

THE EVOLUTION OF DALTON, NEAR KENDAL, CUMBRIA: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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Dalton is a small township in south Cumbria that for much of its history was in the old county of Lancashire, passing to Westmorland in 1895. The countryside is dominated by a limestone fell and much of it is largely uncultivable, 'The township is a rocky tract, abounding in limestone, of which the high hill of Dalton Crag is almost entirely composed' (Baines 1836, 625). The southern part of the township, where the focus of settlement has always been, is rolling countryside, dominated by a central valley. Throughout the township there are highly visible earthworks and stone-founded archaeological remains, which have attracted considerable research and conservation interest. Their upstanding and striking character has led to statutory protection as scheduled monuments. Some of the remains have been surveyed on a number of occasions within the last 35 years and partial documentary investigations undertaken. Little of the research has been widely circulated, however, and a consistent view of Dalton's development has not emerged (Newman 2009, 228–9).

Today there are a number of discrete settlement nuclei and individual farms scattered throughout the township (Figure 1). In the north is the small hamlet of Dalton Houses, in the centre is Dalton Old Hall and in the south Coat Green. The scheduled areas include a double oval of stones at Russell Farm, Dalton Houses (Scheduled Monument number 35031), covering approximately 60 x 23m. It is described as a probable Iron Age or Romano-British settlement. About 0.5km to the south is another scheduled monument (Scheduled Monument number 35030) which is divided into three parts. The northernmost parts are described as Dalton Medieval Village and the southern as a field system, and are clearly regarded as associated within the scheduling details. A classic picture is presented of a presumably contemporary settlement and field system, both abandoned, and with a clear association drawn between two sets of earthworks that are neither similar in nature nor physically linked. The settlement site is described in the Medieval Settlement Research Group index as a class A deserted medieval village with a very good pattern of roads and crofts containing identifiable house sites (Cumbria HER 2524).

The purpose of this paper is to present the preliminary results of research placing the noted remains at Dalton into an historical and landscape context. In the process, previous perceptions and interpretations are challenged or refuted and a picture of an evolving landscape over 700 years begins to emerge. The approach involved a reconsideration of the documentary records, especially maps assisted by the use of a Geographical Information System (GIS). The findings gleaned were amplified, supplemented and validated by landscape analysis based

on repeated site visits to examine earthwork remains, field boundaries and stone alignments.

Dalton township was recorded in Domesday Book. Its place-name simply means farmstead or place in a valley (Smith 1967, 59), an accurate description for Dalton Old Hall and its setting. In 1086 the township was held by the king but by the 12th century the manor was in the hands of the de Croft family (Farrer and Brownbill 1914, 183). In 1372, John de Croft was given licence to create a deer park (Farrer and Brownbill 1914, 184 fn 18). The manorial centre was at Dalton Old Hall. The current house, probably erected in 1666 (Bulmer 1885, 646) was said to adjoin the site of an earlier foundation, the ruins of which survived into the later 19th century (Bulmer 1885, 646). An earthwork, possibly relating to this earlier manor house, lies adjacent to the existing property.

Reinterpreting the settlement pattern

The key to reinterpreting and understanding Dalton's settlement history and the nature of the medieval landscape that underlies today's landscape is an estate map of 1694 (CRO WPR/10 Misc; Figure 2). At first sight, this remarkable document appears to offer little scope for use in examining the past landscape in detail as it appears difficult to relate to later maps and the modern landscape. It seems sketchy and its accuracy questionable. Once issues of scale are resolved, however, it becomes possible to identify nearly every feature shown on the 1694 map in today's landscape (Figure 3). The map portrays Dalton as it was when visited by Thomas Machel, an antiquarian who in the 1690s compiled notes for a history of the Barony of Kendal. In these notes he refers to spending some time at Dalton tracing the county boundary. The settlement is termed 'an irregular village' (Ewebank 1963, 45–6), which is precisely how it is depicted on the map. The 1694 settlement comprised a group of buildings, broadly corresponding with the present day settlement of Dalton Houses, grouped around the double oval feature (SM 35031). This feature is clearly marked and appears to have been a functional part of the settlement. To the south, on the map, is an unenclosed rectangular area that appears to have been a large village green-like area, partially flanked by stone-founded earthworks of buildings and crofts to the east and west (Figure 4). At the southern end is a cluster of buildings and closes that correspond with the area scheduled as Dalton Medieval Village.

