

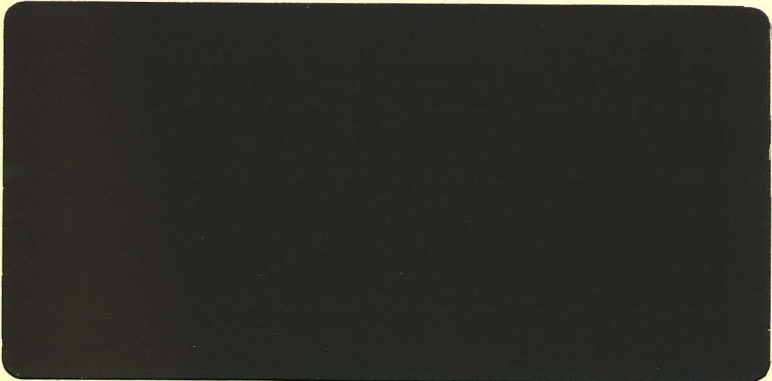
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**EARTHWORK SURVEY  
ON LAND AT  
MILLFIELD FARM,  
SLEAFORD ROAD,  
HECKINGTON,  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
(HMF97)**

National Grid Reference: TF132442



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ON LAND AT  
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Work Undertaken For  
J Priestly

July 1997

Report Compiled by  
Gary Taylor BA (Hons), MA

A.P.S. Report N° 29/97

## CONTENTS

### List of Figures

### Plates

1.	Summary .....	1
2.	Introduction .....	1
	2.1 Background .....	1
	2.2 Topography and Geology .....	1
	2.3 Archaeological Setting .....	1
3.	Aims .....	1
4.	Methods .....	2
5.	Results .....	2
6.	Discussion .....	2
7.	Conclusions .....	3
8.	Acknowledgements .....	3
9.	Personnel .....	3
10.	Sources .....	3

### Appendices

1	Glossary	
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## List of Figures

Figure 1 . . . General Location Plan

Figure 2 . . . Site Location Plan

Figure 3 . . . Location of Ridge & Furrow around Heckington village

Figure 4 . . . Plans of the Ridge and Furrow earthworks

## Plates

Plate 1 . . . . General Site View, looking north

Plate 2 . . . . Ridge and furrow earthworks in southern part of site

## 1. SUMMARY

*An earthwork survey was undertaken on land at Millfield Farm, Heckington, Lincolnshire.*

*An area of ridge and furrow earthworks, remnants of arable use of the land in the medieval period (1066-1500), was surveyed. Although previous investigations have shown that ridge and furrow was widespread around the village, the surveyed area is a rare and previously unrecorded example where it survives as earthworks. Most of the ridge and furrow in the parish has been destroyed and is only evident because the buried remains cause differential crop growth, evident on aerial photographs.*

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

On the 23rd April 1997, an earthwork survey was undertaken on land at Millfield Farm, Heckington, Lincolnshire. The work was commissioned by J. Priestly and was carried out by Archaeological Project Services in accordance with verbal instructions given by the North Kesteven Heritage Officer.

### 2.2 Topography and Geology

Heckington is located approximately 8km east of Sleaford and 19km west of Boston in the administrative district of North Kesteven, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1). The site is located on the western edge of village, immediately north of Sleaford Road and alongside the access track to Millfield Farm, at national grid reference TF132442 (Fig. 2). Although there are localised, gentle, natural undulations in the landscape, the site is on a slight slope down to the west and lies at c. 12m OD.

Local soils are Beccles 3 Association typical stagnogley soils and Ruskington Association

gleyic brown calcareous earths (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 121; 304). These are developed on a sand and gravel ridge which, in turn, overlies Boulder Clay (Ordnance Survey 1971).

### 2.3 Archaeological Setting

Heckington is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Referred to as *Hechintune*, the name derives from Old English and means 'the *Tûn* (village) of *Heca's* people' (Ekwall 1974, 230). The Domesday Survey records a church and a priest in the parish, as well as three fisheries, 130 acres of meadow and at least 11 ploughteams, with the land owned by the King and the Bishop of Lincoln amongst others (Foster and Longley 1976).

