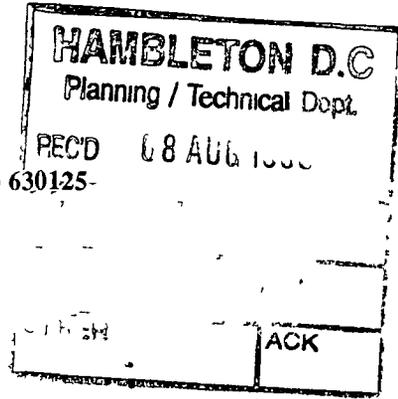


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***MEDIAEVAL REMAINS EAST OF OLD FARM, EAST COWTON
'ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION***

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A report to Hambleton District Council

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MEDIAEVAL REMAINS EAST OF OLD FARM, EAST COWTON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
A Report to Hambleton District Council

INTRODUCTION

This report concerns an archaeological evaluation of land in the village of East Cowton, North Yorkshire, commissioned by Hambleton District Council in response to applications to develop the land as housing and associated infrastructure. An initial, interim statement of the archaeological implications of the proposed development and of its archaeological and historical background was produced before the final completion of fieldwork and processing. The results of the completed work are incorporated into this final text.

The areas under consideration consist of three blocks of land within the village curtilage of East Cowton. These are (Fig 1)

AREA A This, the main area considered, comprises O.S. parcels 9734, 8334 and 8727. At the time the fieldwork was undertaken, this area was under short grass. The northern and eastern parts (in Field 9734) were being grazed by a dairy herd.

AREA B The northern part of Field 2600. This land was occupied by a cereal crop during the evaluation, and it was decided that this should be left undisturbed. The field appears to be covered with poorly-defined rigg-and-furrow of presumed mediaeval or early post-mediaeval date.

AREA C. The northern part of Field 4109, covered as above with traces of rigg-and-furrow cultivation, in a reasonably clear state of preservation.

THE HISTORICAL AND DOCUMENTARY BACKGROUND TO THE SITE

East Cowton is one of three adjacent townships and civil parishes which, together with North and South Cowton, cover an area of some 7,002 acres, situated approximately 8 miles north of the market town of Northallerton. East Cowton was always the largest township, consisting of 3,368 acres, at various times it has been known as Magna, Mickle or Great Cowton, and more recently as Long Cowton.

The name *Cowton* is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *cow* and *ton* or *tun*, and there seems to have been settlement here prior to 1066, as the first documented reference, in Domesday Book (1086), names Thorkil as the last Anglo-Saxon Lord of the manor of East Cowton.

After the Conquest, land in the Cowtons was held by Count Alan of Richmond, except for an acre of East Cowton, which was held by the king. The Cowtons were split into several manors, each with its own Lord, in the case of East Cowton this was Landric, Count Alan's man, who passed the lordship to his son Elias, who in turn passed it to his son, Conan, from whom it passed to the Fyton family. In 1324 the manor was sold to the Clervaux family of Croft.

Most of the mediaeval Lords, however, were subtenants of the honour of Richmond. In practice, the Lords seem to have sold much of their manors and in 1284, for example, there were ten landowners in East Cowton who paid no rent to the Lord. The village did not, therefore, become subject to a strong manorial power, and in the area of the Cowtons religious Orders were able to own and control large estates. The Victoria County History records that St Mary's of York had a grange at East Cowton. In a charter of 1348, the nuns of Marrick Priory had four bovates (about 60 acres) and five crofts and tofts at East Cowton. Bridlington Priory came to own six oxgangs and other lands totalling about a hundred acres, as well as common rights, in East Cowton, mainly by benefaction. The family of Walter the Cook, for example, gave a croft with a two-acre toft *on the north side of the village on the west side*. This piece of land eventually passed from Bridlington Priory to Kirby Ravensworth Hospital, and is said to have survived as a distinct strip until the 1960's.

The Knights Templar acquired land and established a Cowton grange. By 1135 they were working a 720 acre estate which extended beyond the boundaries of the Cowtons. The core of the Templars' grange was centred on what is now Temple House Farm, which lies immediately to the west of the township of East Cowton. As well as the grange, the Templars owned two bovates, made up of the tofts in the villages and the land in the open fields which went with them, let to various tenants. The Templars had ten tofts in East Cowton.

