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**PLOT 1, NEWARK ROAD, STAPLEFORD,
LINCOLNSHIRE :
ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

for

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**PLOT 1, NEWARK ROAD, STAPLEFORD,
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Cover illustration : Medieval ploughing with an ox team,
from a manuscript illustration reproduced in C.W. Airne,
The Story of Medieval Britain Told in Pictures (Manchester, n.d.)

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SYNOPSIS

Housebuilding was accompanied by an archaeological watching brief in accordance with a planning condition. Broad ridge & furrow earthworks were recorded, but no other features or artefacts of antiquity were located. It was concluded that the plot lay within the open field system already known to exist in the vicinity of the former medieval settlement, which had probably grown up as a street village.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This report has been prepared by the *Tony Sumpter Archaeological Consultancy* (the consultant). It describes an archaeological watching brief on development in Stapleford, North Kesteven, Lincolnshire (SK 8810 5767).
- 1.2** Mr R.G. Carman (the developer) applied for planning permission to construct a four-bedroomed detached house with integral garage on Plot 1, Newark Road, Stapleford (P.A. No. N/60/0497/97 dated 14.7.99). The local planning authority (LPA), North Kesteven District Council, gave conditional permission in a decision notice dated 7.9.99.
- 1.3** Condition 3 stated, on the recommendation of the Heritage Officer for the LPA, that no development should take place pending the approval of a scheme of works for an archaeological watching brief to accompany earthmoving. This was to ensure that any archaeological remains uncovered would be adequately recorded.
- 1.4** To fulfil Condition 3 the developer retained the consultant, who prepared a specification (Sumpter 1999) based on a brief provided by the Heritage Officer. The specification was duly approved as the scheme of works for the watching brief.
- 1.5** The watching brief took place between 4th - 13th October 1999, when liaison with the Heritage Officer was maintained. It was based on the requirements of *Planning Policy Guidance 16* (DoE 1990); *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessments* and *Standard & Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1993a and 1993b); *Standard Watching Brief Procedures* (North Yorkshire CC n.d.); the *Lincolnshire Archaeology Handbook* (August 1997); and current best archaeological practice.

2. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1 Stapleford is a rural hamlet in North Kesteven, Lincolnshire, 10 miles south-west of Lincoln and 6 miles north-east of Newark. The county boundary with Nottinghamshire is 1½ miles to the west. The surrounding countryside includes arable, pasture and mixed woodland.
- 2.2 The application area lies on the western outskirts of Stapleford, on the north side of Newark Road. It has mean dimensions of 58m (north-south) x 20m (east-west), an area of 0.116ha (0.3 acre). The elevation is approximately 12m (39ft) OD on land sloping gently southward towards a small stream along the southern margin of Newark Road, non-existent in dry weather, but otherwise flowing into the river Witham 500m to the east.
- 2.3 According to the Geological Survey, soils are the Wickham 2 Association fine loamy over clayey typical stagnogley soils, developed on Jurassic and Cretaceous clay shales (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 351).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 3.1 Stapleford is in Domesday Book (1086) and is probably Anglo-Saxon in origin.
- 3.2 Three areas of subdued earthworks, probably medieval in date, were noted during a non-comprehensive inspection of the environs.
- (SK 8795 5758) 150m west-south-west of the application area, mounds and hollows are visible in a pasture field south of Newark Road.
- (SK 8815 5775) 75m north-east of the application area, a curving bank delineates higher ground on the north side of a pasture field west of Brecks Lane, with slight hollows and irregularities on the lower south side.
- (SK 8855 5765) 400m east of the application area, low banks and hollows lie between the parish church and The Hall.
- 3.3 (SK 881 5772 approx.) Ridge & furrow ploughing has been recorded immediately north of the application area (information from the Heritage Officer).
- 3.4 (SK 8815 5768) On Plot 2 to the east, presumably Maythorn House, two small undated pits were located by a watching brief in 1996 (APS 1996).
- 3.5 (SK 886 576) A church and priest are mentioned in Domesday (1086). The existing parish church of All Saints, 500m east of Plot 1, is an unusual structure with a stone tower, a red brick nave and chancel, and no porch. The tower has been dated to the late 13th century by the nave arch, and also has Decorated (early 14th century) windows. Inside, an earlier foundation is suggested by a scalloped Norman capital, and a Norman pillar piscina with horizontally zigzagged shaft. On the west front of the tower is a dated and initialled stone from restoration in 1700, with three inserted medieval heads above, probably from label-stops. The brick nave and chancel date from 1770. Further restoration took place in 1903-04, which was probably when the pyramid roof was added to the tower (Pevsner & Harris 1964, 681, and inspection).
The nearest buildings are now 150m west of the church.
- 3.6 During the 19th century the population declined from 193 in the 1840s, to 182 in the 1850s, to 147 by the 1890s (White 1842, 605; 1856, 340; 1892-93, 831).
- 3.7 (SK 8927 5867) One mile north-east, a Roman coin found in 1970 was a *dupondius* of Antonia (AD 42-54), daughter of Mark Antony, mother of the Emperor Claudius, & grandmother of the Emperor Caligula (LHA 1.6 (1971), 10).
- 3.8 (SK 838 585) Three miles west the hamlet of Brough overlies the Roman settlement of *Crococalana* astride the Fosse Way, now the A46 trunk road.
- 3.9 The well-known 11th century Anglo-Saxon Stapleford cross is not from this village but from Stapleford in Nottinghamshire, in the south-west suburbs of Nottingham.

