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KIRBY HALL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE THE GARDEN AND SETTLEMENT REMAINS SURROUNDING THE ELIZABETHAN MANSION HOUSE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Elaine Jamieson



**KIRBY HALL
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**THE GARDEN AND SETTLEMENT REMAINS
SURROUNDING THE ELIZABETHAN MANSION HOUSE**

Elaine Jamieson
with contributions from Rebecca Lane

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SUMMARY

In 2013, the Assessment Team (West) undertook an analytical survey of the earthwork remains surrounding Kirby Hall, Northamptonshire. This work included a detailed examination of the abandoned medieval village of Kirby, which demonstrated the complex nature of the settlement remains. Earthwork evidence for a manorial centre was identified on the south-eastern side of the Gretton Brook, and probably represents the administrative centre of a second medieval estate at Kirby. The survey work also revealed a fluctuating story of settlement expansion, contraction and movement of focus, with the village finally abandoned when the formal gardens of the Hall were laid out, probably in the late 16th century. These gardens were expanded in the late 17th century over an area of former open fields to the south of Kirby Hall. The slight earthwork remains of this formal garden, known as the Wilderness, were identified on the ground and from aerial photographs. The archaeological evidence indicates that the Wilderness was set out in a formal and highly structured way, comprising a series of regular compartments divided by a network of paths. Later developments to the garden layout during the 18th century were also recorded, indicating a degree of modest investment and a move towards a more naturalistic scheme.

CONTRIBUTORS

The field survey was carried out by Elaine Jamieson and Rebecca Lane from the Assessment Team (West). Rebecca Lane and Barry Jones contributed to the analysis of the building fabric, and Rebecca Lane wrote the section on the buildings of the village. Edward Carpenter of the Remote Sensing Team rectified the aerial photographs. Pat Payne and Sharon Soutar of the Imaging and Visualisation Team produced the photographic record and finished earthwork plan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ARCHIVE LOCATION

The archive is deposited at the English Heritage Archive, Swindon.

DATE OF SURVEY

January-February 2013

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INTRODUCTION

During the winter of 2013, members of English Heritage's Assessment Team (West) undertook a detailed investigation and survey of the earthwork remains surrounding Kirby Hall, Northamptonshire. This English Heritage guardianship site is located approximately 4kms to the north-east of the town of Corby, within the former royal forest of Rockingham, and represents the vestiges of a once impressive Elizabethan mansion house. The work, undertaken at the request of the Senior Properties Historian, formed part of a wider programme of research initiated as part of a proposal to reinstate the 17th century long gallery. An investigation of the surrounding landscape was undertaken to provide context for the proposed scheme, and to improve understanding of the property and its wider setting.

Topography, geology and land-use

Kirby Hall (NMR: SP 99 SW 2) is located in a sheltered natural basin on the north side of a narrow valley (centre SP 9258 9269), at around 85m above OD (Fig. 1). To the south and west of the mansion are the remains of its formal gardens (NMR: SP 99 SW 25), which were partly reinstated in the 1930s then again in the 1990s. On rising ground to the south-east are the earthwork remains of the former village of Kirby, which take the form of a broad hollow-way lined by a series of enclosures, building platforms and sunken yards (NMR: SP 99 SW 1). The Hall is divided from the village remains by the partly canalised Gretton Brook, which flows north-eastwards to join the Willow Brook before winding eastwards towards the River Nene. The settlement sits at the intersection of three parishes – Gretton, Deene and Bulwick – with the boundary between Gretton and

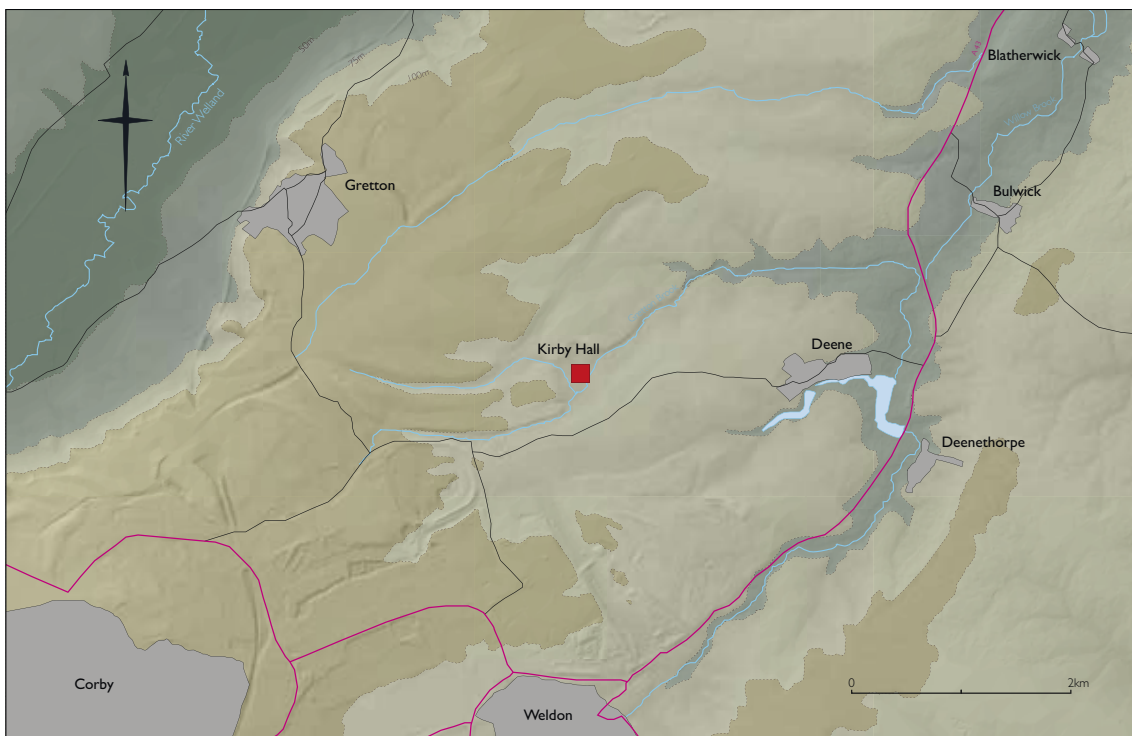


Figure 1: Location map

Bulwick passing through the eastern corner of the mansion house. The crossing on the Gretton Brook clearly formed a nodal point in the landscape, with the parish boundaries converging at the crossing. The visible village remains lie predominantly within the civil parish of Deene, although the church and a substantial component of the village originally sat within the parish of Gretton.

Kirby Hall and the former village of Kirby are located on Lower Lincolnshire Limestone and Argillaceous Rocks of the Rutland Formation, these Jurassic rocks exposed over time by the scouring action of water. The limestones, clays and sands of the region's valleys harbour easily-worked and better-drained soils suited to arable and pastoral husbandry. The higher areas are capped with drift Boulder Clay, producing heavy soils unattractive for cultivation and often given over to woodland. The ridge of ground to the north of Kirby Hall comprises a broad band of Ooidal Ironstone of the Northampton Sand



Figure 2: Rectified 1957 aerial photograph of Kirby Hall and its surroundings, including ironstone quarrying (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042)

Formation. Ironstone extraction was one of the region's main industries and evidence for mineral exploitation is known from the Late Prehistoric period onwards. Modern production was centred on Corby and the band of Ironstone north of Kirby Hall was exploited in the 20th century (Fig. 2), the land now representing an area of restored ironstone 'gulleys' (deep linear quarries).

When John Leland visited the area in the 16th century he described the landscape that he encountered on his journey from Deene to Harringworth as comprised of 'Corne, Grasse and sum Wooddy Grounde' (Toulmin Smith 1964, 14). Today, this gently undulating region is characterised by an irregular pattern of arable and pasture fields, defined by hedges with intermittent trees and timber fencing. The fields are divided by a network of tracks and narrow lanes which link small nucleated limestone and ironstone settlements, usually located off the Boulder Clay and near to a watercourse. The villages are generally focussed around a church and often close to a manorial centre, with the area containing many impressive country houses set in parkland, such as Deene Hall where Leland stayed during his travels. Blocks of small to medium sized mixed and conifer plantations are dispersed across the landscape, intermixed with some older coppiced trees and ribbons of semi-natural woodland along the minor watercourses. Strips of meadowland also cluster along the streams and rivers, though these are becoming increasingly rare.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The name Kirby is generally thought to mean 'settlement with a church', from which a Scandinavian origin for the village has been inferred (both elements of the name are of Danish origin - *Kirkju* + *byr*). Prior to the Conquest Kirby was held by Alwin but had passed to Richard by 1086 at which time he held one virgate of land. At the time of the Domesday Survey there were six households recorded at Kirby – five villagers and one smallholder – and the manor comprised two ploughlands, one worked by the lord's plough team and the other by the villagers. It also contained three acres of meadow, and woodland four furlongs long and one and a half furlongs wide (Thorn and Thorn 1979).

In 1222 three virgates of land at Kirby were in the possession of Robert de Scaccario, a third part of which was awarded to Roesia, late wife of Eustace de Kirkeby, for her lifetime. In 1274 William de Scaccario is recorded as holding two virgates of land in Kirby and in 1296 the manor of Kirby was in the hands of William de Scaccario and John de Boyvile. William's holding was granted to Joane de Engayne who gave it, along with six acres of woodland held by John de Boyvile, to Fineshade Priory in 1297 (Bridges & Whalley 1791, 315). Fineshade Priory was founded in 1208 by Richard Engayne, Lord of Blatherwycke, and built on a site slightly to the north-east of Castle Hymel, Northamptonshire, the stronghold demolished at the commencement of John's reign. The founder endowed the Augustinian canons of Fineshade Priory with lands and messuages in Blatherwycke and Laxton, and his successors gave further grants to the priory, including the churches of Blatherwycke and Laxton (VCH 1906, 135-6). The Priory's estate at Kirby was still tenanted at the time of the Dissolution (Allison *et al* 1966, 41-2).

In the early 14th century the remainder of Kirby lordship was held by Henry of Deene and John of Denethorpe, and from them descended to the families of Tydale and Lytton, and finally to Robert Brudenell in 1514 (Bridges & Whalley 1791, 315). Although mentioned in the 1316 *Nomina Villarum*, the township is not listed in any later medieval taxation returns but may have been grouped with Deene which was generally listed 'with members'. By 1508 Sir Robert Lytton is recorded as having enclosed 80 acres of land and converted it to pasture (NRO Bru A.iv.20). In 1517, five freeholders were bought out, but there were still ten able-bodied men recorded in the village in 1539 (Allison *et al* 1966, 41-2).

In 1536 Humphrey Stafford wrote to Cromwell from Blatherwycke to beg for the gift of the priory of Fineshade (VCH 1906, 135-6). His pleas were unsuccessful and at the Dissolution the Priory passed to John, Lord Russell, who subsequently sold the manor of 'Kyrbye' to Sir Humphrey Stafford in 1543 (NRO: FH 2338). In 1548 Kirby was inherited by his grandson, also Humphrey, who may have been a minor when he succeeded, and who was appointed Sherriff of Northamptonshire in 1565. Shortly after, in 1570, he began an ambitious programme of rebuilding at Kirby.

After his death in 1575, the house was purchased by the courtier Sir Christopher Hatton who probably completed the fitting out of Stafford's house but also began a series of alterations which appear to have been largely completed by 1590. At the time Hatton

acquired Kirby Hall the mansion was surrounded by the remnants of the medieval township's open field system, intermixed with areas of previously enclosed pasture. The open fields which remained were finally enclosed by exchange between Sir Christopher Hatton and Thomas Brudenell of Deene in the years around 1584–1587 (NRO: FH 272/8 & 272/9). About the same time, Hatton would appear to have enlarged the garden and orchard to the west of the house. Ralph Treswell's 1587 map of Gretton (NRO: FH 272/4) suggests this involved enclosing a sub-rectangular area within which the church and some of village houses still stood. The remaining village farmsteads and cottages were probably removed shortly after, making way for the formal Jacobean garden created by Christopher Hatton II (d. 1619).