It can so be seen that the church owned a substantial part of the Cowtons, and it seems that East Cowton was held by a number of owners, although the holdings could still be substantial. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, East Cowton had one large manor, owned by the Clervaux family of Croft, but there were several other freeholders, including the religious orders, enough to prevent any one owner from dictating the development of the village.

After the Reformation the land belonging to the various religious Orders was sold and, in 1548, George Dakyns, who had already bought the Bridlington Priory lands, purchased the manor of East Cowton from the Clervaux family. By 1550 he owned a good deal of the township but, in 1555, his son George gave the priory lands to the Kirby Ravensworth Hospital and School (founded by an earlier Dakyn), and leased them to his own family.

In 1620 Sir Arthur Dakyns sold the manor and lands to Sir Henry Anderson of Haswell, County Durham, for 5,000 pounds. The holding was said to include fifty

houses When this was sold, in the 1680's, it was said to comprise 2,080 acres of enclosed land and 700 acres of common (that is, over 80% of all and in East Cowton) The Hearth tax returns of 1673 indicate some 54 houses in East Cowton

The population, which had fluctuated over the years, appears to have declined after this date, the same farms and houses in one estate in East and South Cowton were rented out to 25 tenants in 1717, and to 18 in 1746 A map of East Cowton dated 1719 shows many of the tofts and garths empty of houses, suggesting that the land was being rented out to larger farmers

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Anderson estate had been broken up There developed in its place two new estates, which straddled the two townships of East and South Cowton they came to be known as the Pepper Arden estate and the Cowton estate By 1719, the Pepper Arden estate had over 600 acres of land in East Cowton The other portion of Anderson's estate passed through several hands to, eventually, the family of Webb By this time the Cowton estate included the manors of East and South Cowton, with large tracts of land in each township

The village of East Cowton is situated mainly along a single village street, aligned east-west The mediaeval church of St Mary lay some distance to the west of the village, on the road to North Cowton there is no evidence to suggest that there was settlement in the immediate area of the church The long village street had a small green at either end, the western has been encroached by modern buildings, but is discernible in the building line, it is also known as Chapel Green

MAPS

The development of the village generally, and of the evaluated areas specifically, may be traced through a series of maps

1 *An Exact Survey and Mappe of Long-Cowton taken from the coheirs of Thomas Fairfax, esq., deceased, in the year of our lord 1719 by John Nesham* North Yorkshire County Records Office ZDG (A) XIV (see Figs 2 and 3)

The outlying land is enclosed no date has been established for this, but it has been suggested (*Brief History of the Cowtons*) that this might have been carried out by Sir Henry Anderson at some time after the 54 houses noted in the Hearth Tax returns of 1673 The fields are named, and their acreages recorded Of the main evaluation area, the L-shaped field which covers the north and east sides is marked as *Hospitale Land* this must be part of the land transferred from Bridlington Priory to the Hospital at Kirby Ravensworth The principal remaining area is named *Simpsons Sarrs*, and contains four acres and one rod. The striking feature of this map is the series of long, narrow strips of land which run northward from the northern side of the village street these are the mediaeval tofts, surviving in what appears to be a very high state of completeness and integrity They number thirteen or fourteen, varying from about 1.5 to 3 acres, about four have surviving

buildings or crofts fronting the village street (although none of these falls within the evaluated area) Some of the others are marked with a symbol which probably represents a gateway onto the village street Two of the long tofts are labelled *Hospital Land*.

2 *Ordnance Survey; 6'' to 1 mile; First Edition (surveyed 1854) (see Fig 3).*

The thirteen tofts have been reduced to some seven divisions, of which three are still very narrow The divisions are shown as hedge lines, and it would appear that some of the tofts have been amalgamated into larger plots, leaving a few retaining their mediaeval form The remaining field boundaries are remarkably similar to those shown on the map of 1719 The principle changes to the Hospital Land are the creation of an east-west boundary, to make the L-shape into two fields This is not shown as a hedge-line A substantial building, probably a farmhouse, is fronting Raby Lane at the western end of the Hospital Land This building is very similar in outline on a later Edition of the O S map, revised in 1912 Some cottages with gardens and rear garths are shown in the corner of the main street and Raby Lane, but the maps show very little housing development in the centre of the village, the new housing is more towards the east and west ends of the village, where further twentieth-century developments have obliterated the field boundaries to the south of the main village street