The double-oval feature was considered by the former Cumbria County Archaeologist, Tom Clare, possibly to have been used as a pound (Cumbria HER 2524). This attribution seems highly likely given that it appears to have been a functional part of the settlement in 1694 and appears to be physically connected to an outgang that led up on to the common waste of Dalton Crag. Stock appear to have entered the settlement from the waste

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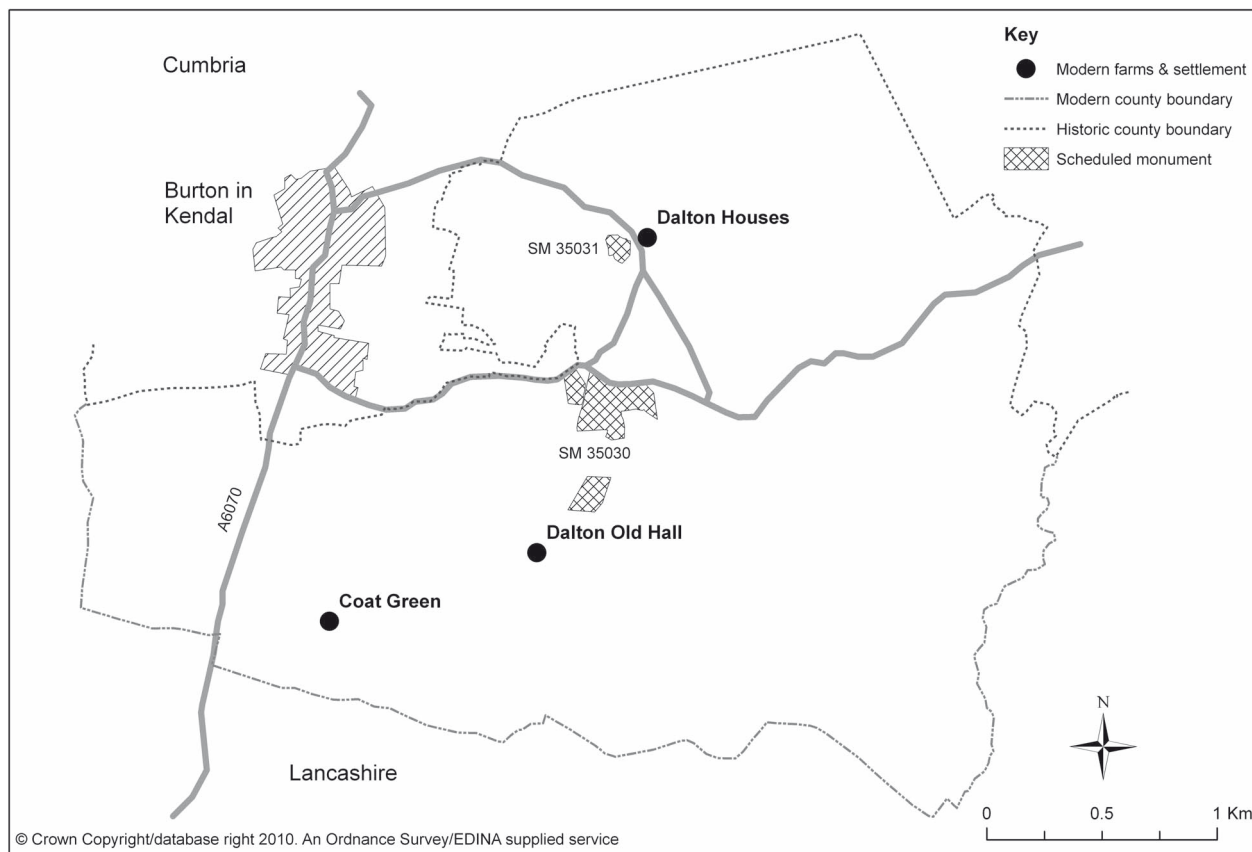


Figure 1 The township of Dalton, Cumbria

through the outgoing and into the double oval enclosure. On the west side of the double oval are probable stockades and a driveway leading out into the common arable field. The features seem to relate to a control system that allowed cattle to be brought in from the common waste and then let out on to the common arable lands in order to manure them (Figure 5). There is no evidence that this monument was a prehistoric settlement as described in the scheduling documentation (SM 35031); rather it seems to be a communal stock controlling area of likely medieval origin.