Kirby Hall passed down through the Hatton family during the 17th century, with perhaps Sir Christopher Hatton IV's tenure (1670–1706) most notable for the changes he made to the formal gardens. These included opening up the Great Garden and constructing a Wilderness on the valley slope to the south, wiping away remnants of the former village fields. After Hatton died in 1706 the fortunes of Kirby Hall declined, the house falling into disuse by 1769. Kirby Hall was taken into guardianship in 1930.

Previous archaeological research

The 17th-century formal gardens surrounding Kirby Hall, and to some extent the wider landscape, have been the focus of much previous archaeological research. This work has largely been prompted by various proposals to reinstate and consolidate surviving garden features. The first of these investigations was carried out by the Ancient Monuments Branch of HM Office of Works following guardianship of the site in 1930. This programme of work, undertaken by George Chettle, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, involved a programme of excavation in the area of the Great Garden, on the south-west side of the Hall (Chettle 1947). This informed restoration work, carried out c. 1935, which involved the reinstatement of a series of paths, grass parterres and yew hedges, reflecting the garden as it probably appeared in the mid-17th century.

A further programme of investigation work was commissioned by English Heritage and carried out in the 1980s and 1990s. This included archaeological excavation along the West Terrace in 1984-5, which examined the retaining wall and part of the central opening in the terrace (Hey 1984; Crump 1986). Following this a substantial programme of excavation was undertaken by the Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit between 1987 and 1994, under the direction of Brian Dix. The initial phase of excavations focussed on the border and path areas of the Great Garden and the adjacent part of the West Terrace, the results of which were used to inform the recreation of the 1690 parterre, completed in 1997. Excavation work extended to areas adjoining the south-west range of the house, the Forecourt, the area known as the Privy Garden, and the Mount (Fig. 3). The canalised section of the Gretton Brook was also investigated, including the stone sluice and the bridge that once linked the formal garden and the Wilderness. The result of this excavation work has been comprehensively published and will therefore not be discussed in detail here (Dix 1991; Dix *et al* 1995).

Geophysical survey was also undertaken across the South Terrace and the area known



Figure 3: Aerial photograph showing excavation trenches (Aerofilms: 90/207)

as the Privy Garden by the Ancients Monuments Laboratory, revealing a range of buried features including drains, walls, paths and water features (Linford 1992). The majority of these features were tested through sample excavation including the footprint of what was thought to be a small structure to the south-east of the Hall. Excavation revealed this structure to be part of a range of stone-built service buildings extending from the south-east corner of the main house. The building had an earthen floor and a stone hearth at its southern end, with ceramic roof-tile recovered from the primary demolition layer suggesting it may have been furnished with a tiled roof. Evidence indicates the building was probably demolished around 1800, though its construction date remains unclear (Dix *et al* 1995, 310).

The English Heritage funded work also included a programme of fieldwalking, carried out in the arable fields to the south and east of Kirby Hall. The surface collection of pottery revealed concentrations of medieval activity adjacent to the main areas of known settlement, as well as revealing a much wider spread of medieval material. Some Romano-British pottery and tile was also recovered suggesting an earlier phase of activity on the site. Other work undertaken included limited earthwork survey, which revealed

the remains of the avenue to the east of Kirby Hall. This was represented by a double row of tree holes to the south-east of the existing avenue of trees and a single row to the north-west (Dix *et al* 1995, 298).

A further programme of geophysical survey was undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology between May and July 2000 in the arable field to the east of Kirby Hall (Holmes 2002). The principal archaeological features identified by this work were a number of curvilinear anomalies in the western corner of the survey area. These were interpreted as a series of enclosure ditches within which a number of possible roundhouses were identified; the complex was thought to be Romano-British in date on the strength of pottery and tile collected from the area. A number of anomalies associated with the enclosure ditches have been interpreted as a possible furnace or waste dumps connected to iron working. Other features identified include a possible barrow and an area of ridge and furrow ploughing.

Map evidence

A series of estate maps made by Ralph Treswell at the end of the 16th century give us a glimpse of the landscape surrounding Kirby Hall in a period of profound change. The earliest of these maps dates from 1584 and shows the grand mansion house with the medieval church and the remaining buildings of Kirby village to the south-west (NRO: FH 272/8) (Fig. 4). The map also indicates that there was a garden and orchard immediately adjoining the western side of the Hall and a stable block along the north-western side of what is now the Forecourt. To the east of the mansion was an enclosure named Pond Close, separated from the house by the main route to Gretton, beyond which lay a hop yard and meadow. Ale and beer were the staple beverages of English society until the mid-18th century and small hop gardens appear on estates in many parts of England from the later 16th century onwards. Treswell's map also lists the enclosed grounds of the estate and land held in the common fields. These are listed by name, agricultural usage and acreage, with furlong and enclosure boundaries depicted on the map.

A second map of Kirby by Ralph Treswell, dated to 1587, is essentially a copy of the 1584 map but with some enclosure and furlong boundaries removed (NRO: FH 272/9). This map was evidently drawn up to record the estate after the exchange of land between Sir Christopher Hatton and Thomas Brudenell of Deene. The map shows that the remaining common arable lands surrounding Kirby Hall (including Brooke Furlong, Kirby Croft and the Furlong by the Towns Side) had been enclosed and laid to pasture by that time. A further map by Treswell, dated 1587 and depicting lands in Gretton, also shows the estate of Kirby after exchange and enclosure (NRO: FH 272/4) (Fig. 5). This map would appear to suggest a large rectangular enclosure had been constructed adjoining the south-western side of the Hall, roughly corresponding with the limits of the later garden. The church and a number of buildings still remained standing within the enclosure at that time, but other village houses had evidently been swept away. This map therefore suggests that the process of removing the final township houses had begun by 1587.

An estate map of 1700 does not depict the mansion house but shows the layout of enclosures surrounding it (NRO: FH 272/x). The map confirms that the course of the

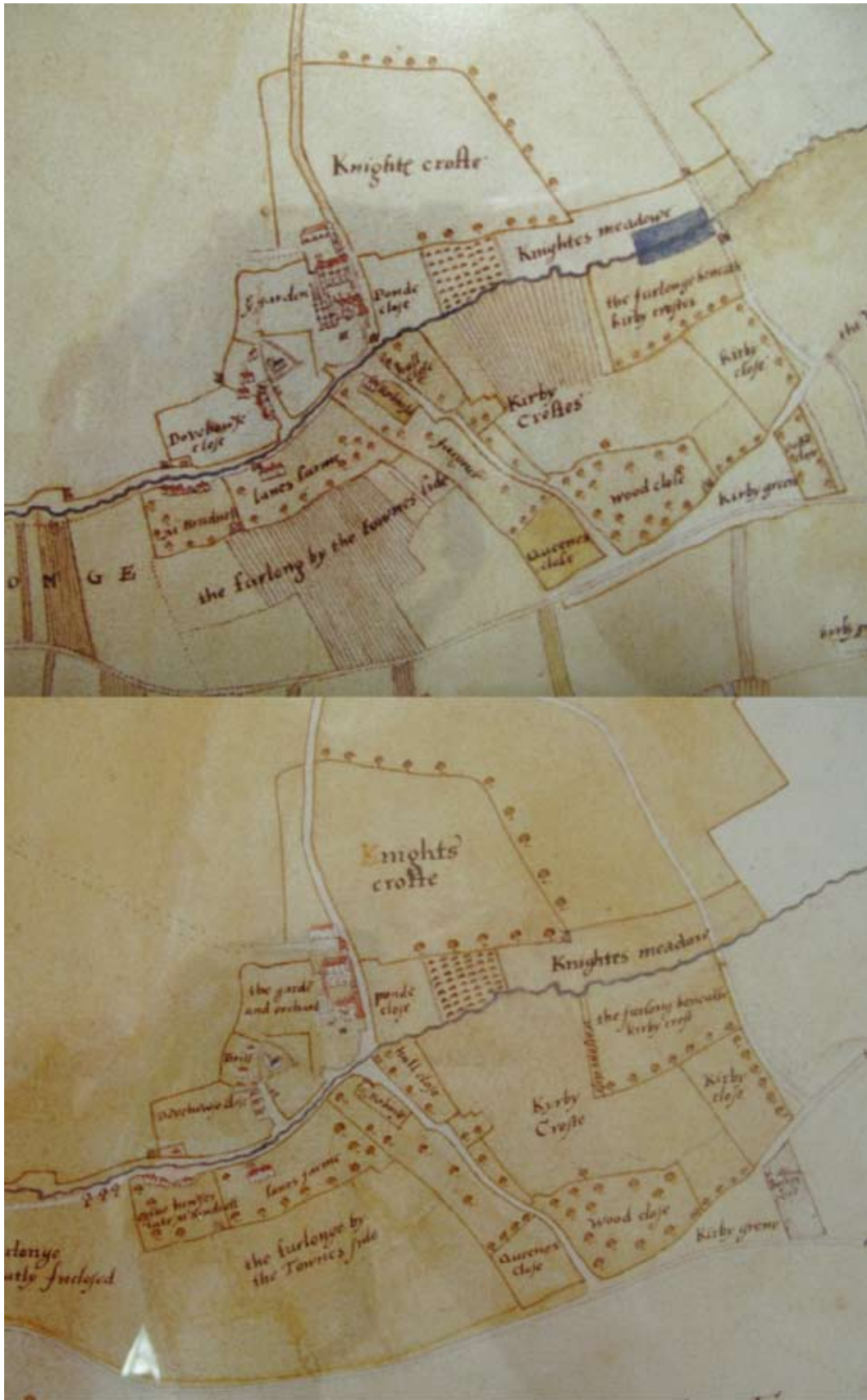


Figure 4: Detail from Treswell's maps of 1584 (top) and 1587 (bottom) showing the manor of Kirby (NRO: FH 272/8 & 9) (reproduced with permission Northamptonshire Record Office)

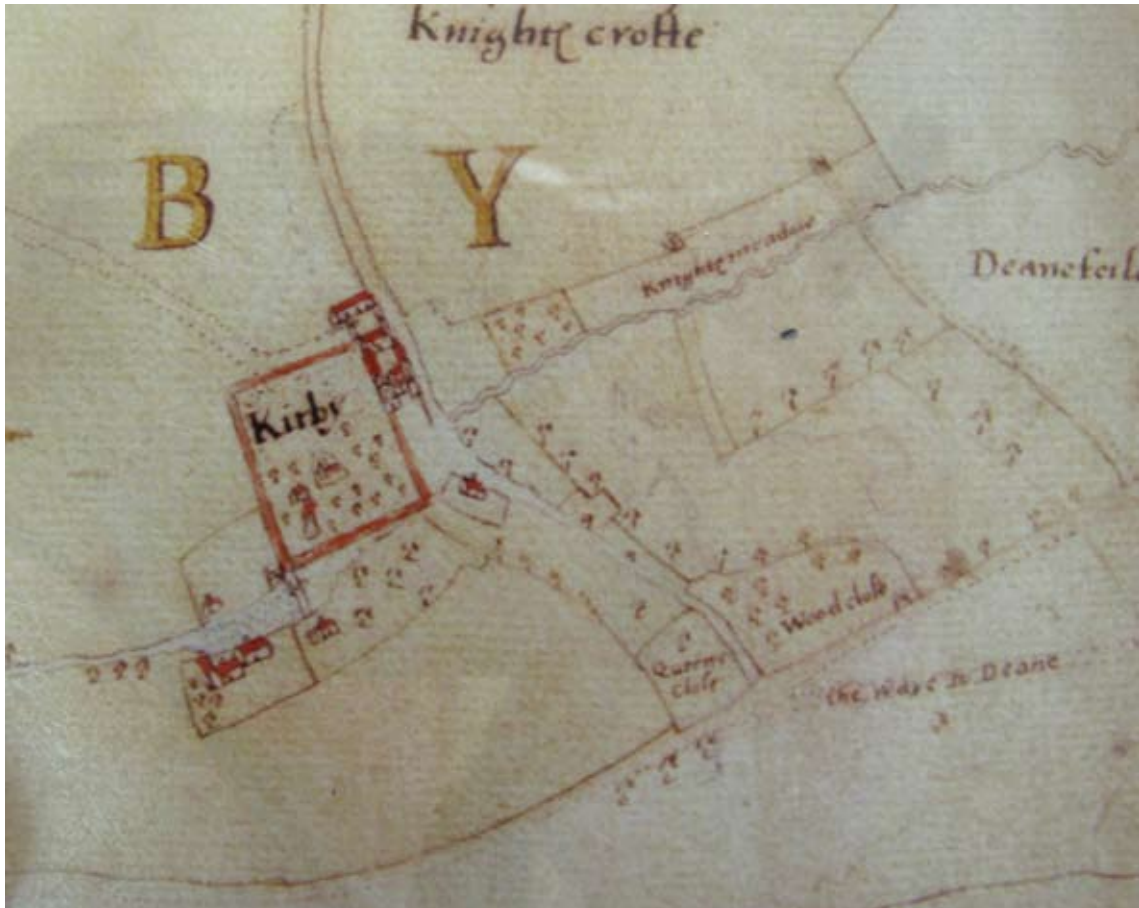


Figure 5: Detail of the settlement of Kirby from Treswell's 1587 plan of the manor of Gretton (NRO: FH 272/4) (reproduced with permission Northamptonshire Record Office)