There is one irregular enclosure (not a building) in the northern part of the Hospital Land, behind the building which fronts onto Raby Lane It is roughly rectangular on the First Edition map, but has changed shape by 1919. This is probably a pond there is no trace of it on subsequent maps (or on the ground)

The small areas at the eastern end of the village, which are included within this evaluation, are shown on the First Edition O S map as fields without trace of building or other features The field to the west of the Northallerton road appears in its present form on a map of East Cowton which is undated, but drawn on paper which is watermarked with the date, 1820 There appears to be a footpath or track, running southward from the eastern corner of this land parcel, and perhaps running through part of it No such path is shown by the O S The same fields are shown on *A Plan of East Cowton Estate*, dated 1810 (Figs 5 and 6) The fields under consideration are marked *Anonymous* perhaps enclosed at too late a date to have acquired a traditional name No houses or other buildings are shown

LIST OF SOURCES CONSULTED

- 1 Bulmer's History, Topography and Directory of North Yorkshire, 1890
- 2 The Victoria County History of Yorkshire, North Riding Ed Wilham Page, FSA 1925 (reprinted 1968)

- 3 A Brief History of the Cowtons Ed Tony Donajgrodzki, 1990
- 4 Ordnance Survey maps scale 6'' to the mile
- Sheet no 40 1857 (surveyed 1854)
- Sheet no 40 1919 (surveyed 1854, revised 1912)
- 5 North Yorkshire County Records Office ZDG (Havelock-Allan archive) Map ZDG(A) XIV/2
- An Exact Survey and Mapp of Long-Cowton taken for the coheirs of Thomas Fairfax esq , deceased, in the year of our Lord 1719 by John Nesham
- 6 North Yorkshire County Records Office ZM1 Map ZM1/37
- A Plan Of East Cowton Estate, 1810
- 7 North Yorkshure County Records Office ZM1 Map ZM1/141
- (untitled) Plan of an estate shewmg field numbers, acreages, crops & adjomng owners No date; watermark 1820

THE VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY

The conventional morphology of East Cowton is far from straightforward. The simplest view is of a single-row village, ahgned east-west, of crofts with long strip tofts rnnng perpendicular to the road on its northern side. There is but little evidence for this pattern of mediaeval development on the south side of the street (although a couple of toft-like long fields may be made out on the First Edition O S map). There is, however, clear evidence for mediaeval expansion along the road to the north, producing a similar pattern of long tofts, at right angles to the mam north-south system, each fronted by a cottage or croft on the east side of the northbound road. The northern hmit of the 'mfield' system is preserved as a series of boundaries which probably represent a former 'back lane' (the width of which seems to be preserved) rnnng along the northern ends of the tofts, if this is correct, it might suggest that the croft-and-toft development along the road to the north is later in date than the system on the mam village axis.

The existence of a manor-house at East Cowton can be demonsfrated, its location is far from clear. A possible position has been suggested (*A Brief History of the Cowtons*) at the south-east corner of the mam evaluated area. This appears to be little more than guesswork, and it is difficult to see why this idea should place the manor-house on the Hospital Land, probably the best-documented field in the village, or in the adjacent Wellgarth, without specific historical justification. A

more suitable location for the manor-house might be closer to the church, beyond the north-west corner of the village (the present All Saints' Church is a nineteenth-century creation, not on the site of the mediaeval church)

EVIDENCE FROM AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Available aerial photographs kept with the North Yorkshire Sites and Monuments Record were consulted in a search for any specific information they might contain about the areas to be evaluated. Virtually no information was forthcoming from the low-level oblique (NY series) photographs. Of more use, however, was a high-level vertical at 1:10,560 contact scale (meridian 170 71 115). This shows clearly two long, low, rectangular mounds, aligned north-south, in the south-east corner of the main evaluated area. Traces of a rectilinear pattern of banks and ditches are discernible over the main part of this block of fields.

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY (Figs 7-10)

An area of approximately four hectares was surveyed by GeoQuest Associates, using a fluxgate gradiometer, with data logged in grid units of 20m x 20m, at intervals of 1m x 0.5m. This section is based on their report. The study area is in four sections, which have been named Areas A, B, C and D, and which are discussed separately.