The importance of stock rearing in Dalton is made clear when the extent of the common waste is calculated for the township. About 44% of medieval Dalton township was uncultivable common waste (Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation). In the early 19th century two annual fairs were held, one for cattle and another for cattle, horses and pedlary (Lewis 1831, 3), which reflect the importance of cattle to the traditional farming economy. The large “village green” to the south of the double oval feature may also have formed part of the stock control system and it did have a pinfold marked within it in 1694 (CRO WPR/10 Misc), the walled remains of which are still identifiable. This area was marked as waste on Thomas Yates’s late 18th century map of Lancashire (Harley 1967), and it is likely to have been used in common. There is earthwork evidence of some croft abandonment on both the east and west side of the ‘village green’, seeming to date to both before and after 1694. Evidence includes an area of well-preserved orthostatic stone foundations.

The settlement cluster south of the ‘village green’ in 1694, today consists of the scheduled archaeological remains of house platforms and other buildings, closes and routes (SM 35030). Map evidence indicates this area of settlement was evolving between the late 17th century and the mid 19th century (CRO WPR/10 Misc; CRO WPR 10/1/4/19). By the early 19th century the area included the field names Robinson’s, Watson’s and Harry crofts as well as New Enclosure and paddocks (CRO WD BIG/1210). Robinson’s Croft was divided into two by the early 19th century and lay adjacent to another empty croft-shaped property known as Widow Wildman’s. All three properties lay at right angles to a route leading along the west side of the ‘village green’ towards Dalton Houses, and are likely to have formed part of the medieval settlement along the west side of the village green (Figure 6). All the earthwork remains of house sites in the scheduled area are multi-cellular and appear to have had chimneys. Consequently, the visible building remains relate to post-medieval structures, but at least in Higher and Lower Robinson’s Crofts may relate to only the last phase of occupation and earlier medieval remains may be present.

Watson’s and Harry’s crofts and New Enclosures, however, do not seem to have formed part of a medieval settlement pattern. The irregular layout of this settlement area, the variability in shape, alignment and size of the crofts are all indicative of a post-medieval layout, characteristic of squatter or encroachment-type settlements. It contrasts strongly with the very regular linear crofts set in a row along a road, or clustered around