Gretton Brook had been altered by this time and the boundary of the Wilderness had been laid out, with new enclosures created either side named Wilderness Close and Lamb Close. Although the layout of the Wilderness is not shown on this map, an early 18th-century survey of Deene parish depicts the Wilderness as comprising a series of elaborately set out sub-rectangular compartments of varying size; the map also shows an avenue of trees adjoining the north-eastern side of the enclosure (NRO: Map 3281 B). It is unclear why the cartographer chose to show the area of the Wilderness on what is essentially a survey of Lord Cardigan's lands in Deene and Deenethorpe, although by the time of the 1846 tithe map the area of Kirby to the south of the Gretton Brook was recorded as part of Deenethorpe (NRO: T203). The tithe map also indicates that two serpentine ponds had been created to the south and east of the Hall, following the course of the Gretton Brook. One of these ponds is also shown on the 1837 Inclosure plan of Gretton (NRO: Inclosure Plan

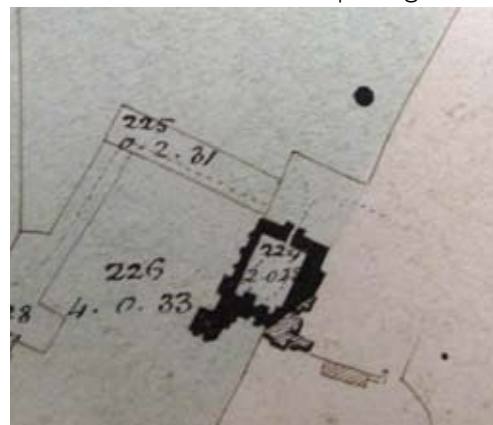


Figure 6: Detail of the 1837 Inclosure Plan of Gretton (NRO: Inclosure Plan 17 Gretton) (reproduced with permission Northamptonshire Record Office)

17 Gretton), along with two structures to the east of the mansion house (Fig. 6) which had gone by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map of 1886.

The Ordnance Survey 1st Edition map labels Kirby Hall as 'In Ruins'. It shows the location of the former stable block to the north of the mansion house and indicates it was still roofed at that time. The Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition map show part of the stable had been demolished by 1900, and by 1938 the remaining buildings were roofless shells. The 1886 map also shows some of the decorative planting surrounding the Hall, including an avenue of trees running north-westwards, extending the central axis of the Great Garden out into the landscape for approximately 0.5km (Fig. 7). This avenue was probably the one mentioned in a letter to Sir Christopher from his brother Charles Hatton in 1697 (Sladen 1984, 154). The same map also indicates that linear ponds shown on the tithe map had silted up and resembled marshy ground.



Figure 7: Ordnance Survey 1:2500 1st Edition map of Kirby

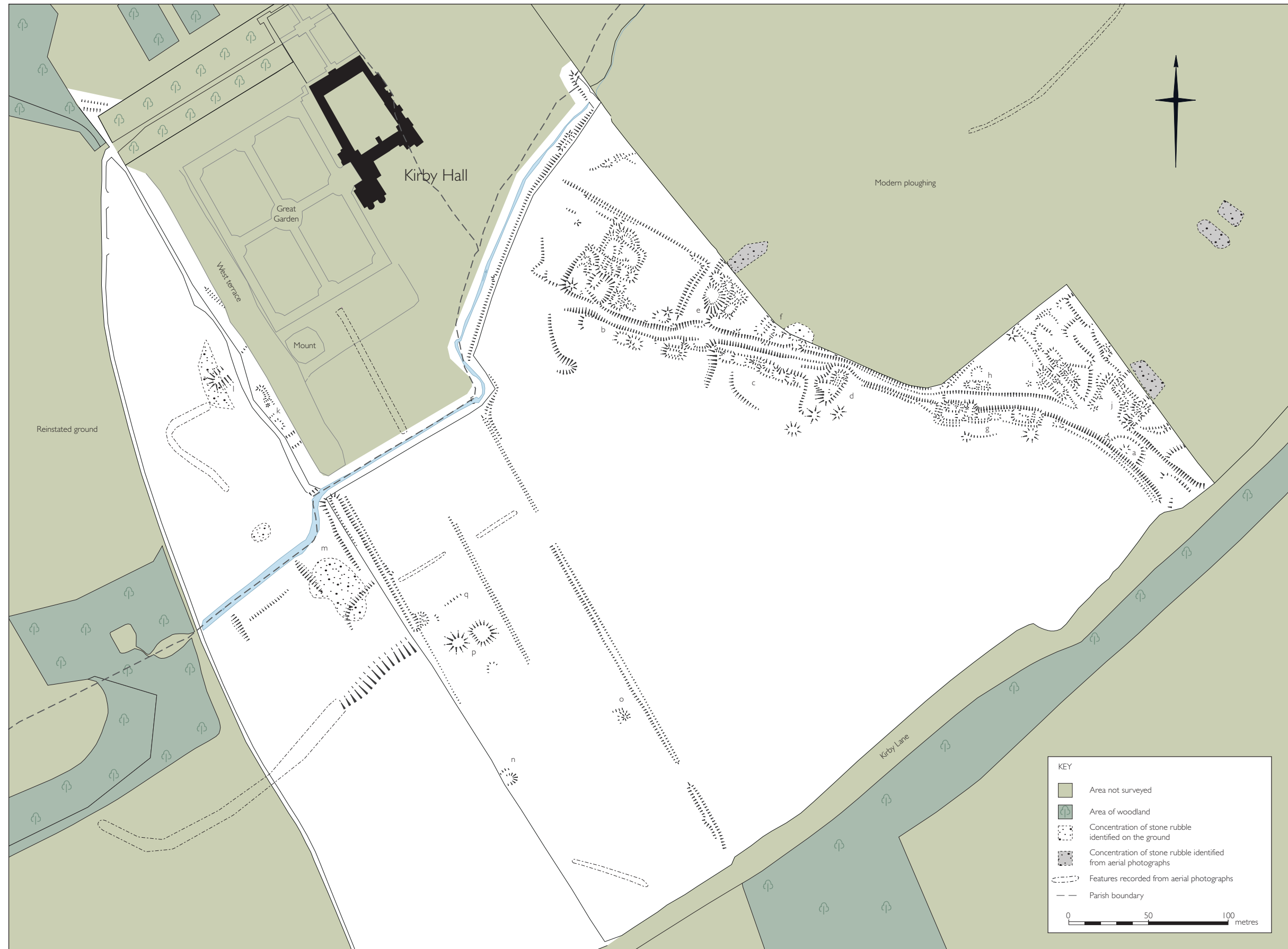


Figure 8: English Heritage 1:1000 scale earthwork survey (reduced)

EARTHWORK SURVEY AND INTERPRETATION

The earthwork remains surrounding Kirby Hall are complex, representing hundreds of years of occupation at the site (Fig. 8). They can, however, be divided into two main components: those associated with the former village of Kirby, which include building platforms, tracks and enclosures; and those associated with the Elizabethan mansion of Kirby Hall, which are mainly represented by garden features dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Village of Kirby

The earthwork remains of the village of Kirby are predominantly located in the pasture field to the south of the Gretton Brook, and cover an area of 3.5ha (8.8 acres). However, vestiges of the settlement have also been identified in the gardens and arable fields to the south-west of Kirby Hall, in the form of low, smoothed earthworks and concentrations of stone rubble. In order to aid understanding, the following description has been divided into sections (Fig. 9). The principal components of the village include: a probable medieval manorial enclosure and building complex; the linear settlement remains in Deene parish; and the more irregular settlement remains to the south-west of Kirby Hall, associated with the former medieval church.

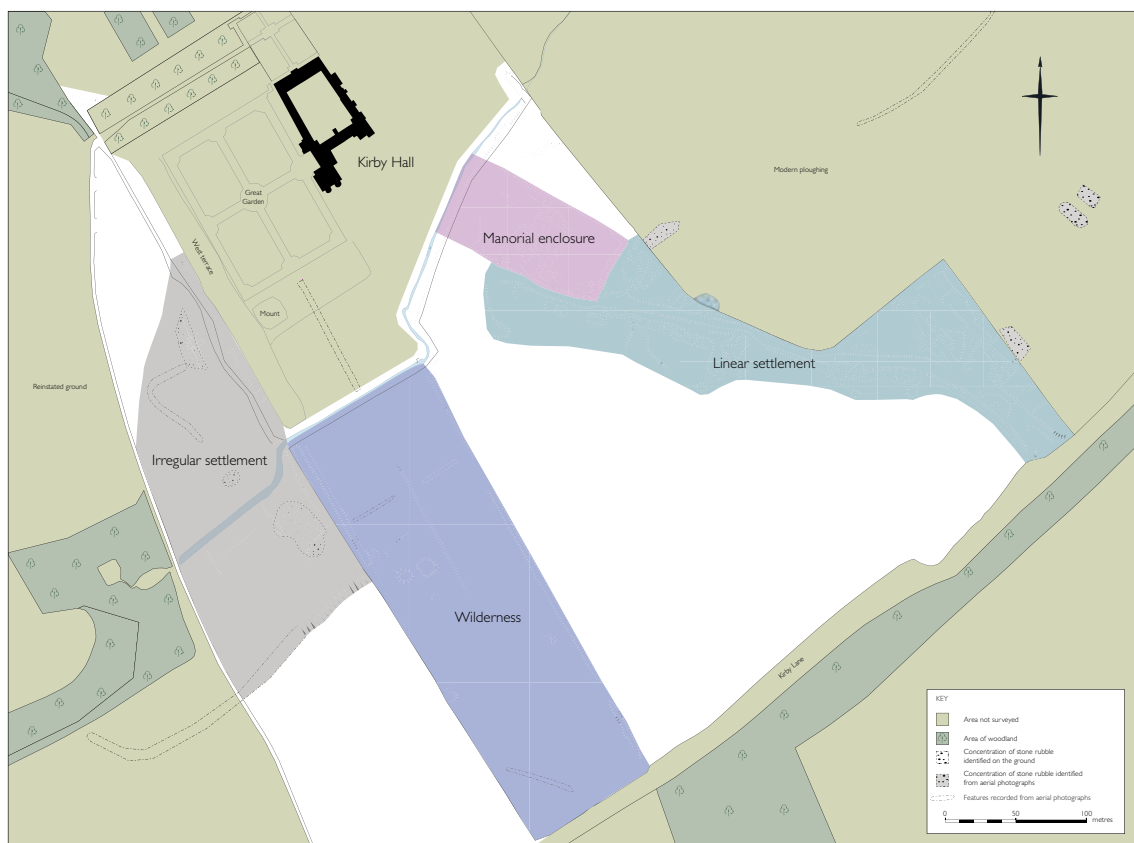


Figure 9: Interpretive plan showing the components of the settlement

The manorial earthworks

A probable medieval manorial enclosure or *curia* has been identified at the western end of the linear settlement. The enclosure contains a complex of buildings, yards and closes, the latter possibly representing gardens or an orchard (Fig. 10). The sub-rectangular enclosure measures some 60m north-south and approximately 120m east-west, having a minimum internal area of 0.6ha (1.48 acres), and is named Hall Close on Treswell's estate map of 1584 (NRO: FH 272/8). An early 18th-century map suggests the area may have been partly under trees at that time (NRO: Map 3281 B), possibly accounting for the good preservation of the earthwork remains.



