the 20th century. Folklore tells of the discovery of good sand when dogs were seen digging out the rabbits. By the 1930s it had become a working sandpit and in the 1950s Warringtons had an extraction contract with the owners, Capt. & Miss Gardner. As a good red sand, suitable for bricklaying and plastering, it supplied Warringtons for much of their operations. There were three levels – the lorries would park at one level and the sand manually shovelled in from the level above. Apparently no mechanised shovelling was used. Locals recall the Sand Martins in great abundance. In filling was started around 1957, apparently using blast furnace dross from Shotton Steel Works. This process lasted for about a year. By the October 1963 aerial photograph (page 122), not only had the pit gone but other ground had been levelled off ready to build the Warrington estate and extend Marina Drive.



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Warrington's Upton Cross estate

The October 1963 aerial photograph (pages 122/123) shows the extent of the land, to the west of Weston Grove, acquired by Thomas Warrington & Sons of Ellesmere Port from the Egerton estate. In the immediate post-war years, Warringtons had many Council contracts around the Chester area but did not start building in Upton until the mid-1950s. After early 1960s planning consent they started the private developments on both sides of Weston Grove which now linked to Wealstone Lane.



Development on the Cross Green side started first with some properties occupied in the early years of the 1960s. The shops were built on Weston Grove which meant the loss of a familiar sight of a Romany caravan parked there. The first shops are remembered as –

Yorks Self-Service, Ashe & nephew, Nicholsons – Butchers, Chemist, Lloyds Bank (opened Apr 65) Ladies Hairdresser - Raymond & Jason (opened Sept 65) and later Newsagents – Lewis



As seen in the aerial photograph both the Westlea school (see chapter 16) and the Clinic – shown here - were built by the mid-1960s.

Newton's northern estate

This area – formerly Dicksons Nursery – was initially named the Upton Park Estate when development started in the early 1950s. This site entrance was off Dicksons Drive, near the footbridge, looking towards Park Drive. The site plan reveals the extent of this first development even though the detail cannot be read.





Before the builders, Spinks & Denning, started on this estate in the early 1950s, the Newton housing on Dicksons Drive ended at the footbridge. Shepherds Lane was a short cul-de-sac accessed from Dicksons Drive. By the mid-1950s Park Drive was complete and renamed Rosewood Avenue. Thornton Drive was a track providing the boundary of the development. Whitby and Pensby Avenues were complete. Kirby Close and Ellesmere Avenue were nearing completion. The northern end of Dicksons Drive had also been completed with Caldy and Bidston Closes.



Well Lane gave access to Rose (later Dawpool) Cottage. As shown, in this winter scene, the footpath then circled the cottage and continued west to Dicksons Drive.

By the early 1960s, Spinks & Denning had completed Thornton Drive and Neston Drive along with Neston's cul-de-sacs – Gayton, Denhall and Moorhouse. Finally, Shepherds Lane was linked to Well Lane with Dawpool and the Menhuin building.

All this land was previously the showgrounds and greenhouses of Dicksons Nursery – see pages 152/154. The name change of Park Drive to Rosewood Avenue appears to remember the nursery but most of the other names have drawn on Wirral villages. This nursery land was well served with streams and springs - all needed to be diverted and controlled before the whole area became a building estate.

The two photographs show some culvert work taking place in the early 1950s. Residents recall a major collapse in the 1960s which resulted in Neston Drive being closed for several months.



The railway line is seen in the background with the Garth Drive area behind.



The last Dicksons Nursery feature, from their spectacular landscaping (see page 152), was the famous 'Marble Arch'. It had been reduced from its 12 foot height during war-time, down to being suitable as a seat. No doubt much of the marble was dispersed to the private gardens gradually being created in the area. The photograph, from the early 1950s, shows Olive and Jennifer Fox sitting on the remains of the arch. Francis Fox is responsible for most of the post-war period photographs of this area.

Train derailment of the early 1950s in northwest Newton area



A significant goods train derailment in the early 1950s was a major talking point at the time and is still well remembered.

The resulting fire drew the attention of the local children. This photograph shows the housing spreading up towards Upton from Newton. The lamppost is on the lane linking Stanton Drive with Dicksons Drive. The derailment is believed to have occured near the end of Caldy Close.