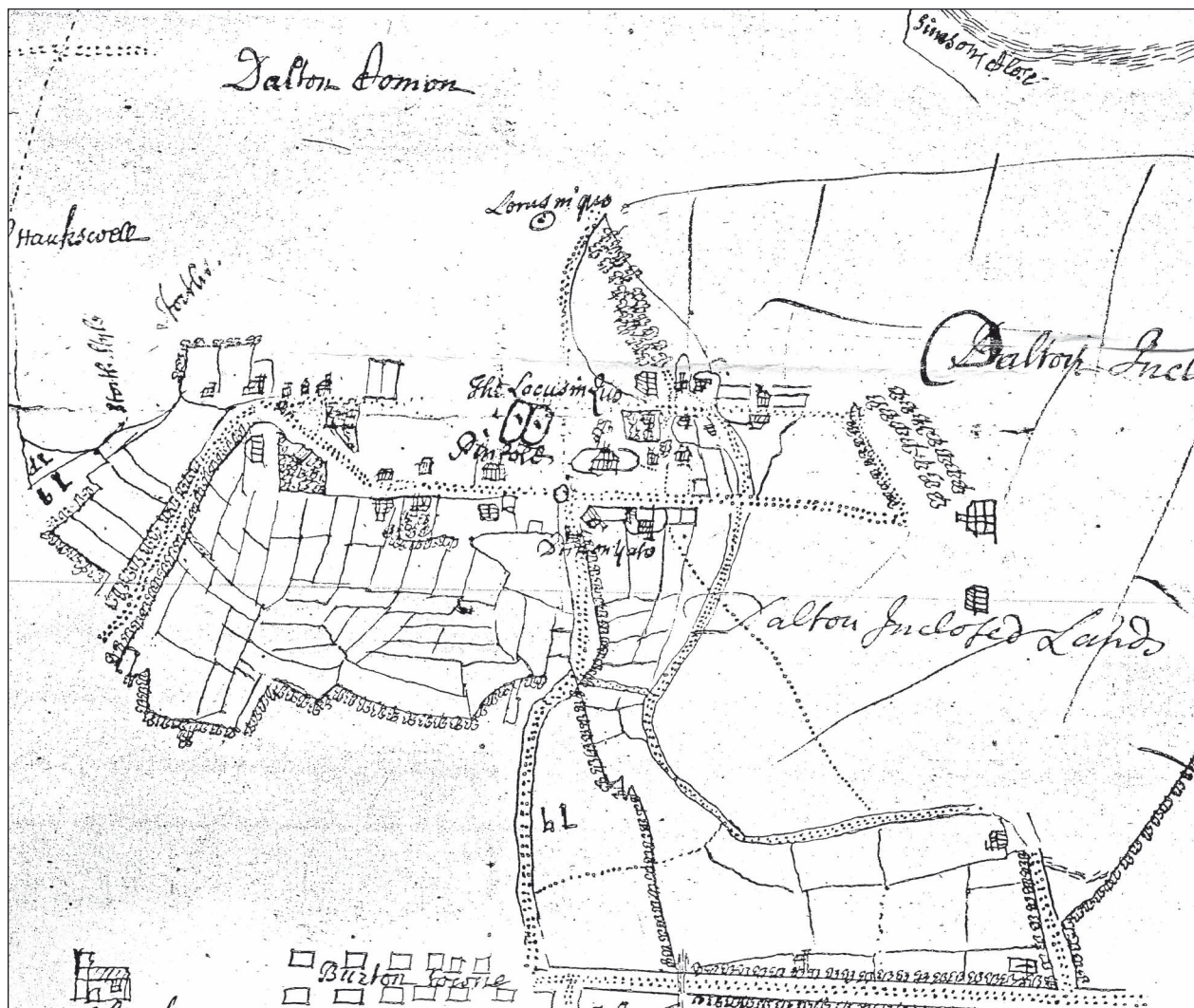


Figure 2 An excerpt from the 1694 estate map of Dalton (CRO WPR/10 Misc), with additions from 1730 relating to a trespass case. North is to the left of the map. Dalton Old Hall is the larger house on the right of the map and the area of Dalton Houses is to the left.

a green, which characterise the usual medieval nucleated settlement layout found in historic north Lancashire (C. Newman in prep). This post-medieval layout may have been forming when it was first mapped in 1694, a hypothesis given strength by the area known as New Enclosure still being shown as being waste on Thomas Yates's 1786 county map. Indeed it seems highly likely that the settlement area was encroached from the waste that formed the 'village green'. The scheduled visible earthworks do not represent the remains of a medieval deserted settlement as landscape and map analysis clearly reveals that most of these earthworks are the sites of structures still standing in the early 19th century, with most originating as part of a post-medieval encroachment on to waste. Indeed the most recent house to have been built in the area is a still-standing ruin. This house was erected between 1837 and 1865. The last to be built in the area, it was also the last to be abandoned. Single storey and three-celled, it seems typical of the character of the buildings represented in the area as multi-cellular earthworks (Newman 2009, 229).

In 1694 to the immediate west of the 'village green' and associated remains, were a series of strip-like enclosed small fields (CRO WPR/10 Misc). Though rationalised and reduced in number by the mid-19th century, this pattern was still recognisable on the tithe (CRO WPR 10/1/4/19) and 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps and is indicative of strips enclosed from a former common arable field. Some field boundaries exhibiting artral curves still survive (Figure 5). The field pattern continues over the former county boundary into neighbouring Burton township and it is obvious that the irregular boundary between Westmorland and Lancashire was defined by strip boundaries as the common field systems of Burton and Dalton interlocked. This is clearly reflected even at the scale of Yates's county map of 1786 (Harley 1967). It was this irregular boundary that interested the antiquarian Thomas Machel. If the county boundary was defined around the time Lancashire became a recognisable entity in the later 12th century, it implies that the common arable fields of Burton and Dalton were already in existence when the boundary was established.