Figure 10: The earthworks of the manorial centre, looking east from the hall gardens

The *curia* would have been bounded along its western side by the Gretton Brook, with its southern extent defined by the village's main street which curved and narrowed to skirt the enclosure. To the east and north the boundary is defined by a broad, spread earthen bank standing up to 0.4m high, presumably once surmounted by a wall or similar barrier. Slight earthwork remains suggest the *curia* may originally have been divided internally by a central north-south bank. A break in the scarp defining the main village street indicates an entrance into the manorial complex was located along its southern boundary, positioned slightly east of centre. The 16th-century estate map depicts an entrance closer to the brook, possibly represented by slight earthwork scarps identified in this area.

The main earthworks within the enclosure represent a series of sub-rectangular building platforms located around two sunken yards – one to the front and one to the rear. These yards are separated by the principal building range which runs approximately

east–west, parallel to the main village street, and is placed centrally within the manorial enclosure. The principal building range possibly comprises two separate structures, the eastern building sub-divided internally, or alternatively, a single long range with a cross passage. This range undoubtedly represents the main domestic accommodation and would have included the manorial hall.

The eastern side of the front yard is defined by a detached building, with this single-celled structure displaying evidence for a centrally-placed entrance facing on to the yard. A less well-defined building platform was also identified along the western side of the front yard. The comparatively slight nature of these earthworks suggests they may represent an earlier phase of construction, or a building which was demolished some time prior to final abandonment.

Attached to the north of the main range is a sub-rectangular enclosure defined by an earthen bank which stands a maximum of 0.4m high. The enclosure, which measures 24.5m in length and a maximum of 11m in width, represents a rear yard – presumably originally defined by a stone wall. There is no clear evidence for an entrance into this rear yard beyond the access through the central building range. The yard is sub-divided internally by a low bank and has a building placed roughly centrally along its northern side, the stone footings of which are still visible through the turf. The location of the walled yard – behind the main building complex and hidden from the village street – would suggest it was a service area, the structure possibly representing a brewhouse or bakehouse.

Two further probable structures were also identified within the eastern half of the manorial enclosure, both adjacent to the village street. They are defined by sub-rectangular sunken or terraced platforms and grass-covered mounds, possibly representing the remains of small outbuildings.

The linear village remains in Deene parish

Roads and tracks

The main village street was evidently a relatively early feature as the other village earthworks were arranged around it. The route-way was also long-lived, as map evidence indicates it continued in use after the settlement was abandoned. It is represented by a sinuous hollow-way running approximately east-west down the valley side, the earthwork fading before it reaches the valley bottom (Fig. 11). Map evidence indicates the track originally forked here, one arm crossing the Gretton Brook and continuing northwards past the eastern side of Kirby Hall, the other turning westwards to follow the line of the watercourse. No evidence for these tracks or for the crossing on the much altered Gretton Brook is now visible above ground.

The width and depth of the hollow-way varies down its length, with clear evidence for narrowing along its western section mainly associated with the encroachment of building plots. In contrast, on the higher ground at the eastern end of the village the hollow-way broadens substantially, reaching a width of up to 19m. At the eastern end of this 90m long broad section the track bifurcates, turning onto the route now known as Kirby



Figure 11: The western section of the hollow-way, looking east from the hall gardens

Lane. Treswell's map of 1584 shows the hollow-way originally met an area named 'Kirby Green' at this point (NRO: FH 272/8), and the broadening of the track may have been created to facilitate the movement of livestock to and from this area of communal grazing. Encroachment into this area of common ground is evident by way of a small enclosure and building platform identified lying within this broad section of hollow-way (a).

At the western end of the broad section of hollow-way a fork runs north-westwards out towards the former common fields. This route evidently fell into disuse, as farm buildings were constructed along either side of it and the hollow-way was re-used

as a farmyard. The continuation of the hollow-way no longer survives as an earthwork beyond the field boundary, but is visible as a soil mark on aerial photographs of 1990 (NMR: AERO 90-208). This route may have originally given access to the northernmost furlongs of Kirby Croftes, one of the village's former open fields.

The farmsteads and cottages

There are two clear focuses of settlement evident in the linear village remains: one towards the western end of the main street, adjacent to the manorial complex; and one towards the eastern end, where the main street joined Kirby Green.

The western farmsteads and cottages

At the western end of the linear village there is only fragmentary evidence for the boundaries defining the individual plots. However, a tentative suggestion of their original size and form can be put forward. At least two of the farmsteads on the southern side of the road would appear to occupy plots with a road frontage of approximately 60m, possibly indicating they conform to a standard width. The manorial complex on the northern side of the road has a frontage of around 120m and therefore occupies a

double plot. This may suggest a planned stage of settlement development.

Only one farmstead (b) in this part of the village is depicted as standing at the time of the 1584 estate survey, at which time it was tenanted by Thomas Robinson and listed as a cottage (NRO: FH 429). Like all the buildings removed in the late 16th or early 17th centuries, it was comprehensively destroyed leaving little trace. Only very slight earthwork remains of two possible building platforms were identified in this area during survey work, positioned along the street frontage opposite the manorial complex. The remains of the plot's western boundary were also located, along with slight evidence for the eastern boundary, suggesting the plot was around 60m wide. Modern ploughing has obliterated evidence for the rear boundary, though aerial photography from 1957 would indicate it was positioned approximately 45m back from the main village street (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042). This would suggest the plot had an internal area of approximately 0.27ha (0.66 acres).

To the east lies farmstead (c) which again occupies a plot with a street frontage of 60m. The plot is defined along its western side by a broad track which gave access from the main street to the back of the village plots, and beyond to the common fields. The very slight earthwork remains of a small rectilinear enclosure or building were recorded on the western side of this track. The buildings of the farmstead are represented by spread earthwork platforms and form a linear row along what must originally have been the street frontage. The earthworks clearly indicate that the village street later narrowed, possibly suggesting that the farmstead accumulated extra land to the front. There may have been as many as six structures in the row. These buildings may represent a single holding or a terrace occupied by a number of families.

The remains of farmstead (d) on the southern side of the main street are also poorly defined, surviving as spread grass-covered earthworks. The western boundary of the holding is represented by a track leading from the main street but there is little to suggest where the eastern extent of the plot originally lay. Aerial photographs from the 1950s indicate ploughing extended almost up to the edge of the building remains (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042), probably destroying any evidence of the enclosure. The buildings of the farmstead clearly encroach on the village street, which narrows to 1.2m at this point. Like the neighbouring holding, the main domestic range was probably located along the original street frontage, with the farmstead later expanding northwards as it acquired land to the front.

The farmstead on the northern side of the street (e), adjacent to the manorial complex, is somewhat different in form to those to the south. Archaeological and map evidence indicate it sat within a relatively irregular plot about 53m wide, with the buildings positioned back from the street frontage and not aligned on it. The well-preserved buildings of this complex were located around a sunken yard, and comprised a single-celled structure on the yard's south-eastern side and a larger linear range along its north-eastern side. The linear range originated as a two-celled structure but was later extended to the north-west, the extension slightly misaligned. A concentration of stone rubble in the adjacent field indicates that a further structure was located towards the north-western corner of the plot.

The final building identified in the western section of the village (f) has been largely obliterated by modern ploughing. A two or three-celled structure was identified during fieldwork on the north side of the street, positioned just back from the street frontage. It is partly visible through slight earthworks and a concentration of stone rubble.

The eastern farmsteads and cottages

The remains of the buildings and plots at the eastern end of the linear settlement are generally better preserved than those to the west. This is almost certainly as a result of this area having been converted to woodland by 1584, with Treswell's map identifying the area as Wood Close (NRO: FH 272/8). By the time of the 1846 tithe map Wood Close included an area to the south of the hollow-way (NRO: T203), with surviving elements of the enclosure bank clearly blocking the track, the earthwork remains now standing no more than 0.4m high.

At the village's eastern end only one complex was recorded on the southern side of the main street (g) (Fig. 12). These remains again occupy a plot with a street frontage of 60m, but would appear to represent two separate farmsteads. The western farmstead is the best preserved and may have survived longer, or perhaps the well-defined earthworks signify a later re-building. This complex clearly encroaches on the hollow-way and is defined by two building platforms set at right angles to one another, the main domestic range fronting onto the street with a yard behind. At the eastern end of the plot there is a similar arrangement of buildings and yard, with both these holdings noticeably smaller than the farmsteads previously identified. Earthwork evidence suggests there may also have been a small structure in the intervening gap.



Figure 12: Farmstead (g) at the eastern end of the settlement, looking east

Opposite, on the northern side of the main street, a small linear two-celled structure was identified fronting onto the hollow-way (h). There is a hint of a yard behind this structure but it has the characteristics of a cottage rather than a farmstead, with no clearly defined plot associated with it.

As mentioned above, at the eastern end of the linear village a building complex was also recorded adjacent to a former track-way (i), the route originally giving access to the settlement's common fields. The building platforms line either side of the track, the complex utilizing the hollow-way between as a sunken yard and effectively blocking it. There are two separate structures along the north-eastern side of the track with a long two-celled building opposite, and although unique in form for this settlement, these buildings undoubtedly represent a single farmstead. This farmstead was clearly a later addition to the settlement, indicating an expansion of the village in the area adjacent to the common green. A series of linear earthworks to the north-east define small closes or gardens associated with the holding, and were accessed by a track running north from the main village street to the east of farmstead (i).

This track also marked the western boundary of farmstead (j), represented by a series of well-defined, grass-covered earthworks (Fig. 13). This substantial U-shaped farm complex was set around a sunken yard, the main two-celled linear range running parallel to the village street with the yard to the front. A second two-celled structure defined the south-eastern side of the yard, with an enclosure bank and small building to the north-west. The complex may also have had a second small yard to the rear, with another possible structure identified through a concentration of stone rubble in the adjoining ploughed field, visible on aerial photographs (NMR: AERO 90-208).



Figure 13: Farmstead (j) at the eastern end of the settlement, looking north-east

The settlement remains to the south-west of Kirby Hall

Only fragmentary remains of the irregular area of settlement to the south-west of Kirby Hall now survive, taking the form of low earthworks and concentrations of stone rubble, covering an area of around 2.6ha (6.4 acres). However, viewed in conjunction with the 16th-century estate maps, this evidence allows us to piece together the layout of this area of the village in the years immediately prior to destruction.