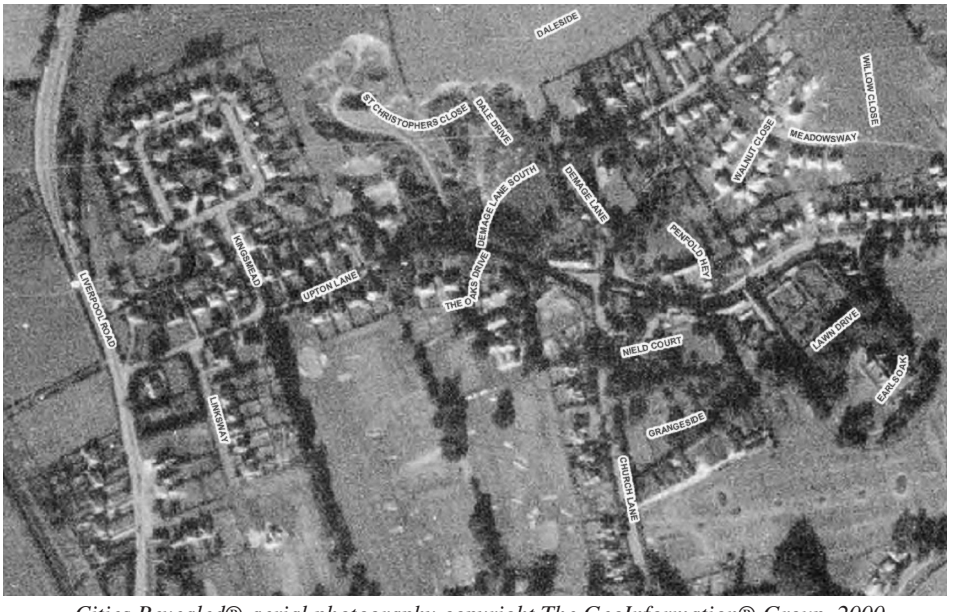


Appleton Road development

These fields on Upton's southern boundary, were previously farmed out of Newton but by the late 1800s had become part of Dicksons Nursery. Post-WW2, they were scrubland until taken up for development in the late 1960s. Development was started by Truebond with the first Appleton Road occupants moving in by the end of the decade. The rest were completed in the early 1970s.

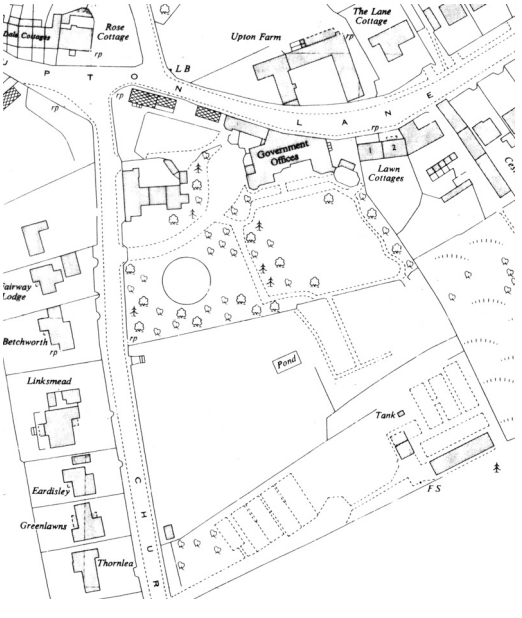
Daleside/Sandpit/Lawn/Grange

This late-1940s RAF aerial survey shows the extent of the development.



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Apparently the Potts estate still owned the sandpit and some surrounding area including at least some, of the Dale Cottages. Daleside was built in 1953/4 by George Morgan on farmland for Viggor Estates Ltd. He also built in the lower area of the pit but building initially kept away from the sandpit cliff edges. Later the pit was filled in and eventually building allowed so that by 1963 the area had been totally built over with St. Christophers Close. The lower grounds of the Grange estate were first built over in the mid-1960s starting along Church Lane and forming Grangeside. The main house and out-buildings were demolished in the late 1960s and Nield Court built - named after the Grange's last private owner Sir Basil Nield MP (see page 66).



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Upton Lawn was demolished c1970 by John Youdale; initially retaining the old snooker room used by gardener and ex-Everton player's wife, Audrey Heywood. The Coachman's House, shown here shortly before its demolition c1986, was by then in a derelict state. Its last role was as a store for an antique dealer.



Lawn Drive, Grangeside and Nield Court were developed by a number of different builders as plots were acquired – Youdale, Halliwell, Marshal Hudson, Wibly, Stewart Lee – to name but a few.

Windmill Rise, a small cul-de-sac off Heath Road, was built between 1962/4 by builders Norman Taylor & Sydney Addis on land purchased from Rev. Leslie Francis Harvey, who owned the Upton Cross estate at that time. The entrance can be seen on the 1963 aerial photograph – page 122.

