

Discover Whitchurch: A Long History

Ice Age Whitchurch

The most recent Ice age peaked about 21,000 years ago and ended around 11,500 years ago. In this area the Welsh and the North West/North Sea Ice Sheets met reaching the end of their progress.

Today much of the bedrock of North West Shropshire, South West Cheshire and lower areas of North East Wales is covered with a thick layer of glacial moraine, in places hundreds of feet thick. Vast quantities of sand, gravel, marl, clay and rocks were deposited over the sandstone and mudstone bedrock as the ice melted.

The retreating ice left an undulating landscape with ice melt gouging out hollows and deep depressions. These subsequently filled with meltwater and rainwater creating the meres and mosses of today.

Whitchurch has a Community Hospital, doctors, dentists, opticians, chiropodists and a range of therapists.

Leisure: Whitchurch has a leisure centre, swimming pool and many sports clubs. Along with the Waterways Country Park which includes Greenfields Nature Reserve, plus Deermoss Meadow, Queensway and Jubilee Parks.

There are the remains of two castles in the parish of Whitchurch: Pan Castle and Blakemere Castle. A third castle seems to have stood in the town itself.

The weekly Friday Market has been held since 1362. The town has a wealth of Medieval, Tudor, Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

Sir John Talbot's school was formed after Henry 8th closed Combermere Abbey.

J. B. Joyce & Co Clockmaker, established in 1690, built tower clocks for many places worldwide.

Randolph Caldecott - illustrator lived and worked here.

Edward German - composer was born here.

Many Whitchurch Pubs are in historic buildings: The Old Eagles (c.1400) is the oldest building in town.

The White Bear is set back from the High Street but has a frontage on the Roman 'Watling Street'.

The Black Bear is rumoured to contain timbers from the collapsed medieval church.

The Old Town Hall Vaults is close to an early town hall and is the birthplace of composer Edward German.

The Red Cow: early 17th century listed building.

Whitchurch is noted for its wealth of independent shops: bakers, butchers, bookseller, haberdashery, delicatessen, chemists, clothing, shoes, gifts, toys, florists, antiques, jewellers, home-furnishing, carpets/flooring, hardware, electrical supplies, prints/cards, art, photography, sports, bikes, pets and phone shops.

Whitchurch also has: railway station, bus station, taxi services, banks, travel agents, estate agents, hotel and B&B accommodation, hairdressers, beauticians, large supermarkets, national chain stores, and charity shops.



St Alkmund's Church
The medieval church collapsed in 1711. A new church was quickly erected. Built of brick and faced with stone, it was consecrated in 1713.



Walker's Bakery + Cafe built c.1450

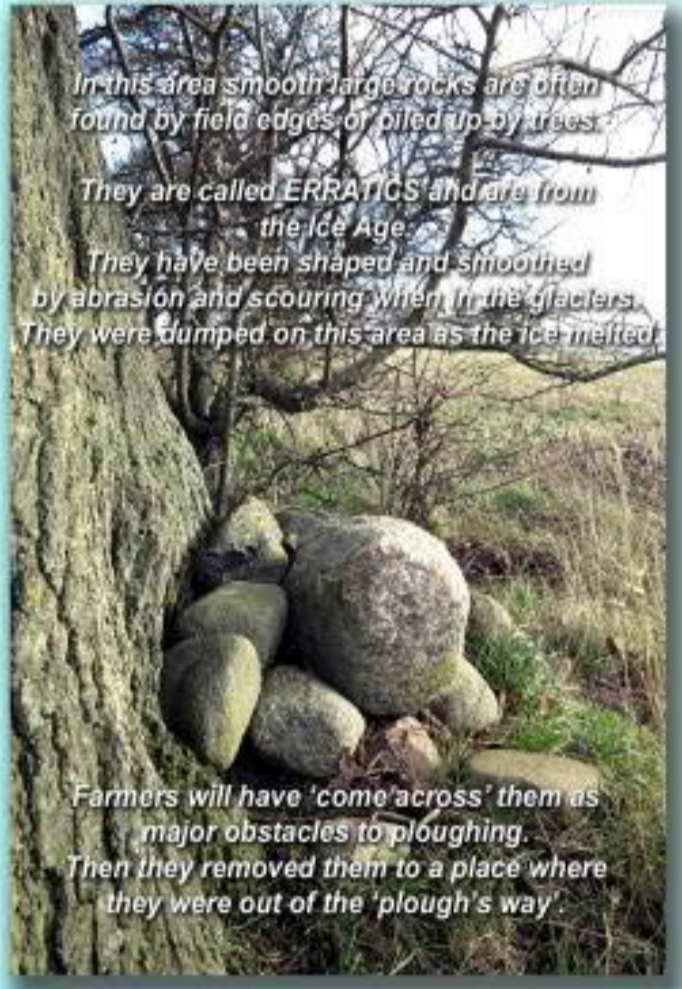
1404 the Welsh Raided Whitchurch

The oldest building in Whitchurch is the Old Eagles Pub. Built about 1400, it is a cruck, timber framed construction that was once a much larger building; it was brick fronted in Victorian times. It is possible that it was built as a 'high status building, perhaps a medieval guild hall?'