The main focus for settlement would have been the medieval church which was dismantled when the Great Garden was laid out, probably around the beginning of the 17th century. The church and churchyard were depicted by Treswell in 1584 and were located at the north-eastern end of the village, possibly adjoining a small square (NRO: FH 272/8). The churchyard is shown as almost triangular in form and was surrounded by a stone wall. When encountering Kirby Hall on his travels through Northamptonshire in the early 18th century, John Bridges noted in his journal: 'where the mount now is, a cart load of bones was dug up about twenty years hence' (Bridges & Whalley 1791, 314-5). Although not published until long after his death in 1724, Bridges' journals indicate that the mount occupies the approximate location of the former churchyard and that work to create the prospect mound was probably carried out at the end of the 17th century. Archaeological excavation of the Mount revealed evidence for the church building, suggesting it was in place by the 13th century, with several earth-cut features interpreted as former graves (Dix *et al* 1995, 331-2).

Treswell's map also depicts a series of buildings to the west of the church, located along one side of a street aligned approximately north-south. Very slight grass-covered earthworks (k) located between the Great Garden's raised terrace and a later ditch would appear to represent two of these structures. It seems likely that these are the remains of the buildings which sat on the eastern edge of the enclosure named Dovehouse Close, fronting on to the village street. This would indicate that the main street now lies under the raised earthen terrace. Aerial photographs from the 1950s also show the earthwork remains of a former boundary bank in the field to the west, the feature probably representing the back boundary of these village plots (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042; see Figure 2).

Further structures were also identified in this field, which is now under arable cultivation, the remains visible as a spread earthwork platform and concentrations of stone rubble. The building platform (l) almost certainly represents the location of the house which belonged to Thomas Brill in 1584, with stone rubble to the south marking the position of a second building. A further small structure that would have lain within Dovehouse Close was identified as a concentration of stone rubble near to the Gretton Brook, although it does not appear on any of the 16th-century estate maps.

On the southern side of the Gretton Brook a series of spread earthworks define part of the tenement named Lanes Farm in 1584 (m). The boundary of the plot is represented to the south-east by a spread scarp standing up to 1m high, and to the south-west by a short section of earthwork standing no more than 0.2m high. The plot originally continued into the adjoining field but this section was evidently swept away during the construction of the Wilderness. The location of the farm buildings is defined by a concentration of stone rubble overlying a terraced platform, with a small close or possible garden plot to the south. A slight linear scarp running parallel to the Gretton Brook may represent one side of the track which provided access to the

village houses on this side of the watercourse.

The Wilderness

The main area of garden recorded during survey work was the Wilderness, located within pasture on rising ground to the south of Kirby Hall (Fig. 14). The Wilderness is now defined by a sub-rectangular enclosure which measures some 330m north-south and a maximum of 110m east-west. The enclosure has an internal area of approximately 3.4 ha (8.4 acres) and is defined to the east by a grass-covered bank which stands no more than 0.4m high. Hedges and timber fencing delineate the southern and western boundaries of the area, with a canalised section of the Gretton Brook marking its northern extent. A stone-built weir or sluice was recorded towards the eastern end of this section of the watercourse, suggesting water levels were carefully controlled. A centrally placed stone or timber bridge must have crossed the Gretton Brook to allow access between the Great Garden and the Wilderness, with only slight earthwork remains of this now surviving on the northern side (not recorded as part of this survey).



Figure 14: The earthwork remains of the Wilderness, looking east from the Great Garden

The Wilderness was clearly constructed to reflect the proportions of the formal garden next to the house, extending its main axes out into the wider landscape. The earthwork remains of this linear axis were recorded on the ground and from aerial photographs, and suggest that a slightly off-centre pathway, around 2.5m wide, ran almost the entire length of the enclosure.

Evidence for the division of the enclosure laterally is less clear, but linear features recorded from aerial photographs indicate the location of a cross division c. 70m south of the Gretton Brook. When considered in conjunction with the main linear axis, the evidence would suggest the northern extent of the Wilderness was divided into two compartments. This corroborates evidence from an early 18th-century survey which depicts the Wilderness as comprising a series of sub-rectangular compartments of varying size (NRO: Map 3281 B).

A number of other features also serve to reinforce the suggestion that the area was set out in a similar way to that depicted on the 18th-century map. For example, two sub-circular earthwork features (n & o) may represent the former location of trees, small building stances or plinths for statues, and are located in line with each other at right angles to the main linear axis of the enclosure. They formed the corners of two of the compartments depicted on the early survey, with a number of surviving trees also positioned close to or at the location of former compartment corners. Furthermore, very slight diagonal earthworks were noted towards the southern end of the Wilderness, one of which was visible on an aerial photograph (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042). This linear corresponds with the cruciform layout of paths shown in this area on the 18th-century map. Lastly, the 15m wide gap towards the southern end of the enclosure's eastern boundary bank reflects where the avenue of trees leading from Kirby Green met the Wilderness. A small number of the avenue's trees were still upstanding into the 1950s and are visible on aerial photographs (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042; see Figure 2).

In contrast, there are a number of earthwork features in the Wilderness that do not bear any resemblance to the layout depicted on the early 18th-century map. These include two adjoining flat-topped mounds (p) which measure 16m and 19m across respectively, and stand a maximum of 0.8m high. It is unclear whether these mounds formed platforms for structures or were created as mounds to support planting. To the north-west of these a linear stone-revetted ditch or culvert was recorded running parallel to the enclosure's western boundary (Fig. 15). This water feature doesn't respect the early arrangement of compartments, and is therefore most likely a later addition. Its close relationship with the flat-topped mounds, and the



Figure 15: The cascade or rill on the south-western side of the Wilderness

scale of the earthworks, also suggests they may too be a later modification to the garden.

By the time of the 1846 tithe map the Wilderness had been divided into two enclosures (NRO: T 203), and a short section of the dividing boundary was recorded as a slight scarp (q). The larger southern area was depicted as still containing trees at that time, with the western boundary of the northern enclosure following the line of the stone-revetted ditch, therefore suggesting it was in place by 1846. These divisions do not respect the earlier layout of the Wilderness.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Prior to English Heritage's 2013 investigation, the scheduled deserted medieval village of Kirby had not been the focus of any significant previous research. The analytical survey of the earthwork remains, combined with evidence from documentary sources, historic maps and aerial photographs, has significantly improved our understanding of the settlement and the wider landscape surrounding Kirby Hall. The survey has also demonstrated the complex nature of the earthwork remains of the deserted village, and some issues inevitably remain unresolved, particularly in relation to the sequence of abandonment in the linear component of the settlement.

The Later Prehistoric and Romano-British landscape

The evidence for Later Prehistoric activity in the area immediately surrounding Kirby Hall is relatively limited, its distribution perhaps reflecting archaeological activity and areas of 20th century mineral extraction rather than a true picture of prehistoric exploitation (Fig. 16). The evidence predominantly takes the form of pits, ditches and finds of pottery and metalwork. Approximately 2.5km to the north-west of Kirby a hoard of 48 sword-

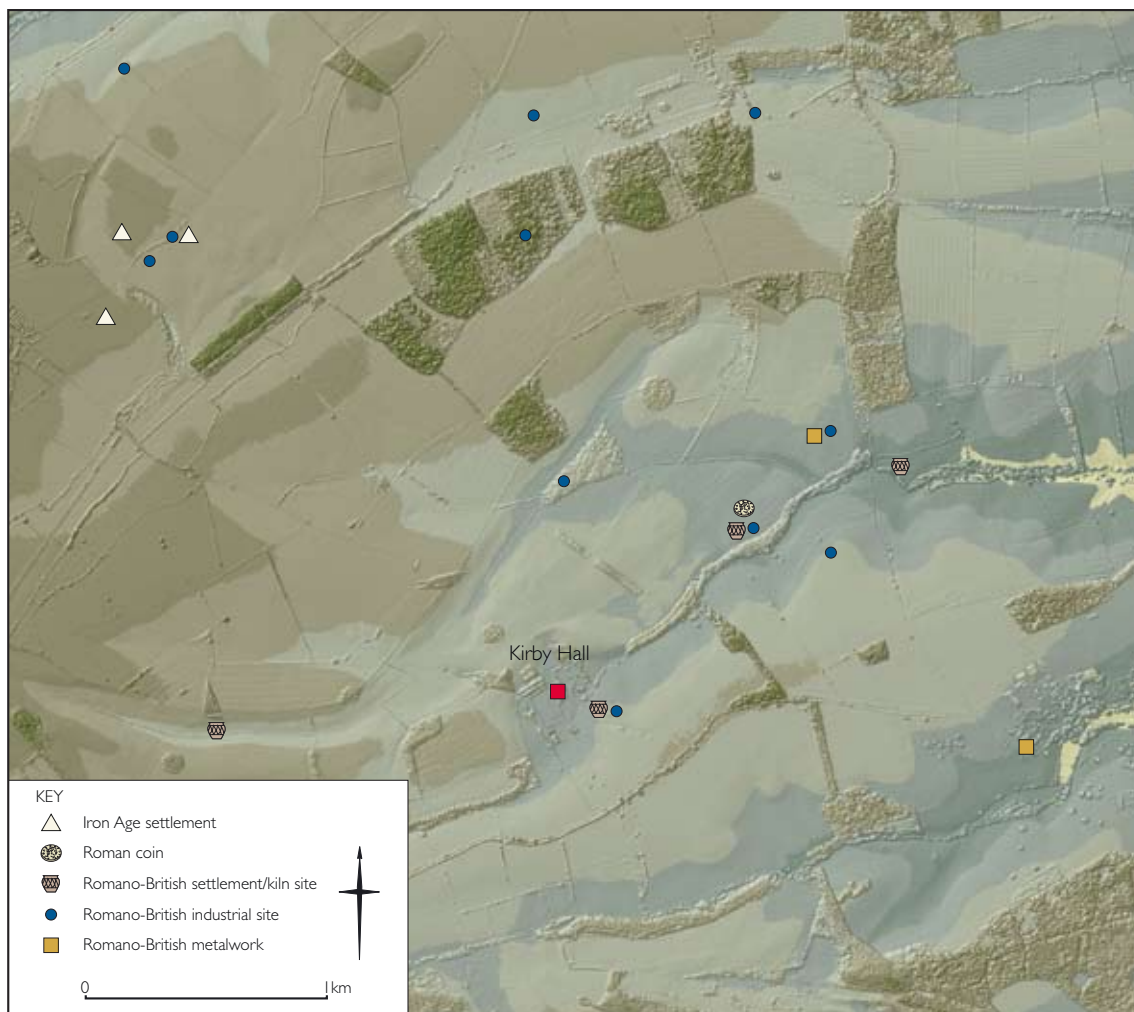


Figure 16: Distribution map showing Later Prehistoric and Romano-British sites

shaped currency bars was found during quarrying operations near Gretton. The site also comprised a linear ditch and pit alignment, the pits producing Early Iron Age pottery (NMR: SP 99 SW 12). Nearby a further linear ditch, approximately 2m deep and 70m long, was uncovered when the topsoil was removed prior to iron-stone mining; this ditch produced Late Iron Age pottery (NMR: SP 99 SW 16). There is also evidence for Romano-British activity in the vicinity of both these sites, suggesting a long history of landscape exploitation and perhaps reflecting a continuity of occupation at favoured locales.

The evidence for Romano-British use of the landscape surrounding Kirby is predominantly related to the economic life of the district – pottery manufacture and iron working. These industries exploited the natural resources of the area, reflected in the distribution of iron working sites which are located on or adjacent to areas of Ooidal Ironstone. These specialised metal-working sites tend to cluster along the sides of the minor river valleys – close to water courses – and were relatively densely distributed. The evidence for iron working is represented by finds of pottery, iron slag, charcoal, coins and the remains of furnaces and hearths, much of which was discovered during quarrying operations in the 20th century. For example, close to Ferrel's Wood on the north side of the Gretton Brook, around 1km downstream from Kirby, a quantity of pottery, iron slag and charcoal was discovered associated with a number of Roman coins (NMR: SP 99 SW 3). These coins include examples from the reign of Carausius and Constantine, suggesting a 3rd to 4th-century date for activity at the site.