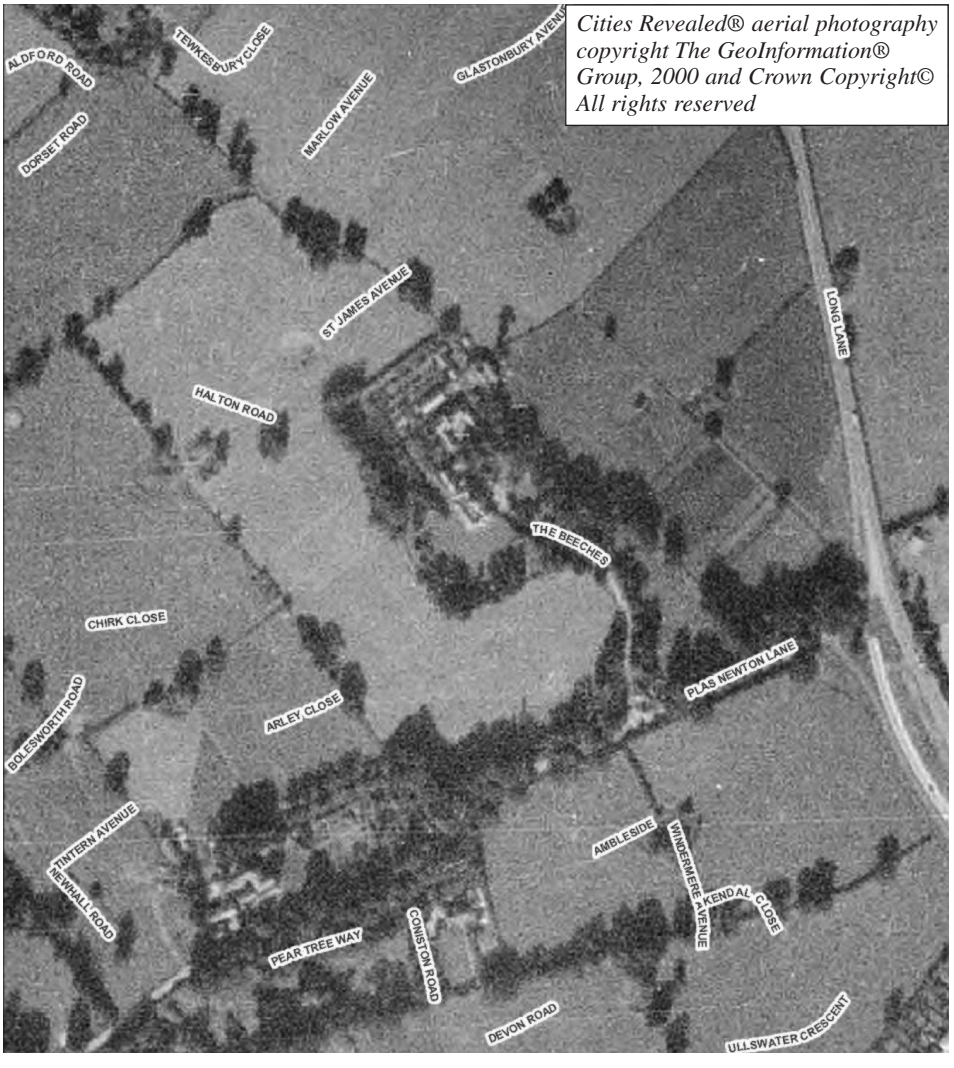
Flag Lane South developments

John Youdale demolished Upton Manor in 1974 – the building having previously been set on fire. Developing the area attracted souvenir hunters from a wide area; quickly digging before the site was built over. Wheldon Close was built 1975/6 and named after the Rev. Wheldon Williams (see page 258). The Manor House (see page 39) had stood at the centre of the Close hammer head.



The Baptist church was built in the 1980s and the Smithy Court development followed after the blacksmith's had closed and been demolished.

The Plas Newton area (see also page 75)



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This RAF aerial survey from 1945/8 shows that this area was farmed and apparently stayed that way, with cattle in the fields until Lloyd Jones abandoned farming around 1960. After completion of the Council estates (see page 125), further housing was built from the mid-1960s. By 1969, Boot the builders had completed St. James Avenue, circling Plas Newton. Arley Close was built by Percy Eden who had completed Tintern Avenue earlier in the 1960s.

The field to the west of Long Lane, opposite Plas Newton Lane, had become the Brookhirst Athletic Ground. The former Brookhirst Switchgear Company of Newry Park employed many people who lived in the Upton area. The 'County Officers Club' was built off Plas Newton Lane and now incorporates these sports fields, all under the name of the Cheshire County Sports Club.

The Beeches

The Shell company acquired the remaining Plas Newton estate (see page 75) including the main property and built accommodation along the drive for staff attending courses. By the early 1980s, they sold out to developer Christian Salvesen and builder Wainhomes began construction of The Beeches. Recently, the main house has been demolished and Bellways have built a block of apartments – The Court Yard.

The growth of community facilities in the 1960s & 1970s

The major growth in housing was accompanied by a range of new community facilities. More schools were built – see chapter 16 – and by the mid-1970s, the new High School meant that local children no longer had to be bussed out of the area.