The survey results are presented as greyscale images at scales of 1:10,000 and 1:500.

AREA A The geophysical image from this area shows a high concentration of magnetic dipoles, particularly in the south-western corner and in the centre of the area. Individual dipolar anomalies are usually caused by ferrous objects in the topsoil, while large areas of dipoles may reflect building rubble.

Two parallel, positive magnetic features, one with an adjacent negative anomaly to the west, extend north-south from the northern limit of the surveyed area. On the ground, these parallel anomalies correspond with low banks and indicate the presence of associated ditches.

In the western half of this area the geophysical survey has detected a very large dipolar anomaly. This may be due to a very large buried iron object, or possibly an area of intense burning or firing.

AREA B The survey data from this area also contain high concentrations of magnetic dipoles, especially towards the western limit of the survey and around the perimeter fence. This probably reflects ferrous litter in the topsoil.

At the southern end of the surveyed area there is a rectilinear pattern of strong positive and negative lineations positive lineations almost certainly reflect the presence of high susceptibility, soil-filled features such as ditches, while adjacent negative lineations probably indicate associated banks On the ground in this part of the field there is a pattern of raised areas, presumably caused by earlier activity on the site

The survey has detected a positive magnetic lineation extending north-south across Area B, probably reflecting a ditch feature

In the northern half of the site, the geophysical image shows a sub-rectangular pattern of positive magnetic anomalies, which are most likely to reflect a series of ditches

AREAS C and D These survey areas are relatively small and are dominated by dipolar anomalies, probably reflecting ferrous litter it is difficult to discern any potential archaeological features in the survey results from these areas

TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY (Figs 11 and 12)

As part of the evaluation process, surviving earthworks in the evaluation areas were surveyed at a scale of 1:500 (note the plan supplied with this draft report is a sketch only) The results appear fairly unambiguous The main block of land is traversed by a broad ditch or hollow-way (clearly visible on the aerial photographs) running from east to west South of this, very little is visible, other than rather vague irregularities in the surface an area in the south-west part of the field seems to have been disturbed recently, and shows traces of brick rubble and of the rank vegetation which suggests recent intrusion This is all in accord with the geophysical data (with a concentration of strong dipoles) and with local memory of considerable landscaping having been undertaken in this part of the field in a successful attempt to overcome ground-water problems The area immediately east of Old Farm is disturbed in the same way here pieces of brick rubble protrude abundantly, and almost certainly account for the concentration of strong magnetic dipoles noted in the geophysical survey

To the north of the ditch, the field is marked by a slightly eroded system of ridge-and-furrow cultivation, aligned north-south, with a headland under the hedge separating Field 8727 from 9734 The system is in itself unremarkable, and typical of many to be seen on the fringes of mediaeval villages all over the region in this case, however, much additional interest may be derived from the fact that the ridge-and-furrow appears to represent the same, named, land divisions seen on the East Cowton map of 1719 The earthworks are somewhat eroded, probably by subsequent cultivation in the course of reseedmg, etc

The most significant features are a pair of low mounds at the southern end of the Hospital Land, in the south-east corner of the main evaluation area. On the ground, they are by no means so clear as they look on the vertical aerial photographs, appearing as a pair of low, ill-defined mounds with distinctly rounded ends to the north. They appear to be complete, that is to say, they seem not to have been truncated by the development of the modern houses immediately to the south. The most plausible explanation of these structures is that they represent two of the domestic plots of the mediaeval village, probably the only surviving mediaeval house-sites in Cowton, preserved because, at this point, later development has encroached into the street rather than into the tofts on its north side.

Traces of the rigg-and-furrow cultivation may be made out to the north of the putative house platforms. Similarly, the small parcel at the eastern end of the village (Area C), which is also considered within this evaluation, is covered with rather unexceptional rigg-and-furrow cultivation.

SAMPLE EXCAVATION

On the basis of information available from desk-top research, from aerial and topographic survey, and from geophysical survey, a series of trial trenches were laid out over selected areas further to elucidate the nature of features and anomalies detected. At the time of preparation of this interim statement, this excavation work has not been completed. Given below is a brief epitome of results, but it is considered unlikely that completion of excavation and recording will significantly alter the picture which is given.