The volume of pottery uncovered at Ferrel's Wood, combined with evidence for burnt earth, clay and sand, also suggests that a pottery kiln was in operation. This is perhaps not surprising as the Nene Valley to the west of Peterborough was the focus of large-scale pottery manufacture during the Romano-British period. This industry was established in the second half of the 2nd century AD and carried on until the late 4th century AD (Hartley 1960, 6-9). The evidence for pottery production generally consists of concentrations of pottery, including wasters and under-fired vessels, and kiln debris. Such sites are generally located along valley bottoms or near springs where a ready supply of water was available for washing the clay. When Lenton's Wood (located 1.5km to the west of Kirby) was cleared in 1960 a pottery kiln was discovered, represented by pottery (including samian, grey and colour-coated wares), wasters and a possible clay dome. The site was dated through the pottery to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD (NMR: SP 99 SW 7). A discrete area containing Romano-British roofing tile was also found and the site was put forward as the possible location of a small building.

There is limited evidence for Romano-British settlement and agriculture in the immediate vicinity of Kirby, though a relatively high density of dispersed farmsteads has been recorded along the Welland Valley. Settlement evidence generally takes the form of curvilinear enclosures and round houses visible as cropmarks or identified through geophysical survey. In the field adjacent to Kirby village curvilinear features and possible round houses recorded from geophysical survey have been interpreted as Romano-British in date and may be associated with an iron processing site (Holmes 2002, 4). Both iron processing and pottery manufacture would have required access to fuel in the form of charcoal, with blocks of coppiced woodland almost certainly representing a significant

part of the landscape at that time. Environmental evidence from work undertaken along the Nene Valley has shown that the wider region supported an organised agricultural landscape in the Romano-British period. The main crop grown was spelt wheat with areas of grassland also managed for hay production, indicating a mixed farming regime with large areas laid down to pasture (Parry 2006, 34-5).

The medieval landscape

The departure of the Roman administration, and the social and economic changes which followed, had a profound effect on the British landscape. Long established trade networks cease to function and the production and distribution of pottery and metalwork began to fail. From the 5th century AD dominant families emerged to exercise control over a multitude of individual territories. A drop in the rural population resulted in the abandonment of farmsteads and the removal of more marginal areas from agricultural use, altering the way the landscape was worked and managed. The survival of evidence for Romano-British industry around Kirby may be due to woodland regeneration in the 5th to 8th centuries AD, as the intensity of landscape exploitation declined. No evidence for medieval habitation dating from before the Late Saxon period has been discovered at Kirby, and the ceramic evidence for Saxon occupation is so slight (and the figures recorded at Domesday so low), it is likely that the pre-Conquest population was small.

The Royal Forest of Rockingham

The region's later use as a royal hunting forest could also have helped preserve evidence for earlier activity around Kirby, as it would have restricted the area's exposure to intensive medieval ploughing. Designated hunting forests were an essential component of medieval lordship and their creation represents one of the most influential changes in estate management in the post-Conquest period. Although certain areas were used as hunting grounds by the Anglo-Saxon kings, the concept of a royal forest – where deer and other wild animals such as boar and hare were reserved for the king and protected under forest law – was a Norman innovation (Grant 1991, 3).

The royal forest was effectively a game reserve, subject to its own administration and jurisdiction, and the right to hunt in the area was retained exclusively by the crown. Forest law was primarily created to protect the king's hunting, but it also permitted the monarch to retain rights over land beyond the bounds of his royal estate. Harsh punishments were often imposed for offences against forest law under the Norman kings, which could include imprisonment and death. By the later Middle Ages punishments were more generally in the form of fines imposed by the forest eyres (the highest forest court), which raised large sums of money for the crown. Fines could be levied for such offences as killing royal deer, clearing woodland or keeping hounds within the bounds of the royal forest. Within Rockingham forest it was also an offence by the 15th century for any man below lordly status to carry a crossbow without licence, with a £10 fine levied on those caught in possession of an unlicensed weapon (Cox 1905, 253).

A perambulation of the Forest of Rockingham in 1286 indicates just how large an area

it covered at that time. The forest extended from the south bridge of Northampton to the bridge of Stamford – some 53km – and was bounded to the east by the River Nene and to the west by the Welland Brook, effectively bringing a vast area (and its inhabitants) under the jurisdiction of forest law. The extent of the forest was somewhat reduced by the time Edward I formally confirmed the Great Charter in 1299, but still covered a considerable area of the county. The forest was divided into three separate districts or *bailiwicks* – Rockingham, Brigstock and Cliff – each of which were divided into two or more *walks*. Rockingham comprised Benefield Land, Vert Walk and the woods of Gretton, Little Weldon, Weedhaw, Thornhaw and Corby (Cox 1905, 256). The inhabitants of areas under forest law were restricted in the exploitation of their own lands and had to apply for permission to fell areas of woodland within the forest. They did, however, often have customary rights to exploit the royal forest for its valuable herbage for cattle and horses, pasture for sheep and goats, and seasonal pannage for pigs.

Proximity to the forest could bring other benefits, with foraging, poaching and woodland crafts supplementing the diet and income of many farming households. Wood could be collected for repairs and for fuel, and could be permitted to be used for some small-scale commercial and industrial purposes (such as iron-working). Many of the prosecutions presented at the forest eyres were concerned with poaching, particularly within the king's demesne woods, and for the felling of timber without licence, both of which were serious offences and warranted prison sentences. Perhaps the clearest impact the forest had on the landscape, however, was the construction of buildings to accommodate the various officials who implemented forest law. Treswell's 16th-century estate maps, for example, show a number of lodges on the edge of the king's woods. These included a building on the southern side of Gretton wood, located alongside the road from Gretton to Weldon and adjoining Troughton's Close on the western edge of Kirby.

As the initial establishment of many of the villages within the Forest of Rockingham occurred before the Conquest, the creation of the royal hunting ground could not have influenced their early development. However, the imposition of forest law may have limited their growth in the following centuries. The amount of assarting allowed in the forest, for example, would have been strictly controlled by forest officials, potentially restricting the expansion of the village fields and therefore the villages themselves. Kirby lay on the edge of the king's demesne wood of Gretton, possibly restricting the potential for arable expansion on the north side of the Gretton Brook. The king's woods of Little Weldon and Corby also occupied substantial areas of land to the south and west of Kirby, and undoubtedly had a bearing on the development of both Kirby and Deene.

The church and manorial centres

The church at Kirby was clearly integral to the village plan, with place-name evidence indicating the existence of a church or chapel on the site by the early 11th century, if not before. Prior to the construction of the Great Garden in the 17th century the topography of the area was quite different, with excavation evidence suggesting the church was located on a small knoll (Dix 1991, 63). This natural feature may therefore have been the draw for the earliest religious centre, possibly representing a site imbued

with pre-existing landscape significance.

Documentary evidence suggests the manor at Kirby was held jointly from at least the early 13th century onwards, when a part share was awarded to Roesia, late wife of Eustace de Kirkeby. By the end of the 13th century the manor was still recorded as held jointly, and by 1297 what was probably the larger of the two holdings was granted to Fineshade Priory. The endowment of land to monastic establishments was seen as a way for landholders to project their lordly status, a process particularly prevalent during the 12th and 13th centuries. The grant to Fineshade Priory may also have included the church, as benefactors were also persuaded to endow churches to monastic houses as their nature changed and the potential for income from customary dues increased.

The separate estates at Kirby would have been run from discrete administrative or manorial centres. The term manor refers to a territorial unit of lordship which also served as the basic unit of estate administration. Medieval manorial complexes generally comprised an enclosure or *curia*, often accessed through a gatehouse, within which all the buildings required for a lordly residence sat. These seigneurial assets would have included an open hall, solar and oratory or chapel, as well as service buildings such as kitchens and stables. Manorial complexes also functioned as the economic and administrative centre for the estate, and as such, comprised offices and farm buildings (which could include an ox house, hay house, granary, pigsty and sheep house), as well as structures for processing estate produce, such as mills, bakehouses and brewhouses. Other lordly appurtenances – fishponds, dovecotes, gardens and orchards – were also commonly associated with manorial centres.

There is no known reference to a second manor house at Kirby in the medieval period, but the name Hall Close on Treswell's map of 1584 is a strong indication of the former status of this site. The number of possible buildings recorded within Hall Close combined with their double courtyard form, are also suggestive of a higher-status residence and set it apart from the other farmsteads in the village (Fig. 17). That the building complex would appear to occupy a double plot and had direct access to the Gretton Brook may be considered as significant; the 16th-century map evidence also suggests that this section of the brook may have been damned to create a pond. Although it has been noted elsewhere that the sites of early manorial enclosures were prone to move (such as Jones and Page 2006), it is unlikely that Hall Close represents the medieval predecessor to Kirby Hall. The site is located within Deene parish and remained in separate ownership until the late 16th century. It is not uncommon to have two manorial complexes within a village, as seen at sites such as Raunds, Northamptonshire, where separated manorial halls were identified on either side of a small brook (Audouy and Chapman 2009). There are also a number of examples in the immediate vicinity of Kirby where settlements are located on opposing sides of a watercourse, including Henwick and Bulwick, and Blatherwycke Holy Trinity and Blatherwycke St Mary, all located along the course of the Willow Brook.

It is tempting to make comparisons between the form and location of the manorial residence in Deene parish and Kirby Hall, as both occupy a strategic position on the main through-route adjacent to the crossing on the Gretton Brook. The footprint of Kirby

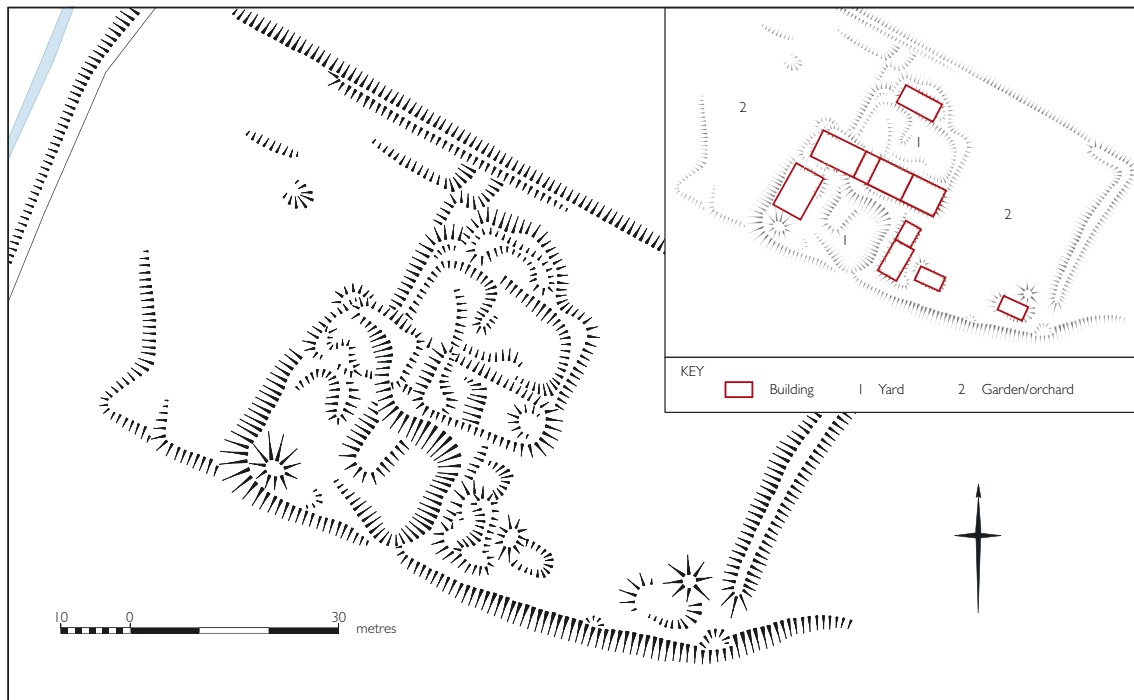


Figure 17: Detail of earthwork survey showing the manorial complex

Hall is also strikingly similar in size (and shape) to the manorial enclosure in Deene parish, although there is no current archaeological evidence to suggest Kirby Hall occupies the site of a medieval manorial centre.