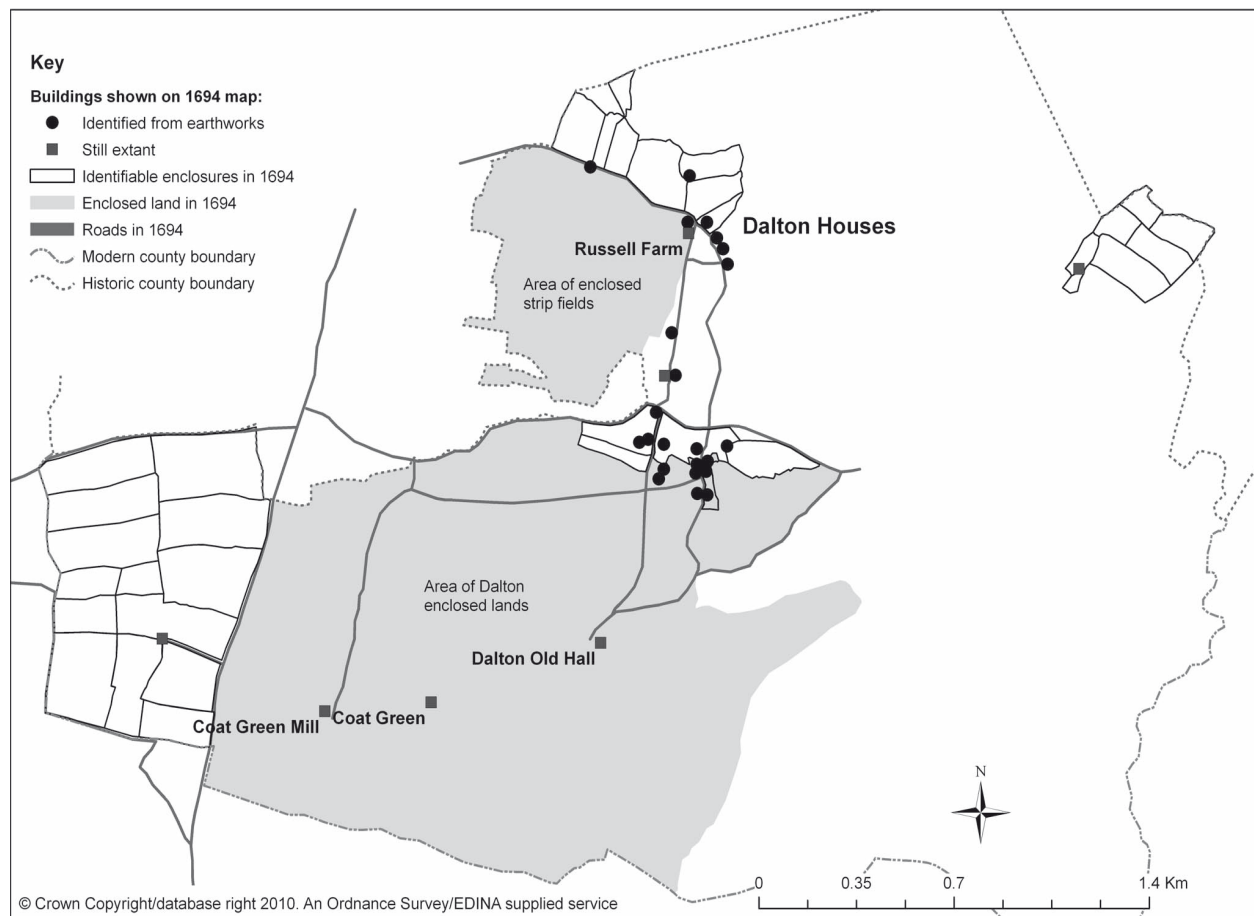


Figure 3 Settlement pattern at Dalton in 1694. The double-oval feature (SM 35031) is at Russell Farm, Dalton Houses

It is likely that the common fields of Dalton had shrunk in area by 1694. To the south of the scheduled settlement area is a series of strip lynchets within an enclosure. By c. 1800 the enclosure was known as Great Lindale and there was a neighbouring enclosure called Little Lindale, possibly indicating the subdivision of one former larger field. This may have been a common field, within which the lynchets formed strip divisions, but all that can be said for certain is that this system of cultivation appears to have ceased by 1694. These lynchets are part of the scheduled monument 35030 but clearly if they are of a likely medieval origin they are not chronologically or probably functionally associated with a settlement that was largely post-medieval in origin.

Dalton in the medieval period

Bulmer's *Directory of Westmoreland* offers one of a number of later 19th century accounts (generally copied one from another) of a tradition of desertion of a settlement in Dalton brought about by plague. It states that near to Dalton Old Hall 'can be traced the remains of an ancient village, or town, which tradition tells us was depopulated by a plague which then raged in England' (1885, 646). Irrespective of the likelihood or not of such a desertion being brought about by plague, the tradition raises the question as to whether it related to the deserted settlement area around New Enclosure (SM 35030), or to

some other area of settlement. To date, other interpretations of the settlement evidence at Dalton have applied the description to the New Enclosure area (Cumbria HER 2525). Not only would this be highly inaccurate, although in itself not unusual for a local tradition, but it also requires the local directory correspondent to have been remarkably ill-informed, as the desertion of the New Enclosure area would have been well within living memory. Indeed what are now earthworks are likely to have been standing ruins in the 1880s.