The only extant remains of medieval Heckington are the parish church of St. Andrew and churchyard cross, in the centre of the village, which date from the 13th-14th centuries (Pevsner and Harris 1989, 375). The only other medieval remains visible are the typical ridge and furrow earthworks indicative of medieval farming. The location of ridge and furrow, evident as surviving earthworks or as cropmarks, was plotted by the Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology in the 1970s. This recording has shown that much of the ridge and furrow was located to the north and east of the village, with only a few fields to the west (Fig. 3). However, the Trust for Lincolnshire Archaeology survey had not identified the location of the surviving ridge and furrow earthworks that form the subject of this investigation.

## 3. AIMS

The aim of the survey was to make a record of ridge and furrow earthworks prior to their removal.



#### 4. METHODS

A geodolite TST surveying instrument was used to establish the location and extent of the ridge and furrow earthworks. The dimensions of the earthworks were also recorded by surveying the lines of the furrow bases and ridge crests (Fig. 4).

Photographic records were also made, using a 35mm camera with colour print film (Plates 1 and 2).

#### 5. RESULTS

The survey recorded a triangular area approximately 150m by 100m in extent (Fig. 2).

The earthworks were found to be aligned approximately northeast-southwest. Ridges were recorded as between 7m and 15m in width (Fig. 4).

#### 6. DISCUSSION

Ridge and furrow was a long-lived form of ploughing that is particularly characteristic of the medieval period. The earthworks were individually formed and cultivation occurred on the ridges, with the furrows serving a drainage function.

Although such ploughing techniques perhaps commenced in the Middle Saxon period, *c.* AD 650-850 (Hall 1982, 53) and persisted to the late 19th or even early 20th centuries, the dimensions and shape of the resulting earthworks vary over time. This variability is related to the method of ploughing. During the medieval period, the land was tilled using animal-drawn ploughs. This resulted in broad ridges, quite often with gentle curves that describe a 'reverse S'. More recently, ridge and furrow ploughing was undertaken by steam traction engines which generated

straight, narrow ridges. The earthworks recorded at Millfield Farm are fairly straight but quite wide, up to 15m. In consequence, it is considered that the earthworks are remains of medieval ploughing.

The variable width of the ridges is unusual. However, the narrower ridges are located in the middle of the area of earthworks (Fig. 4). This may suggest that two separate phases of ridge and furrow ploughing are represented by the earthworks, with the later period having transgressed some of the ridges of the earlier. Alternatively, the wider ridges on the outer sides of the earthwork area may have resulted from the difficulty in turning the animal-drawn plough near the field margins.

Examination of the orientation of the extant ridge and furrow with the surviving field borders in the vicinity reveals only one boundary parallel with the linear earthworks. This boundary lies just to the southwest of the ridge and furrow, beyond the farm access track (Fig. 2). On the basis of common alignment it is probable that this hedge constituted, or perpetuated, one of the boundaries of the original field that enclosed the earthworks.

Additionally, the layout of field boundaries and ridge and furrow remains on either side of Sleaford Road in the area of Millfield Farm and to the east was examined. It would appear from the field boundary arrangement that the road had crossed a pattern of earlier north-south elongated fields. Moreover, it also appears that these fields are aligned square to Burton Road, to the south (Fig. 2). It is therefore probable that Burton Road formed an early, perhaps the original, route into Heckington, with Sleaford Road a later replacement.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The survey has measured the extent and dimensions of an area of previously unrecorded ridge and furrow ploughing earthworks. On the basis of size of the individual elements, the earthworks are considered to have been produced by ploughing in the medieval period. Additionally, common alignments suggests that one of the original field boundaries survives just to the southeast of the earthworks.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wish to thank J. Priestly of Millfield Farm, Heckington, for commissioning the fieldwork and report. Dale Trimble coordinated the work and Tom Lane edited this report. Kate Orr, the North Kesteven Heritage Officer, kindly provided information pertaining to the archaeological setting of the site.