An alternative location for the early manorial centre at Kirby is presented by evidence for medieval occupation in the ploughed field to the south-west of Kirby Hall, beyond the Great Garden. During fieldwalking a large concentration of medieval pottery was recovered from the enclosure named Dovehouse Close on Treswell's 1584 estate map (Dix *et al* 1995, 297), and the remains of a possible structure were identified during the recent survey work. This building does not appear on any of the 16th-century estate maps and is now only visible as a concentration of stone rubble. The enclosure has direct access to the Gretton Brook and the name suggests it was once the site of a dovecote. In the medieval period dovecotes were a prerogative of the manorial gentry by law, and as well as providing a year round supply of fresh meat, they also played a symbolic role in demonstrating power and status (Williamson 1997, 95-96). Dovecotes were therefore often sited within the manorial complex, as recorded at sites such as West Cotton and Raunds, Northamptonshire, where circular medieval dovecots were recorded adjacent to the main manorial buildings (Chapman 2010; Audouy and Chapman 2009). It is therefore possible that Dovehouse Close represents the location of an earlier manorial centre at Kirby, the dovecote presumably surviving longer than the manor-house buildings to give the enclosure its name. It seems unlikely that the relocation of the manor relates to the construction of Stafford's house in the 1570s however, as the dovecote had gone by 1584.

The earliest identifiable fabric in Kirby Hall dates from the early to mid-16th century, and comprises a two-light window opening, partly concealed within the north wall of

the basement of the stair hall (Fig. 18). The window has a simple hollow chamfer to its mullions and four-centred arched heads. The form of this window contrasts with those associated with the main building phase begun by Humphrey Stafford in 1570 and indicates that this basement window is likely to relate to a building on the site prior to the 1570s house. Windows of similar form and proportions at nearby Deene Park are attributed to a phase of construction in the 1520s. The complex stratigraphic relationships visible in the wall and in the walling of the associated Little Hall range at Kirby suggests that further fabric in this area is likely to date from the same period, with some fabric potentially also surviving from earlier phases. It is therefore possible that prior to the construction of Stafford's house, there had been a major reorganisation of the settlement which saw the site of the manorial complex moved to the north-east. This move perhaps reflects a desire to control and dominate access to and from the settlement, or may imply a need to escape the physical constraints of the earlier site.



Figure 18: The two-light window partially concealed in the north wall of the stair tower

The village of Kirby

The origins of the village of Kirby remain poorly understood, but the Scandinavian origin for the place name indicates it was coined after the Danish Conquest of the 870s. There was clearly a settlement in this general location from at least the 11th century, with residual pottery of Late Saxon date recovered in small quantities during excavations around the Hall (Dix *et al* 1995, 311). The position of the village is typical for this area, where settlements tend to cluster along both sides of the main river valleys and their major tributaries, often focused on crossings. Secondary settlements such as Kirby are

also common, and may have started out as true dependencies of the larger 'mother' villages. It is easy to understand why people chose to settle at Kirby as it has access to a wide range of natural resources, including a ready supply of water, good quality farmland along the valley sides, areas of meadow along the valley bottom, and valuable mineral resources. Settlers would also have had access to woodland and open grazing land on the higher slopes, providing valuable pasture for cattle and sheep, seasonal pannage for pigs and a ready supply of timber for their immediate needs.

The village remains at Kirby tell a long and fluctuating story of expansion, contraction and movement of focus; they also reflect cultural, social and economic change which ultimately resulted in their complete abandonment in the late 16th or early 17th century. The earliest phase of the village is somewhat obscure but was most likely centred around the area of the church and manorial centre on the northern side of the Gretton Brook. The tenements here were also the longest lived, and as a result, like most of the later abandonment in Northamptonshire, are the least well preserved. This area of the village may have developed from a single row of tenements along the western side of a roughly north-south aligned street. The buildings were positioned towards the front of each plot, and by the 16th century were represented by a combination of houses facing onto the street and placed end-on. A number of holdings were also located on the southern side of the Gretton Brook, and probably represent a later phase of expansion along the valley bottom. The size and form of these plots would suggest they represent the colonisation of former common arable fields.

The linear settlement remains in Deene parish are in a better state of preservation, partly a result of their earlier abandonment (they escaped the zeal of later settlement clearance) and partly due to later land-use. The final sequence of abandonment in this region of the village is unclear, but may be related to phases of enclosure documented from the early 16th century onwards, when areas of common arable were being amalgamated and laid to pasture. The earthworks, however, indicate a complex story of change, which includes separate phases of colonisation and expansion. The initial focus of settlement was almost certainly associated with the manorial centre, with a series of regularly-sized holdings positioned on the southern side of the main street. More irregular plots on the northern side of the street were also enclosed and settled, possibly at a later date, and may have been directly related to the manorial complex.

The buildings along the southern side of the main street were almost exclusively positioned facing on to the road with several holdings accumulating extra land to the front, and in doing so, reducing the width of the village street. This would suggest a degree of longevity in the village plan, and possibly reflects the influence of neighbours on one another. We can imagine a scenario where land was accumulated in stages, with neighbouring households not wanting to be outdone. These areas may have been used as small garden plots or for storage, one holding even going as far as to extend their property over this newly acquired land. This may illustrate a rise in the collective influence of the local community, and could be linked to the withdrawal of the seigniorial class from village life (Harvey 1985, 38).

A second focus for settlement developed at the eastern end of the village street, adjacent

to the common grazing ground on Kirby Green. There is one plot on the southern side of the road which may represent one of the earliest phases of colonisation, as it occupies a site which respects the regular plot size noted around the manorial complex. This plot may have been subdivided at some point, as it contains two relatively small L-shaped farmsteads set around rear yards. It was not uncommon for holdings to be split in the medieval period, often as part of inheritance where a father wanted to provide for more than one son. The pressure on landholding at Kirby is clearly demonstrated by the expansion of the settlement north-eastwards, along the edge of Kirby Green. Some of these holdings survive as well-defined earthworks, with others now only identifiable through stone rubble visible on aerial photographs and concentrations of medieval pottery recovered through field walking (NMR: AERO 90-208; Dix *et al* 1995). Settlement expansion was achieved through the colonisation of arable strips, but when and by what means this occurred remains unclear. Its unplanned nature may suggest the settlement expanded organically over a prolonged period of time, possibly a reaction to demographic change and the adoption of new agricultural methods.

Later settlement shrinkage and abandonment at Kirby was also a gradual process, and can not be attributed to a single event or a particular period in time. Some village tenements were probably lost in the 14th or 15th centuries, the casualties of social, economic and environmental change, with others holding on and perhaps prospering, accumulating land as their neighbours left in search of a better life elsewhere. The desire of local landholders to increase the profitability of their land led to the enclosure of village fields across Northamptonshire, a process which began in the 16th century and accelerated through the 17th century. Enclosure clearly had an influence on the settlement pattern at Kirby, with land in Deene parish amalgamated and enclosed in the early 16th century by Sir Robert Lytton. The remaining open fields were enclosed by exchange between Sir Christopher Hatton and Thomas Brudenell in the 1580s, by which time a large number of the village houses had been abandoned. The creation of the great mansion of Kirby Hall, and the setting out of its gardens, was the catalyst for the final abandonment of the village, probably occurring around the end of the 16th century.

The buildings of the village

By Rebecca Lane

As the description of the village has shown, the relatively good earthwork survival of the linear village remains in Deene parish allows some analysis of the form and function of the buildings at Kirby to be made. This information can then be set in the wider context of similar settlements in Northamptonshire, allowing a more detailed picture of the settlement to emerge.

Layout, form and materials

The majority of the village buildings are set within clearly defined plots, which in most cases contain multiple structures representing both domestic and agricultural buildings. The domestic structures can generally be distinguished by their position within the plot, and their size and form in relation to the other buildings. The majority of the farmhouses lie parallel to the main street, often towards the front of their plots. In some cases

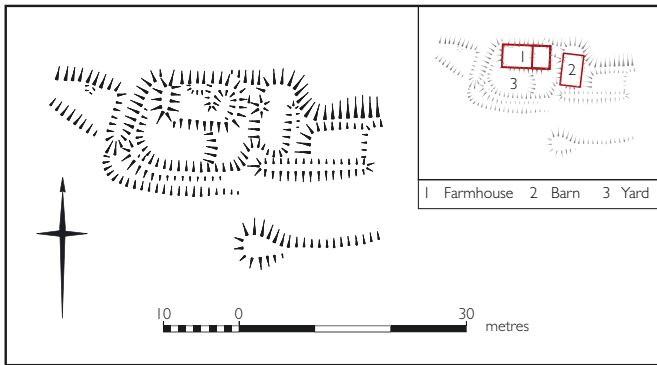


Figure 19: Detail of earthwork survey showing farmstead (g)

with others comprising agricultural buildings set at right angles to the main domestic range.

this has led to encroachment onto the street itself, as seen at farmstead (d) for example, where the northern range of the building projects out over the village street, significantly impinging on the main thoroughfare. Similarly, a narrowing of the street can be seen at farmstead (g) (Fig. 19), possibly the result of a relatively late rebuilding of part of this complex. Some of these farmsteads are defined by a linear arrangement of buildings,

There are also a number of cases where the main domestic range is set back from the street frontage behind a sunken yard. These include the higher status manorial complex where the principal domestic accommodation is positioned centrally within the plot, allowing for a double courtyard arrangement with buildings grouped around yards to the front and rear (see Fig. 17). This arrangement is partly replicated at farmsteads (e) and (j), where the domestic accommodation is positioned back from the road with smaller agricultural buildings set at right-angles to it along one or both side of a sunken yard (Fig.

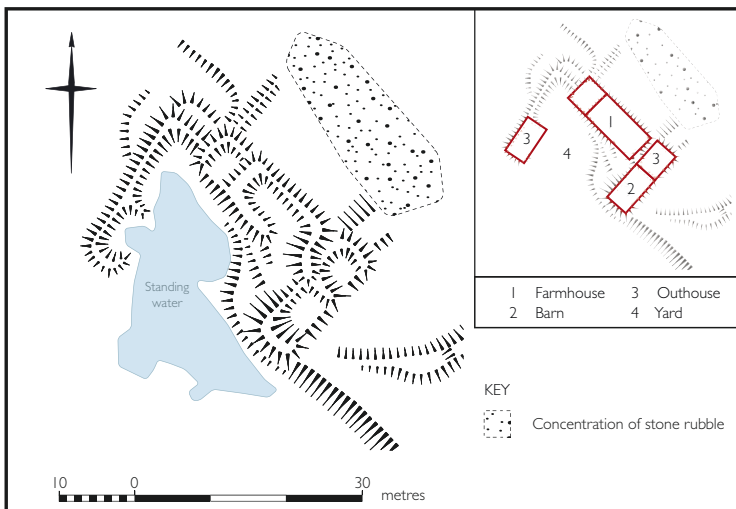


Figure 20: Detail of earthwork survey showing farmstead (j)

the adjacent ploughed field. This could suggest some parallels between the way of life of the better-off peasant farmers and their manorial lords.