The Welsh raiders devastated Whitchurch. They burned and pillaged the town leaving the centre of Whitchurch in ruins. However, what was later to be named the Old Eagles Public House survived. There are two buildings in the High Street that were built during the slow period of recovery after the Welsh pillage. They were both built about 1450: Walker's bakery/cafe and the High Street Garage.



Old Eagles built c.1400 High Street Garage built c.1450



Ancient Objects Found in the Whitchurch Area



Perforated Mesolithic Mace Head
Middle Stone Age: starts 10,000 years ago

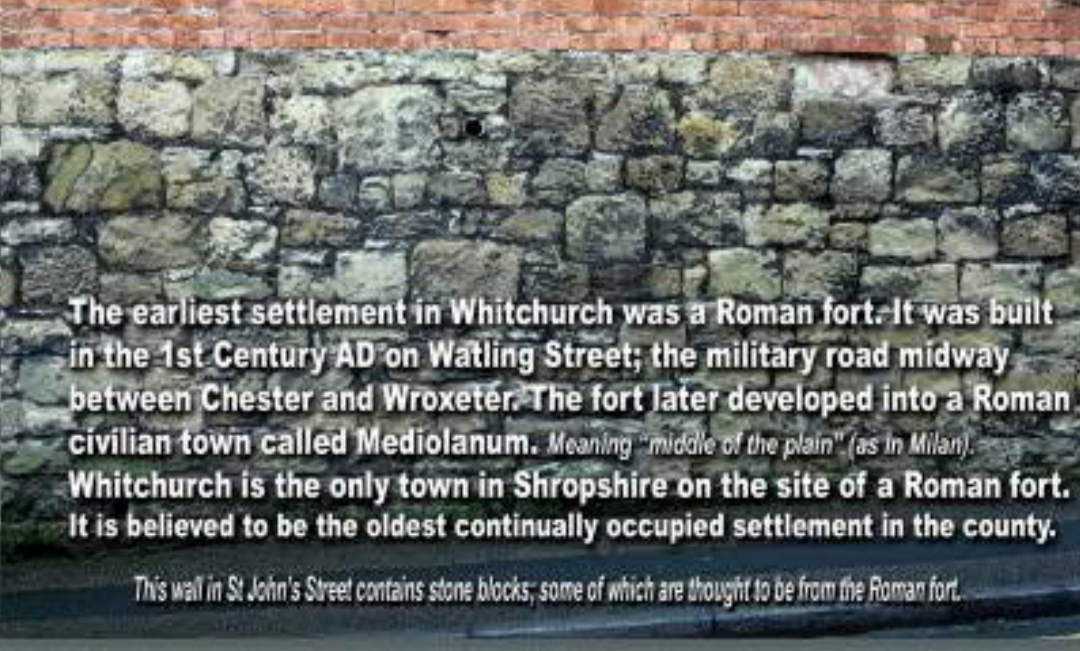
Neolithic Perforated Stone Axe-Hammer
New Stone Age: starts 6,000 years ago

Palstave Axe Head
Bronze Age: starts 3,500 years ago



This 'enhanced' map shows how little the town centre has changed in 250 years.

Whitchurch Began as a Roman Fort



The earliest settlement in Whitchurch was a Roman fort. It was built in the 1st Century AD on Watling Street; the military road midway between Chester and Wroxeter. The fort later developed into a Roman civilian town called Mediolanum. Meaning 'middle of the plain' (as in Milan). Whitchurch is the only town in Shropshire on the site of a Roman fort. It is believed to be the oldest continually occupied settlement in the county.

This wall in St John's Street contains stone blocks, some of which are thought to be from the Roman fort.

DOMESDAY BOOK

William, Duke of Normandy conquered England in 1066 and took ownership of all its land. He granted some land to his supporting barons and ruled by a system we now call 'feudalism'. This was the beginning of our 'class system'. In 1085 he decided to catalogue his newly acquired territory and possessions. This list today we call the Domesday Book. It is written in Latin. Whitchurch is listed in the Domesday Book. In the 'Book' this settlement is written as Westune. It is suggested that it is more likely that Whitchurch was actually then named Weston: west town.

Erected in 2017 by the Whitchurch Waterway Trust

The panel is part of the first stage in the construction of the Whitchurch Canal Basin: grant provided by EAFRD.

Whitchurch Waterway Trust website: whitchurchwaterway.uk

Whitchurch Information website: whitchurch.info

Whitchurch History and Archaeology Group Website: whitchurch.history.uk

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

design, compilation and photography by WHAG member Philip Walker

JOHN TALBOT 1ST EARL OF SHREWSBURY

Born at Blakemere Castle, Whitchurch in 1383, Lord Talbot is noted as one of the most illustrious figures in English history. In the Hundred years war with France he distinguished himself as a great military commander. In 1422 John Talbot was created the 1st Earl of Shrewsbury by Henry VI as reward for his service. Lord Talbot moved the chief residence of the Talbot family from Goodrich Castle to Alton Towers. In 1453 at the age of 80 Lord Talbot led the English army at the Battle of Castillon-La-Bataille but died from a wound received there. The English lost the battle and lost France; the last battle of the 100 Years' War.



Lord John Talbot's monument in St Alkmund's Church