Trenches were initially excavated by a JCB fitted with a standard four-foot ditching bucket, which was used to excavate turf and topsoil, and any clearly modern overburden. This stripping was carried out in ten-centimetre spits, and the broad, toothless bucket allowed a reasonably clean exposed surface to be examined during the process. The underlying subsoil in all trenches proved to be a very heavy, orange-brown clay, with occasional boulders. This deposit was very much dried out, was very hard, and had a tendency to crack and to fall into large irregular blocks, making the process of cleaning very difficult. In summary, the results were as follows (see Fig 11 for location of trenches).

TRENCH 1 (Fig 13) This was laid out to examine the eastern of the two probablecroft sites near the south-eastern corner of the Hospital Land, and consisted of a trench dug approximately east-west, at right angles to the axis of the long mound, from its centre to its western edge, near to the southern end of the mound. Turf and a thin topsoil (001) proved directly to overlie a heavy orange clay which is quite free of inclusions other than pebbles and small boulders, and which appears to be natural. The western edge of the mound is marked by a north-south bank or wall footing of cobbles and boulders (003) some 40 centimetres in width. It is perfectly possible that this is a structural wall. One possibility is that it

represents a low sleeper wall for the support of a timber superstructure. Near the western end of the trench, close to the central axis of the long mound, is a second stone feature (002) which includes one round stone into which has been worn or bored a partial perforation. It resembles a pivot stone for a doorway, and the possibility that this feature represents part of a north-south wall with the remains of an entrance is probably more likely, in view of the lack of evidence for burning, than the most obvious alternative, that it is a hearth. No stratified deposits were associated with either feature, which rest upon the natural clay, but small fragments of mediaeval pottery were, during cleaning, found all over this trench on the surface of the natural clay and on top of the features.

TRENCH 2 (Fig 13) This was a small trench designed to test whether or not the wall noted above as defining the western edge of the mound continued into its northern part. No trace of the wall (or of its removal) could be found. It appears therefore that there is a distinction between the two ends of the mound, and that activity, probably domestic, was concentrated towards the southern end. No mediaeval pottery was found, in considerable contrast with Trench 1.

TRENCH 3 (Fig.13) This was a north-south section cut at right angles across the broad ditch or hollow-way visible as an earthwork at the southern end of the rigg-and-furrow. There was much modern rubble (009), particularly on the southern side of the feature, which seems to be further evidence for the wholesale bulldozing of the lower part of this field. The feature itself proved to be a distinct, broad hollow, filled with a redeposited heavy clay (004), without any sign of significant stratigraphy between the topsoil and the underlying natural clay.

TRENCH 4 This was an area of 4x4 metres designed to examine the area of disturbed ground in the south-western part of the area. It is clear that this area has been levelled in the past by the spreading of hardcore and brick rubble. No early feature or deposit was detected.

TRENCH 5 This also was an area of 4x4 metres, near the south-east corner of field 8727, in the area designated as a children's playground. Again, turf and topsoil directly overlay natural clay, and no early feature or deposit could be detected.

TRENCH 6 This area of 4x4 metres was located to the east of Old Farm, and was designed to examine an area of apparent disturbance and strong magnetic dipoles. Removal of turf and topsoil revealed what appeared to be a hollow, filled with modern rubbish and rubble, to a maximum depth of about a metre below the present surface. There was no trace of significant stratigraphy or of early features. Because of safety problems associated with an inquisitive dairy herd, this trench was immediately backfilled after an initial examination.

DISCUSSION

It is plain that the village of East Cowton retains much of the form of its mediaeval origin, and of the early (seventeenth-century) enclosed landscape which succeeded it. Modern development has obliterated much of the mediaeval landscape on the southern side of the village, especially, it appears that little of value survives to permit an understanding of the continuity of the landscape's development. Isolated patches of ridge-and-furrow cultivation, like that in Field 4109, are in themselves of little significance, and not necessarily even of mediaeval date.

The northern side of the village, however, is of considerable interest, embodying not only much of the mediaeval layout, but also identifiable elements of the seventeenth-century enclosures and of a later, early nineteenth-century, period of enclosure. The field boundaries and the pattern of roads, paths and lanes survive very well, and this pattern is greatly enhanced by the reasonably good earthwork preservation of many features. Historical documentation is reasonably good, and this fact helps to enhance the significance of the physical remains which do survive. East Cowton may not be a mediaeval village which is, in archaeological terms, of the first rank of importance, but it is a site of genuine interest, and contains some particularly striking features (the site of the demolished mediaeval church is one, as is the slightly ambiguous nature of the morphology and development of the village, and the possibility that more formerly existed on the north side, perhaps along the line of the 'back lane' which has been described).