## 9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Dale Trimble  
Site Supervisor: Neil Herbert  
Site Assistant: Robert Ashford  
Illustrations: Gary Taylor  
Report Compilation: Gary Taylor

## 10. SOURCES

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Fig. 1 General Location Plan

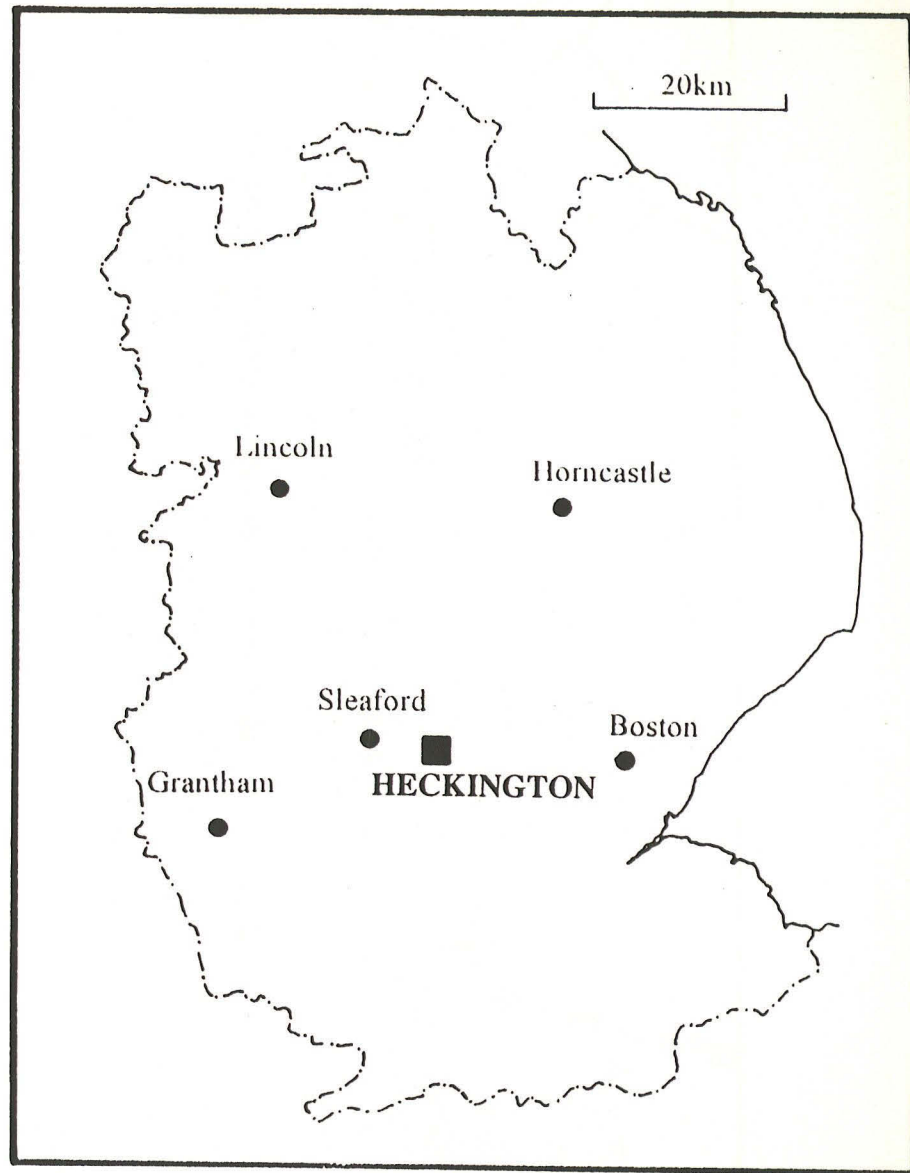
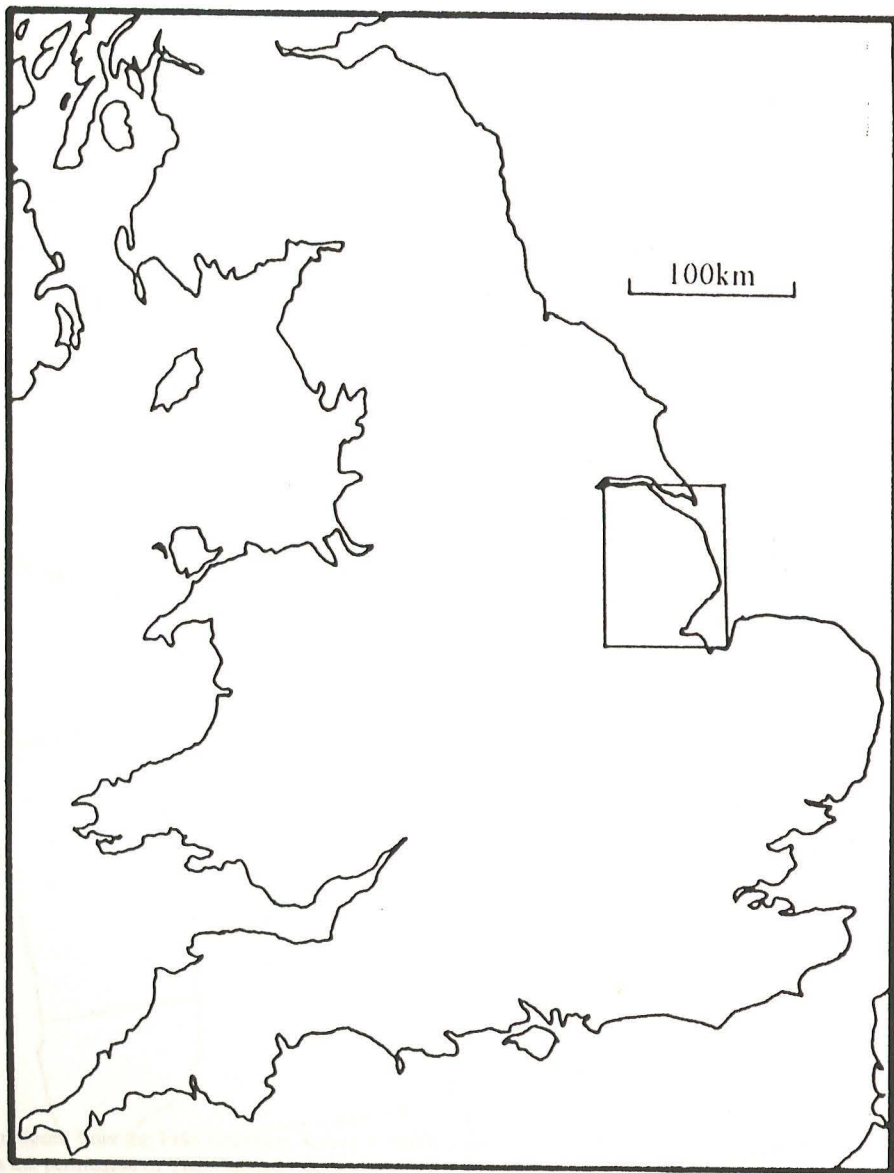
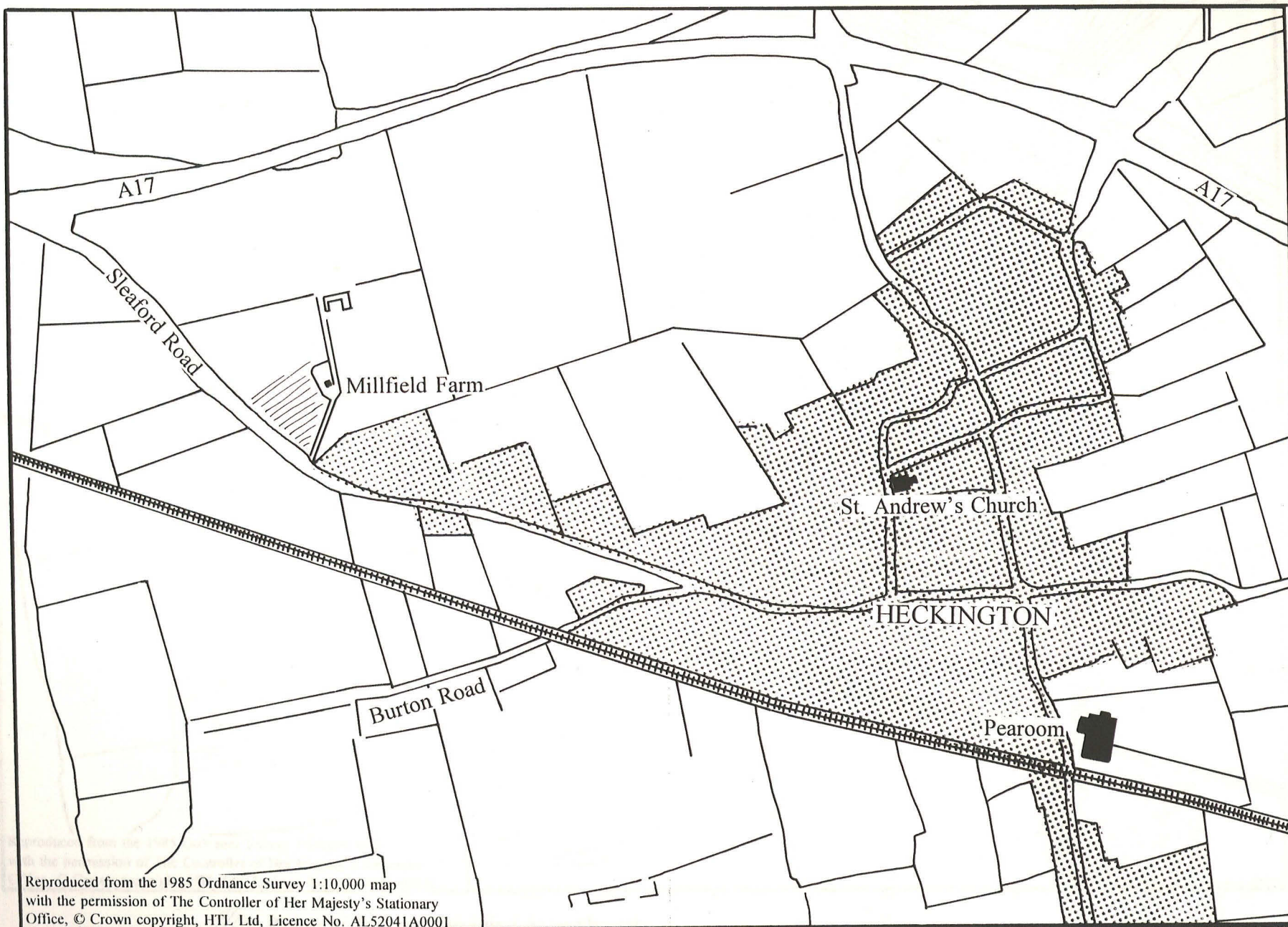