There is an alternative candidate for the site of the settlement linked to the plague depopulation tradition. An estate map of *circa* 1800 shows a field called Tofts to the south-west of Dalton Old Hall on the route through to Coat Green. The field had been heavily improved by the 1970s and there are no earthworks visible. In addition there are at least three sets of discrete earthworks scattered along the ridge to the east of Dalton Old Hall which appear to define former homesteads (Figure 7). Although these sites were all covered heavily in nettles when visited, the remains of stone wall foundations could be discerned. These farmsteads are associated with former enclosure boundaries, represented by substantial stone-founded banks. On the map of 1800, two of the farmsteads are physically associated with enclosures called Mark Farm and Noble Farm. These sites were abandoned before 1694. A likely context for their desertion may be the creation of the deer park.

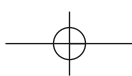


Figure 4 Stone-founded earthworks of buildings and crofts west of the 'village green' area, Dalton Houses



Figure 5 Double-oval feature at Russell Farm, Dalton Houses. Although scheduled as an Iron Age or Romano-British settlement, it is more likely to be medieval and relate to stock control. The atrally curved field boundaries beyond Russell Farm are survivals of the enclosed former arable common fields.



Dalton deer park

In 1372 licence was given to empark 300 acres of wood and 200 acres of arable within the manor of Dalton (Farrer and Brownbill 1914, 184). The park was still in existence in 1498 (Farrer and Brownbill 1914, 185). This deer park is situated to the south-east of Dalton Old Hall, which it abutted. It includes a large area of replanted ancient woodland, known as Dalton Park Wood. The circuit of the deer park is readily traceable on the ground as it features a boundary with a partially surviving internal ditch, and in some places the remains of a substantial stone wall (Figure 7). The northern boundary is in part formed by a natural stream course. The best preserved boundary segments are along the eastern boundary of Dalton Park Wood, where it survives as a bank and ditch, and in the south-west corner, as a substantial stone-founded bank and ditch, or as the substantial foundations to a large dry-stone wall. In some places the park boundary appears to incorporate pre-existing enclosures, some of which are associated earthworks of likely farmsteads. The eastern boundary of the field, known as 'The Tofts' in 1800, is clearly cut by the internal ditch of the park pale. These morphological features demonstrate that there is surviving evidence for pre-park enclosures both in the form of extant and remnant boundaries.

Within the park, to the south of Dalton Old Hall, is an egg-shaped enclosure, orientated south-east to north-west,

and situated on a north-west facing slope (Figure 8). The enclosure is approximately 89m long by 57m at its widest point. It is enclosed by a low earthwork bank, approximately 0.3m high, with both internal and external ditches. It appears to have two entrances, at opposite ends of the longest axis, but these may be later creations. It is possible that the enclosure pre-dates the park, but its size, location on a steep slope and lack of internal structures, suggests that it is not of prehistoric origin. The morphological evidence combined with wider landscape analysis and the location within a former medieval deer park indicates a medieval date. A medieval farming origin for the enclosure is possible, but more likely is an origin as a 'hay' (a deer enclosure), within the deer park.

The emparking of 200 acres of arable land would have represented a significant reduction in Dalton's arable acreage, probably at least a third for the tenanted lands outside the freehold estates. It suggests that some former tenanted lands were being converted into a demesne holding of the manor. The most likely explanation for this is that there had been some mid-14th century depopulation of Dalton township that allowed a change in land management through the conversion of arable land into deer park. The farmsteads and their associated fields systems and any settlement that may have been within the field known as The Tofts, are likely to have been deserted at or before the creation of the deer park.