By the mid-1960s, Wealstone Lane playing field was established. The football pitch was followed with a pavilion and then putting, bowls and the play equipment. Finally a new tennis court was built; the former pre-war one having been located where the teen shelter now stands. A new purpose built library was erected in 1969 on land adjacent to the playing fields. With a car park, this Wealstone Lane public facility became the main location for outdoor events – see chapter 13. Land acquired for Mill View school in the late 1960s, also allowed a Youth Club to be built – further adding to the community facilities of this area.

The Roman Catholic church acquired some land on Upton's southern boundary and resolving the necessary drainage issues, were able, by the mid-1960s, to build a modern style church - St.Columba's. Until it opened, the Village Hall had been used for their services – see chapter 12.

The Firs development on Wealstone Lane

The Firs estate is covered on page 72. As discussed on page 106, the estate had been acquired by the War Department and a large number of wooden barracks erected during WW2. Post-war the army built married quarters on Horrocks Road – named after the last General, the Commander-in-Chief. By the 1950s, the army appear to have abandoned the main Firs building and it stood empty, becoming derelict, until c1980 when it was demolished. Cllr Eric Gerrard had attempted to save it – suggesting that the Conservative Association acquire and restore it for their use. The site was developed in the early 1980s by Christian Salvesen. The planners, apparently, insisted on retention of the sandstone wall, wherever possible, along the frontage. One of the new roads is named Whitton Drive. This suggests that it may have been named after Delores Whitton, although this has not been confirmed. She was not Mayor of Chester until 1986/7 and did not represent an Upton or Newton ward.

Moston area



Brickland's pig farm shortly before its demolition. Acknowledgement to the unidentified aerial photographer.

The Oakfield estate (page 69), established by Roberts, had included much of Moston. The area between Daleside and the Moston garage traffic lights, had passed to the Rev. Stephen Williams and was later acquired, in part, by Dandy for his nursery (see page 283). The field to the south of the nursery, known as '*Big Moston*' was acquired by Thomas Hibbert with an early 1900s building which was developed, becoming Hillcrest. This is best remembered as Brickland's pig farm. It was demolished in the 1970s.

The County Council Highways depot on Liverpool Road, opposite the Dale camp, had been used to dump wartime concrete debris and other material. No longer required by the 1990s, it was considered unsuitable for housing development and in 1997 it was decided to make a wildlife area of the available half acre. With volunteer help it became the first '*access for all nature reserve'* managed by the '*Cheshire Wildlife Trust*'. In 1998 a hedgerow was planted and a pond created. With its raised beds, access to all is much improved and further developments are in hand.



The Bache Supermarket

The area's most ancient site – the Bache Pool (see page 17) – remained generally undeveloped until the mid-1980s. Dicksons Nursery had acquired the land, cultivating up to the marshy pool edges. By the early 1900s, railway sidings had been built and various temporary buildings were gradually added – see page 143. In the mid-1980s, Safeway acquired the railway sidings area and built their initial supermarket which overlooked the scrubland and horse grazing field of Mr Godwin (see page 7).



The entrance to the former smaller Safeway store can just be seen in the far right of the picture and the Bache shops in the background. In the late-1990s, the supermarket was extended after acquiring Nixon's field and carrying out archaeological digs within the former Pool area – see page 25. The raised bowling green (see page 196) behind the Egerton Arms was removed in the 1990s and an hotel built.

With the new Bache roundabout (see page 9 colour photo), and Countess Way removing one of the last wild play areas for local children, the Bache area was dramatically changed during the last decade of the 20th century. Developments required extensive underground construction of water courses.

In-filling

Several small cul-de-sacs have been added as the housing demand has sought out any available land. Names are needed for these and occasionally the Council forget the origin of neighbouring road names. Hence the small cul-de-sac off Marina Drive (named after Princess Marina – icon of the age); has been named Harbour Close. Alas no mooring berths are available!

Finally two recent News items whose legacy lives on

A potentially very serious accident occurred in April 2001 when a double decker bus, carrying children to Upton High school, attempted to pass under the railway bridge on Mill Lane. The roof was torn off and the children suffered shock, bruising and whiplash. The 'Low Bridge' warning signs remain to this day.

A 2000 'Keep Upton Green' campaign was formed to fight proposals to develop part of 'Chemistry Pits' playing field (see page 95). Those supporting the development argued that developing a quarter of the site, for a sheltered accommodation scheme by the charity Scope, would fund improvements to the whole site and help supervise the vandalism problems. Those opposing the proposals, argued that this was a dangerous precedent as there was a shortage of open public land and the Council had an obligation to find the necessary funding for required improvements. The proposal was dropped and many site improvements made – the latest of which has involved local school children helping to plant a wild wooded area.