This having been said, the only features probably of outstanding interest are the two putative croft platforms near the south-east corner of Field 9734. Preservation of sub-surface features appears to be good, and the two mounds represent a fairly uncommon example of a pair of crofts surviving intact within a village which has had fluctuating fortunes but was not a 'failed' village in the manner of so-called Deserted Mediaeval Village Sites. Structural, sequential and environmental/economic evidence concerning these properties would potentially be of great value. Other features, while fairly commonplace in the context of a surviving mediaeval village in a rural setting, are of slightly enhanced importance on account of the group value derived from their association with this part of the site. On the whole, however, and with some marked exceptions, earthwork preservation at East Cowton is not particularly good. There has been considerable improvement of grassland, resulting in the erosion and even destruction of mediaeval features.

Most of the features represented are associated with old field boundaries (including some which are of pre-Enclosure, probably mediaeval, date) and with early (mediaeval and post-mediaeval) cultivation in the form of ridge-and-furrow (fig 14). Much of this evidence survives in an eroded and mutilated form. An interesting group of well-preserved earthworks exists near the west end of the village, in the two small fields north-west of All Saints' Church. These may represent house platforms and associated enclosures, and are particularly clear, intact and well-

defined One field could not be examined, that immediately north of Raby Mount it is understood that earthworks exist there, but an inspection proved the field to be covered by a heavy crop of barley, over what appears to be simple rigg-and-furrow

It is possible to apply to the surviving remains the non-statutory discrimination criteria used in the Monuments Protection Programme for the scoring of sites potentially of national importance. The method involves allocating scores (1, 2 or 3) for certain defined quantities which contribute to the overall importance of the site or monument. As applied to the features in the areas A, B and C, which form the main concern of this evaluation, appropriate scores would be as follows (figures in brackets indicate the square of the number, a technique used to increase the sensitivity of the scoring):

Survival	2 (4)
Group value (association)	2 (4)
Documentation (archaeological)	2 (4)
Documentation (historical)	2 (4)
Group value (clustering)	2 (4)
Potential	1 (1)
Diversity (features)	1 (1)
Amenity value	1 (1)
TOTAL	13 (23) out of a possible 27 (72)

This is clearly not a particularly high score, and falls well below any threshold for national, and probably for regional, importance. The picture does not change much if the scores are applied to the mediaeval remains of East Cowton as a whole

Survival	1 (1)
Group value (association)	2 (4)
Documentation (archaeological)	1 (1)
Documentation (historical)	2 (4)
Group value (clustering)	2 (4)

Potential	1 (1)
Diversity (features)	1 (1)
Amenity value	1 (1)
TOTAL	11 (17) out of a possible 27 (72)

A suitable strategy for the protection of the archaeological interest in Area A of the evaluated area might be

(i) The crofts described above should preferably be preserved *in situ*, by a slight redesign of the development scheme which would allow them to be avoided by building or landscaping works. Should this option be accepted, it would be highly desirable to introduce some formal measure to ensure their continued survival for the future.

(u) An acceptable alternative to *in situ* preservation might be 'preservation by record', through the complete archaeological recording of this part of the site. A suitable scheme would probably include survey using micro-contours, complete excavation and sampling, and the full processing and publication of results.

(ui) Although the other surviving earthworks are of added value in that they enhance an understanding of the surviving crofts, that value is in itself probably insufficient to remove them entirely from development. As a minimum measure, an archaeological watching brief, with detailed recording, should run alongside contractors' groundworks, should development of the site be approved. If excavation of the crofts is seen as a suitable course of action, the project design for that work should take into account the other landscape elements, and allow for further investigation and sampling as appropriate.

Other areas of the village fringe are of little archaeological potential, and the interest of the archaeology could probably be ensured by full recording of the rigg-and-furrow. The significant exception is the group of earthworks north-west of All Saints' Church, an initial inspection of which would suggest that they probably merit *in situ* preservation or, failing that, major archaeological intervention.

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Percival Turnbull
29, vii, 1996