4. SITE OBSERVATIONS

- 4.1** The location of Plot 1 - between the earthworks south of Newark Road and those west of Brecks Lane (para. 3.1 above) - raised the possibility that it lay within the core of the medieval village, and might contain occupation evidence. This was the basis for the archaeological planning condition.
- 4.2** When first inspected Plot 1 was completely masked by bushes and long grass, but wading through the undergrowth gave a sense of uneven ground. Clearance confirmed that this was a continuation of broad east-west ridge & furrow visible to the west in a horse paddock behind Lilac Cottage. The contours were manifested by undulations in a post & rail fence separating the paddock from Plot 1. Looking westward, the ridge & furrow tended towards an S-pattern rather than the more usual reversed S-pattern.
To the east it was uncertain whether the ridge & furrow persisted as the ground behind Paddocks Cottage was obscured.
- 4.3** It became clear that ridge & furrow covered at least the northern three-quarters of Plot 1, including the site for the new house. Four ridges were recorded, with ridge-to-ridge distances, from north to south, of 9.1m, 15.2m, and 15.1m (respectively 30ft, 50ft and 50ft). The remaining distance to the road frontage was 16.0m (52ft).
- 4.4** Excavation of the foundation trenches was carried out with a JCB 3CX, accompanied by continuous observation. The trenches were 0.5m wide and 1.0m deep. The strata comprised three types of deposit, from the surface down :
- 0.35 to 0.65m of dark brown humic topsoil with occasional sub-rounded gravel;
 - 0.20m yellow sand & sub-rounded quartzite gravel < 20mm;
 - stiff impermeable blue-grey clay.
- The clay was at a mean depth of 0.70m. The varying thickness of the topsoil was simply a function of its position on the profile of the ridge & furrow.
No other artificial features nor artefacts of antiquity were noted.
- 4.5** Subsequently two service trenches along the east side of the plot were monitored. The trench between the house and the road showed a fairly uniform topsoil depth of 0.40m over the sand & gravel and clay, but nothing of archaeological interest. If the ridge & furrow had originally extended to the road, which seemed likely, the earthworks here may have been reduced during the construction of a large 20th century concrete septic tank measuring 2.7 x 1.75m, just within the curtilage. The second trench, from the house to the rear boundary of the plot, did no more than confirm the surface observations of ridge & furrow.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The surviving medieval earthworks, along and near to the tributary stream, extend both west and east of the present-day hamlet. Taken with the isolation of the parish church, they suggest that Stapleford today is a shrunken successor of the medieval settlement.
- 5.2** Although Plot 1 is located between two groups of earthworks, the watching brief showed that the plot overlies ridge & furrow ploughland and was therefore within the open field system belonging to the medieval settlement.
- 5.3** This suggests that in the medieval period Stapleford was a street village, strung out along the line of the main east-west road and stream, with occupation also possibly branching northward along Brecks Lane.