Fig. 2 Site Location Plan



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 Area of recorded ridge & furrow

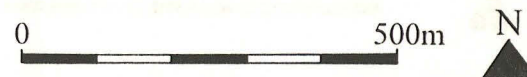
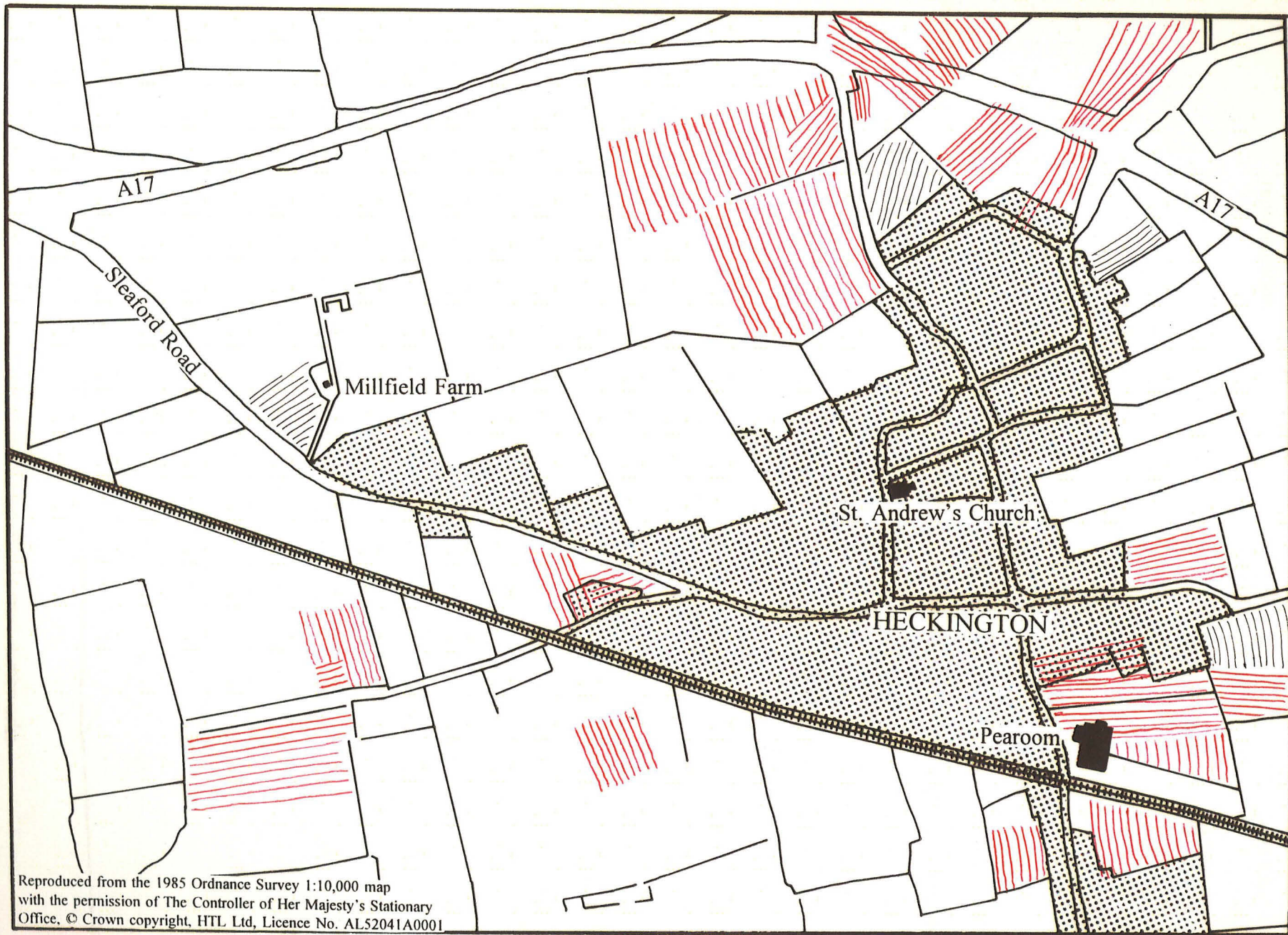