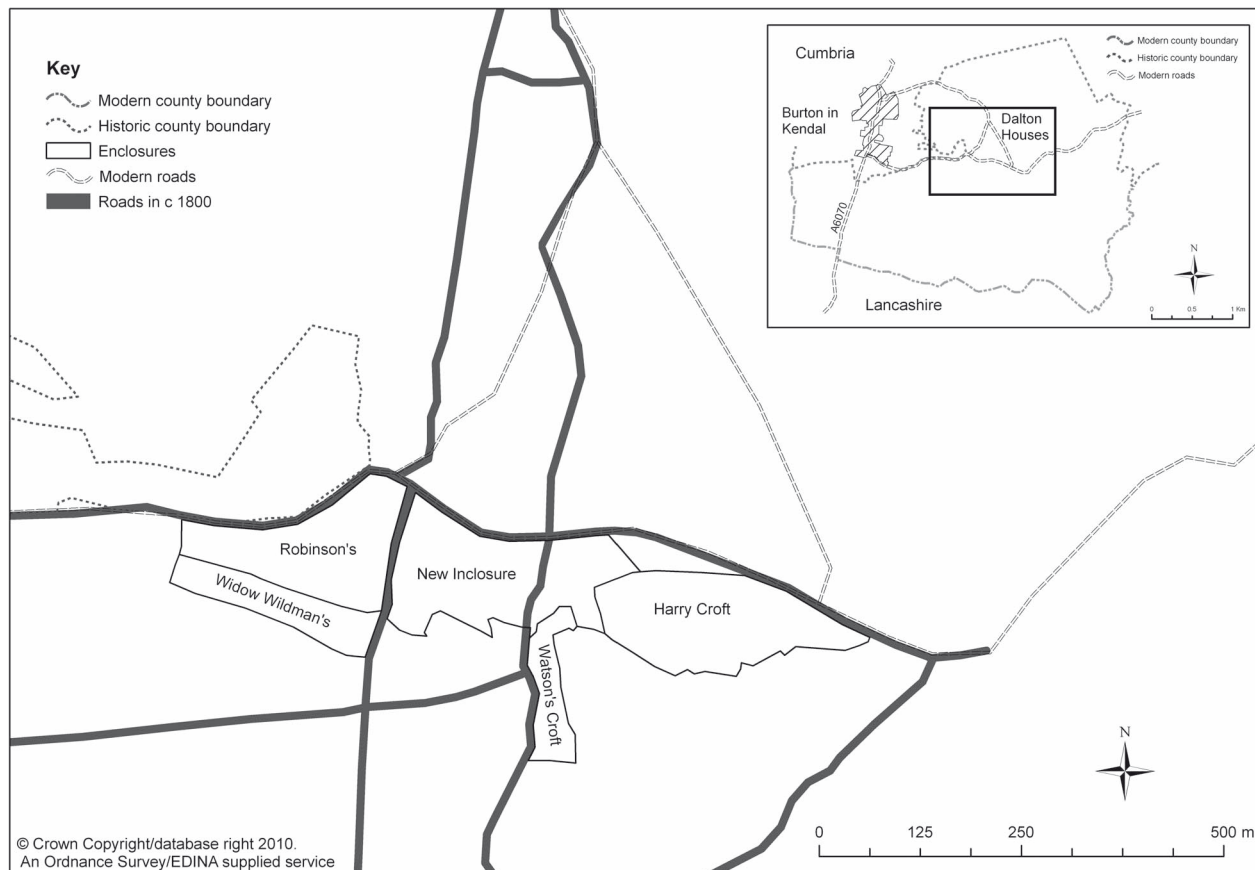


Figure 6 Crofts shown and named on early 19th century maps, and scheduled as part of the deserted medieval village of Dalton. Only Robinson's and Widow Wildman's crofts are likely to have medieval origins, the others are probably post-medieval encroachments onto waste