WORKS CONSULTED

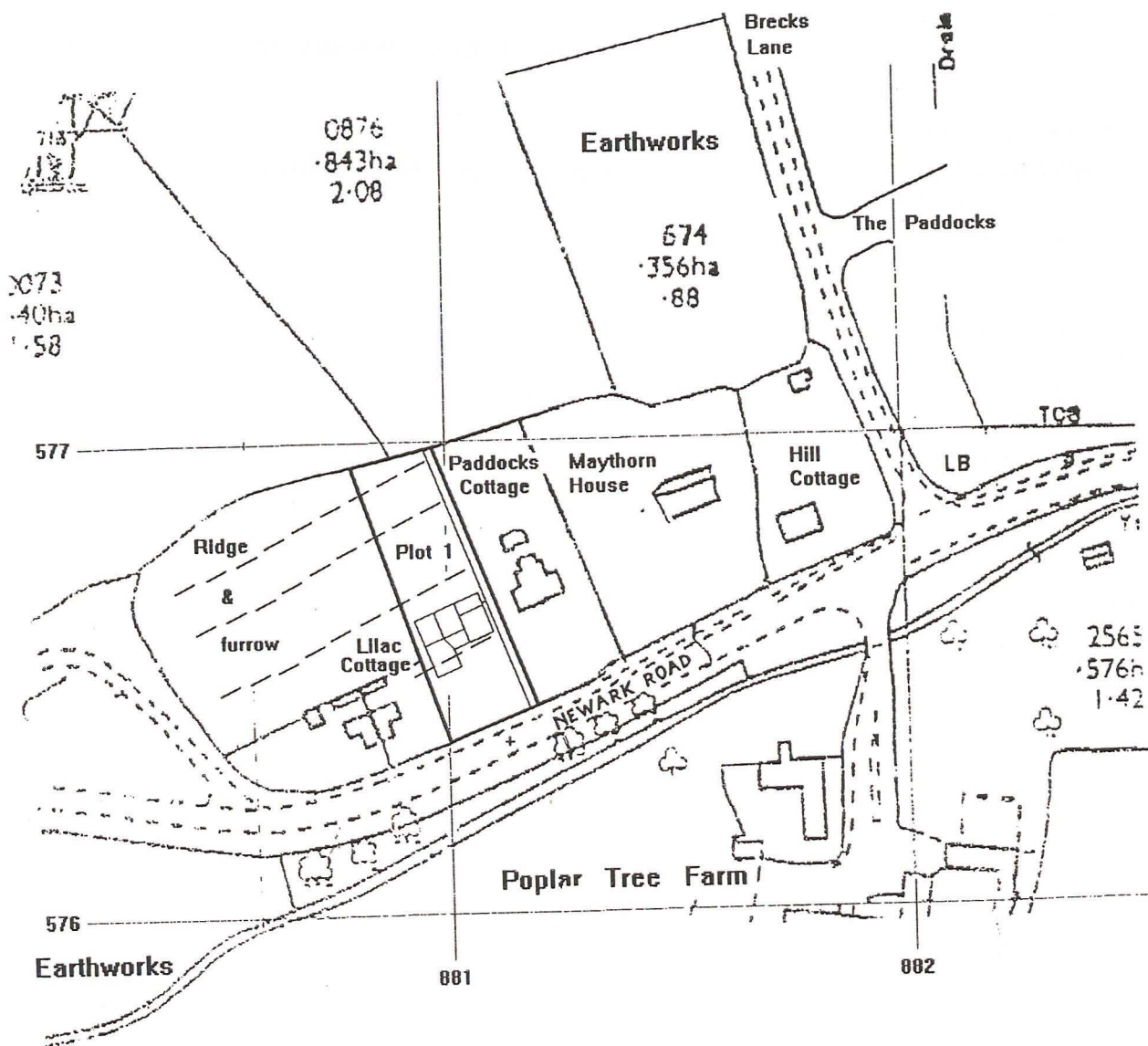
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Here at last is a photo of the post & rail fence on the western boundary of the site. It is merely a record shot on disposable camera but you can see clearly how the alignment of the rails follows the undulating profile of the ridge & furrow which underlies the plot. In the pasture through the fence, rainwater is visible lying in one of the furrows.