Fig. 3 Location of Ridge & Furrow around Heckington village



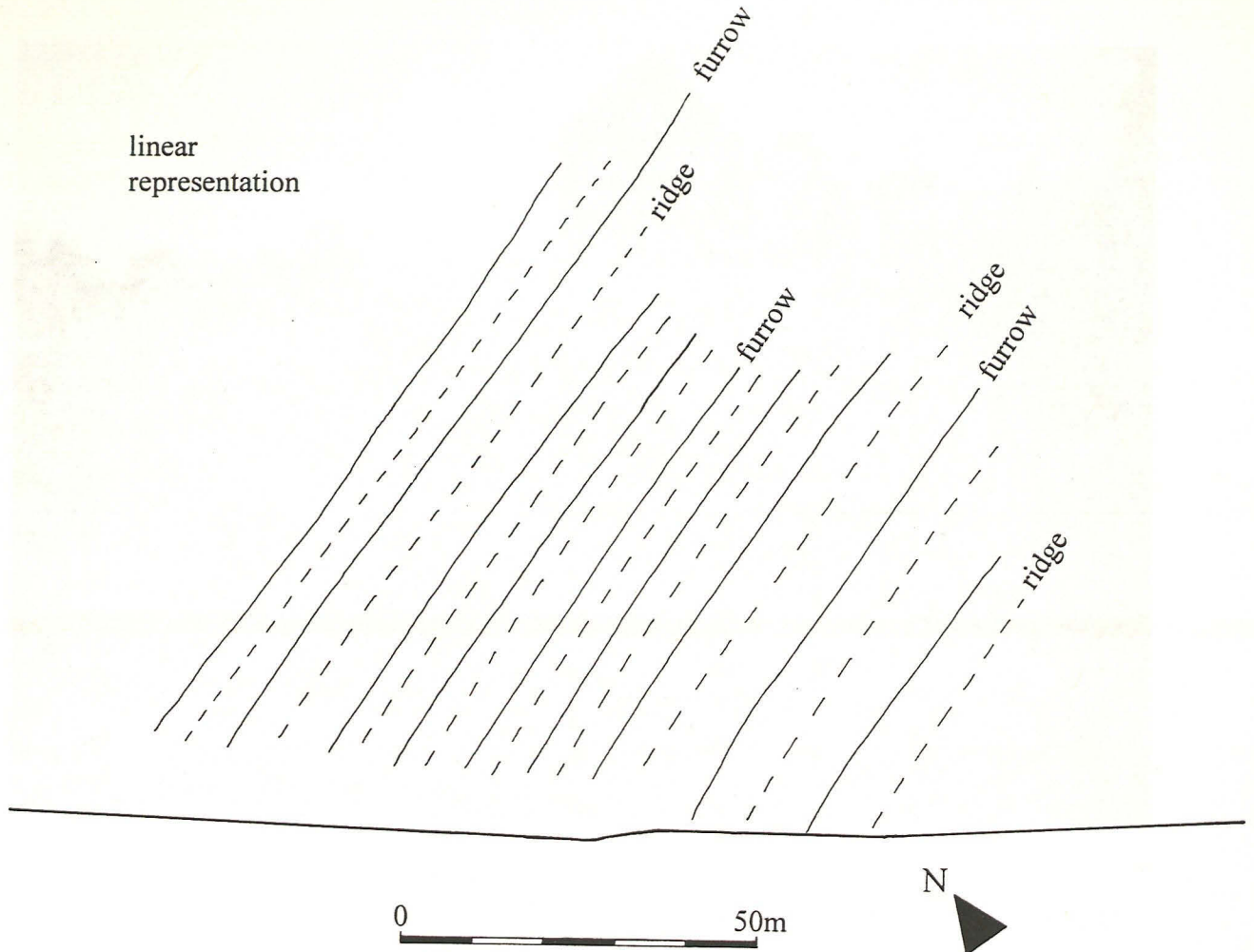
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-  Ridge & furrow, surviving as earthwork
-  Destroyed ridge & furrow, evident as cropmark