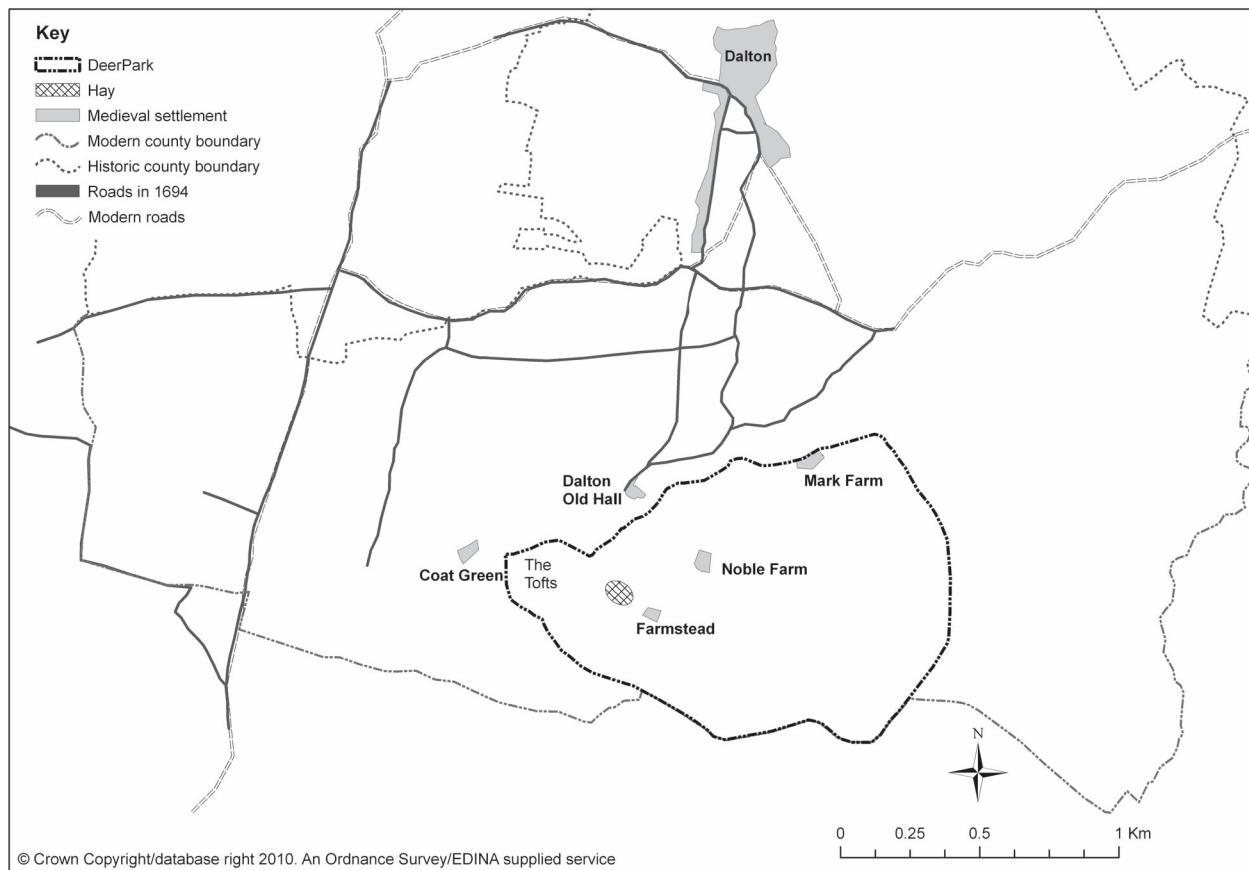


Figure 7 The likely extent of medieval settlement at Dalton. The late 14th century deer park included farmsteads which had already been deserted

Conclusion

The evolution of the landscape

The picture of settlement evolution suggested by the scheduling documentation is overly simplistic. The visible earthworks, both scheduled and otherwise, are the physical remains of a long period of settlement evolution, involving pulses of expansion and shrinkage. It seems likely that at some point before the mid-14th century, Dalton consisted of a number of separate settlements. At the centre of the township was the manorial *caput* of Dalton Hall. To the north was a loose nucleation along the edge of an area of common waste. To the south of Dalton Hall may have been another small nucleated settlement, for which the only evidence to date is the field name 'The Tofts'. Earthworks and field names indicate the existence of small, discrete farms and enclosed fields to the east of Dalton Hall. Associated with this settlement pattern were common fields farmed in strips, the evidence for which survives as lynchets and post medieval field boundaries. From the medieval period, the large area of waste, as well as some of the settlement topography, suggests that stock rearing was an important activity.

In the late 14th century, a deer park was created in the south-eastern quarter of the township. This either caused or followed on from settlement shrinkage in this area, which saw the desertion of the discrete farms and any

settlement at The Tofts, and a reduction in the township's arable farmland. By the later 17th century, all of the common arable lands had been enclosed, and the farming system appears to have been heavily reliant on cattle rearing. By the later 17th century, in the nucleation to the north of Dalton Hall some medieval crofts had been abandoned. A small part of the waste was encroached for new settlement, a process beginning before 1694 but continuing on into the 19th century. This new area of settlement expansion had itself been abandoned by the end of the 19th century.

Requirement for further work

Historical research and an archaeological approach to the landscape have provided an outline of the complex picture of settlement development from the medieval period to the 19th century. It has questioned some of the easy assumptions so often made about highly visible earthworks and their chronological and functional relationships. Even so, such analysis does not allow the precise dating of earthwork remains, nor a full understanding of their relationships and evolution. To advance beyond the visible last phase of activity requires below ground investigation. Work to date has produced a framework for further research, which may include further documentary analysis, more detailed survey, geophysics and excavation.



Figure 8 The possible hay within the deer park

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