MAP OF THE SITE AND ENVIRONS

STAPLEFORD

Showing foundation and service trenches on Plot 1, ridge & furrow, and nearby earthworks (superimposed on the OS 1 : 1250 (50-inch) map extract supplied by North Kesteven District Council)

APPENDIX A : MEDIEVAL FARMING

During the Middle Ages farming was the national industry, and throughout much of England, notably the Midlands, villages were the predominant form of settlement - many of them established by the Anglo-Saxons between the 5th and the 11th centuries. Villages provided communal manpower for the labour-intensive tasks of farming before mechanisation.

The most important equipment was the heavy plough, drawn by a team of eight oxen whose cost was shared. Ploughing was facilitated by the absence of hedges, giving rise to the open field system whereby a village was surrounded by two, three or four large arable fields cropped in rotation as if they were a single substantial farm. This made it necessary for each tenant to have a number of holdings distributed among the fields, so they could all benefit from whichever field was in production. The system also allowed a fairer allotment of more fertile and less fertile areas.

The unit of cultivation was the strip or land, originally 220 yards long x 33 or 22 or 16½ft wide, giving ½ or ⅓ or ¼ acre; sometimes lands would later be amalgamated or divided. A typical peasant holding might be 20 acres of scattered strips. Ploughing of each strip was usually in a clockwise direction, with the mouldboard throwing earth to the right so that over time it built up towards the centre, aiding drainage and giving rise to the corrugated ridge & furrow pattern.

Between 1066 and the early 14th century the population increased from 1¼ million to approximately 4 million. Then in 1348 the Black Death struck, killing about 1½ million people over the next 30 years. One consequence was a shortage of labour to maintain the arable field system, and much was converted to pasture, often adjacent to the village so that people could keep breeding stock near their homes.

For a variety of reasons including economic recession, disease, emparkment, and a huge increase in sheep farming, villages commonly shrank in size and a large number were abandoned altogether - well over a hundred in Lincolnshire alone. The sites of deserted medieval villages are often recognisable as earthworks in pasture, though many have been destroyed by modern intensive agriculture.

APPENDIX B : STAPLEFORD IN DOMESDAY BOOK (1086)

Wapentake of Graffoe

4. Land of the Bishop of Bayeux

79. In Stapleforde Turuert had 2 carucates of land [assessed] to the geld [i.e. taxable]. There is land for 1 team. Tor, the bishop's man, has 1 team there [in demesne], and 3 villeins and 1 bordar ploughing with 6 oxen. There are 1½ furlongs of meadow. T.R.E. [*Tempore Regis Edwardi*, i.e. before 1066] it was worth 20 shillings; now the like amount.

(Foster & Longley 1924, 46)

56. Land of the Countess Judith

9. In Stapleforde Morcar had 10 carucates of land [assessed] to the geld [i.e. taxable]. There is land for 5 teams. Osbern has of the countess 2 teams there [in demesne], and 27 sokemen on 6 carucates and 6 bovates of this land and 3 villeins and 3 bordars with 7 teams. There is a priest there, and a church, with half a carucate of this land. And there are 5 furlongs of meadow in length and 60 perches in breadth. T.R.E. [*Tempore Regis Edwardi*, i.e. before 1066] it was worth 7 pounds; now 8 pounds; tallage 40 shillings.

(Foster & Longley 1924, 177)

GLOSSARY

bordar :	A class of villein.
bovate :	One-eighth of a carucate, typically in Lincolnshire 20 acres of arable land, with the meadow and rights of pasture annexed to such a tenement by local custom.
carucate :	As much land as a team of eight oxen could plough in a season, varying but probably in Lincolnshire about 160 acres. However not all areas given in carucates were necessarily under the plough. Also the carucate was more a fiscal unit than an accurate measure.
demesne :	The lord's land used by him rather than let out to tenants.
geld :	A land tax.
tallage :	A land tax.
villein :	A tenant who held land in return for providing labour and making payments, usually in kind, to the lord.