linear  
representation



hachure  
representation

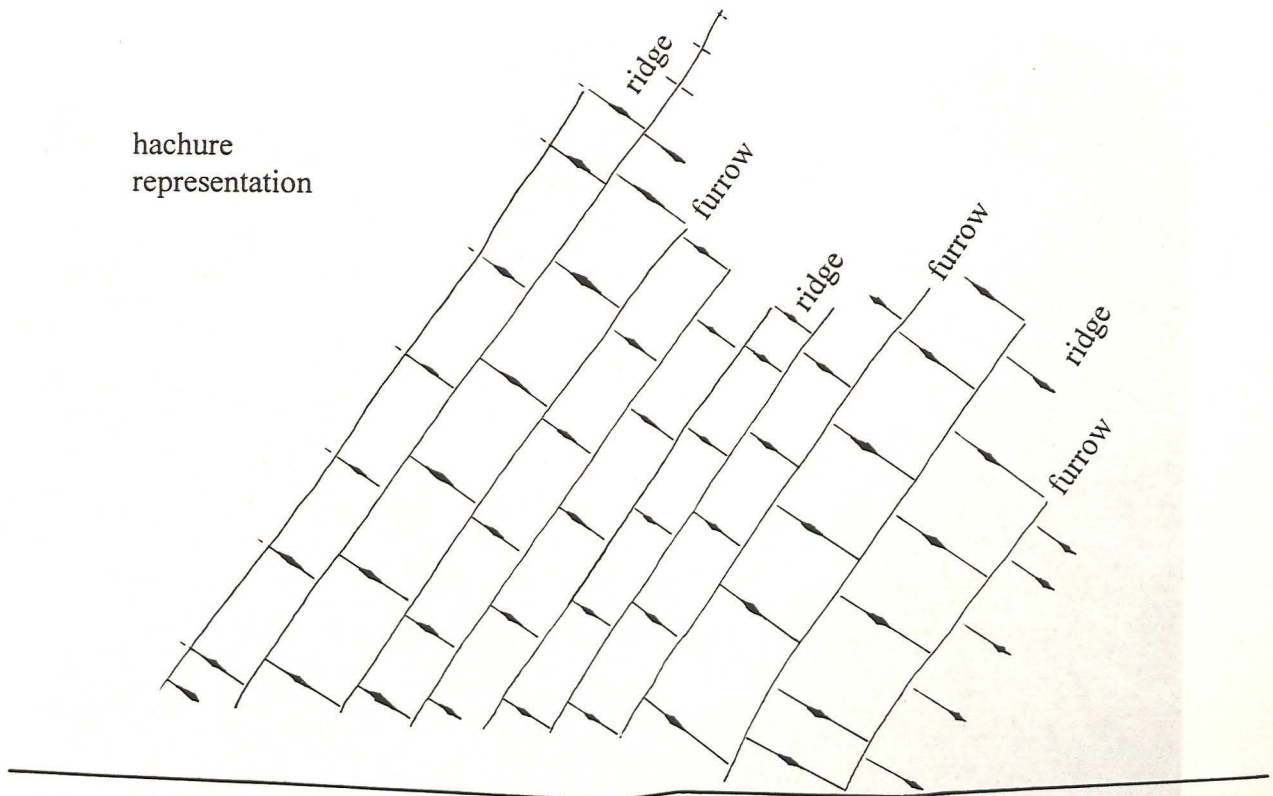


Figure 4 Plans of the Ridge and Furrow earthworks





Plate 1 : General Site View, looking north.  
Note alternate bands of sunlight and shade on ridge and furrow crossing site  
in the middle distance.



Plate 2 : Ridge and furrow earthworks in southern part of site.  
Note telephone pole shadow 'bending' over a ridge.



## APPENDIX 1

### Glossary

- Cropmarks** Alterations in plant growth caused by buried remains (both archaeological and natural). Cropmarks can often be seen at ground level but are more easily observed and understood when recorded on photographs taken from aeroplanes.
- Earthworks** Alterations to the natural landscape by human action. Normally, earthworks are evident as elevations ('bumps') or depressions ('hollows') in contrast to the general trend of the land surface.
- Medieval** Pertaining to the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
- Old English** The language of the early part of the Anglo-Saxon period, used from approximately AD 450-650.