20). The reasons why these farmsteads adopted a different form are unclear, but it is notable that the domestic ranges associated with them are relatively large (see below), and thus, as with the manorial complex, may represent higher status holdings. In the cases of farmsteads (e) and (j) there are indications that further buildings may have sat to the rear of the plots, now represented by scatters of stone rubble in

Where the form of the farmhouses can be discerned the majority appear to have originated as two cell buildings. These vary considerably in size: the western farmstead of complex (g), for example, has a domestic building measuring 10m x 5m; the farmhouse at (e) has an original component which measures 19.5m x 6.5m; the probable cottage at

(h) measures 15 x 4m. This appears to indicate that two-cell structures were preferred even where investment, and indeed the overall proportions of the building, would have allowed for a three-cell structure. The exception to this is the manorial complex, where the principal domestic building appears to be a three cell structure measuring 34m x 8m, possibly with a cross-passage towards the west end dividing the largest room (12m x 8m) from the other two. Typically this would represent a service area, although the form and function of respective areas of such buildings could be subject to frequent updating and upgrading. The well defined courtyard to the rear of the building appears to have been enclosed and the structure in this area may have provided additional service accommodation.

There is evidence for later extensions to some farmsteads, potentially to provide additional domestic or service rooms. That at (d) has already been discussed in relation to its encroachment into the street, but is also notable as an extension to existing accommodation. At (e) there is a small single-cell structure attached to the west of the main building. It is out of alignment with the principal range and slightly narrower in width (measuring 5m x 5m), and is clearly a later addition. Such modifications could be related to changes in building function, agricultural practices or household circumstances.

The association of the majority of these buildings with a wider farmstead probably ensured that some domestic functions, particularly those associated with dairying, brewing, baking etc, could have taken place in ancillary buildings. Domestic structures were most often paired with at least one agricultural building, probably a barn, most often placed at right angles to the village street. These single-cell structures range between 10 x 5.5m and 8.5 x 4.5m in size, and where discernable, had a centrally positioned door opening onto the yard. The sunken profiles of the yards may suggest livestock was kept in them at night, and their trampling, together with the periodic scraping of the surface for manure, would have eroded the ground surface to create their sunken form. Other specialist agricultural buildings or outhouses could include stables, cart sheds and stock buildings such as pigsties or poultry houses – the ephemeral nature of some structures possibly leaving little archaeological trace.

The visible stone footings of some structures make it clear that the majority of buildings were constructed, at least in part, of locally available stone. It is clear that at a minimum it was used for base walling, including for internal cross walls, and for fireplaces. It is not possible to determine the extent to which this may have been combined with other materials, most notably timber. The position of the village within the royal forest indicates that timber was available locally, although access to such supplies would have been carefully restricted. Roofing material is mostly likely to have been thatch, although some higher status buildings may have made use of stone slates, sources for which were available locally and which became ubiquitous in the post-medieval period.

The wider Northamptonshire context

By definition deserted settlements represent the less successful settlements in an area. In Northamptonshire, records from the medieval period suggest those settlements which were abandoned in the 15th and 16th centuries tended to have been the poorer and smaller settlements which were naturally more vulnerable to population shifts and

changes in agricultural practice (RCHME 1979, lii). This has implications for the form of the settlement, and to a lesser extent its buildings, as their population levels and capacity for investment in buildings is likely to have been lower. Certainly Kirby did not develop the more complex street pattern visible in settlements like Gretton by the 16th century (NRO FH272/4).

Despite this, some of the general features of settlement in the county certainly apply to Kirby, including a tendency for domestic buildings to run parallel to the street, and for plots to be wide enough to accommodate three-room buildings (RCHME 1984, xxxix). The majority of Northamptonshire houses were built on the street front (RCHME 1984, xxxix), a feature visible at Kirby, particularly on the south side of the main village street (such as complexes (c), (d) and (g)). Indeed at (d) and (g) the houses have encroached on the street, possibly as a result of expansion or rebuilding of their original footprint. There are, however, a significant number of farmsteads with buildings set back from the roadway. The RCHME notes this in relation to higher status complexes (RCHME 1984, xxxix), with one of the Kirby examples interpreted as a manorial complex. The others appear to be larger farmsteads which have main domestic ranges parallel to the street front but set back. They also have smaller, probably agricultural buildings at right-angles to the main block, with a yard area to the front. The reason for this less typical plan form is not clear, but may be associated with the size and status of the holding.

Some of the best comparators for the domestic structures in the village come from the RCHME architectural survey of North Northamptonshire. Almost all of the smaller domestic buildings identified in this survey are of the 17th century or later, and the survey notes that these in themselves probably represent the larger and better constructed buildings of that period (RCHME 1984, lvi). Of the smaller medieval buildings that were identified in North Northamptonshire one represented a relatively high-status three-room plan house and three, more fragmentary, two-cell structures (RCHME 1984, lviii). Other examples were considered atypical or incomplete. Although not providing a large enough sample for proper analysis, the findings of the survey seem to correlate to the pattern observed at Kirby, with only one possible three-cell structure in the manorial complex and otherwise a series of two-cell structures of varying size. Some of the latter structures have what appear to be additions which may have potentially made them three-cell structures in the later phases of their use.

Despite the disparity in dates, it is also informative to look at the surviving post-medieval domestic buildings. Some continuity in the form, scale and detailing of structures can be anticipated, and the comparable size of surviving 17th century structures in nearby parishes such as Bulwick and Harringworth and the Kirby earthworks suggests that something of the form of the buildings can be gleaned from the later structures.

Of the materials used to construct the buildings the RCHME notes that the use of stone is almost universal in the area from the 16th century onwards in smaller buildings and for all higher status buildings of the medieval period and later. This reflected the easy access to local stone supplies, which could be quarried close to many of the settlements. The extent to which timber-framing was employed, particularly in the area around Rockingham Forest, in the medieval period is unknown, but it is noted in non-domestic

buildings in the area in the 17th and 18th century and there are some surviving high-status medieval buildings with timber-framed first floors (RCHME 1984, xlv). The survival of stone footings in some of Kirby's farmsteads attests to the widespread use of stone in the settlement.

The identified higher-status manorial complex at Kirby has more direct comparators in the wider area, as some comparable medieval complexes do survive. Typically these complexes are significantly altered; however a relatively intact example has been identified at Nassington, on the north-eastern edge of Northamptonshire. The main domestic building sits parallel to the road in the centre of the plot, and was surveyed by the RCHME in the early 1980s. It comprises a 13th century main hall of 12m x 9m, remodelled in the 15th century and with a 15th and 16th century service wing. Subsequent archaeological and historical research has identified a number of other medieval and post-medieval structures in a loose double courtyard arrangement with a gatehouse and lodgings to the front and a dovecote to the rear (Emery 2000, 280). Such an arrangement may parallel that provided in the manorial complex at Kirby, notwithstanding a possible distinction in the status of the two, as Nassington's complex was the primary manorial centre for the village, albeit with a secondary manorial complex which developed to its north.

The village fields

Surrounding the village of Kirby would have been its open field system. The open fields of the medieval period were generally located close to the settlement and comprised bundles of strips called *furlongs* within which the same crop would normally be grown in any one year. These strips (known as *lands*) were allocated to peasant farmers by the lord of the manor and were distributed evenly over the common fields. Ploughing of individual strips to create ridges moved small quantities of soil along the strip, forming heaps at each end called *heads*. It is these heads – often surviving as linear earthworks – that can be used to define furlong extents (Fig. 21). The majority of the archaeological evidence for the arrangement of furlongs at Kirby is now only visible on aerial photographs taken in the 1950s. These capture the remnants of the medieval landscape on the eve of its obliteration by modern agriculture and industry. What the photographs reveal is a chequerboard of small furlongs, with strips ranging from around 80m to 260m in length, most of which lie on a north-west to south-east alignment. There is clear evidence for adaptation of the system, with some furlong boundaries ploughed over, either in part or completely, and strips amalgamated to form longer lands.

Furlongs were grouped into blocks to create fields, the basic unit for fallowing, with a single field remaining unsown each year in a rotational system. Typically there were two or three fields supporting a two or three year crop rotation. At Gretton, for example, map evidence indicates the township worked a three field system comprising East Field, West Field and Wood Field. The main crops cultivated in the open fields were wheat for baking and barley for brewing, with black peas and beans grown as fodder (the latter also valued for its beneficial effect on the following crop). Soil fertility would have been improved by spreading manure from the yards and animal houses of the village over the strips and furlongs, as well as by folding sheep flocks on the open fields after cropping.



Figure 21: Plan of village fields transcribed from aerial photographs

The distribution of the medieval ceramic evidence recorded at Kirby clearly illustrates that domestic rubbish was also spread over the village fields to improve soil fertility (Dix *et al* 1995, 297). Map evidence indicates the existence of a limekiln towards the south-western corner of Kirby Great Pasture, and although it is possible this kiln was constructed to supply lime for the construction works at the Hall, the use of lime as a soil improver can be traced back to the medieval period.

At Kirby, cartographic evidence suggests the village worked a two-field system – West Field and Okes Field – the fields located to the south of the Gretton Brook and shared with Deene (NRO: FH 272/9). However, there is archaeological evidence to indicate a greater portion of the estate had previously been used for arable cultivation. By the 16th century a large part of the area to the north of the Gretton Brook comprised enclosed demesne pasture, with Gretton Wood beyond. Ridge and furrow ploughing is visible within the pastures named Knights Croft and Hollow Bottom, to the north-east of Kirby Hall, indicating these areas were at one time under the plough. It is likely that Kirby Great Pasture, at least in part, was also used as arable for a time, though no archaeological evidence for this survives. The demesne land also included an area of meadow along the

valley bottom named Knights Meadow, which covered 8 acres, as well as other smaller meadows scattered across the common fields.

The reversion of arable land to grass probably began in the 15th century, with areas initially chosen for pasture generally those where the soil was poorest or that furthest from the village, often corresponding with land that had been taken into cultivation from the wastes. Some of these areas of intake could also be given over to woodland, particularly those located on the heavy clay soils of the higher ground. The small enclosure named Wood Close on Treswell's map, for example, contains cultivation ridges and clearly formed part of the common field at one time. This former furlong was almost certainly added to the open field system, probably originating as part of Kirby Green, though it may only have been cultivated for a relatively short period of time. By 1584 around one third of the strips in Kirby's common fields were left as permanent grass or *leys*, indicating a shift away from intensive arable farming towards a more livestock-based economy. In the years between 1584 and 1587 whole blocks of furlongs at Kirby were enclosed by exchange between Sir Christopher Hatton and Thomas Brudenell of Deene and the land turned over to pasture (NRO: FH 272/8 & 272/9).

The post-medieval landscape

The story of the post-medieval landscape is dominated by the ambitious plans of Humphrey Stafford to build a grand Elizabethan manor house at Kirby, and the subsequent alterations and additions carried out to the house and gardens by the Hatton family.

The 17th-century and later gardens

The layout and development of the formal 17th-century Great Garden to the west of Kirby Hall is relatively well understood, primarily due to the pioneering archaeological work of Brian Dix (1991; 1995). The range of rare and exotic plants and seeds which were cultivated in the gardens was also extensively documented in correspondence between family members (Sladen 1984, 148-54), allowing a clearer picture of the 17th-century gardens to emerge. What is less well understood are the effects of the later 17th-century garden remodelling on the wider landscape.

Evidence from the 2013 survey work has helped to confirm the existence and layout of the area known as the Wilderness, probably created c. 1693-94 when the south wall of the Great Garden was removed and the view to the wider landscape opened up (BL Add. 29574 239). The main linear axis of the Great Garden was extended out into the landscape, the raised terrace along the Great Garden's western side resulting in the Wilderness having a slightly asymmetrical form. When John Bridges visited Kirby in the early 18th century he described the gardens as being 'adorned with a wilderness composed of almost the whole variety of English trees, and ranged in an elegant order' (Bridges & Whalley 1791, 314). The archaeological evidence indicates that the Wilderness was indeed set out in a formal and highly structured way, comprising a series of regular compartments divided by a network of paths and joined by an avenue of trees on its eastern side. It also demonstrates the surprising accuracy of the early 18th-century map,

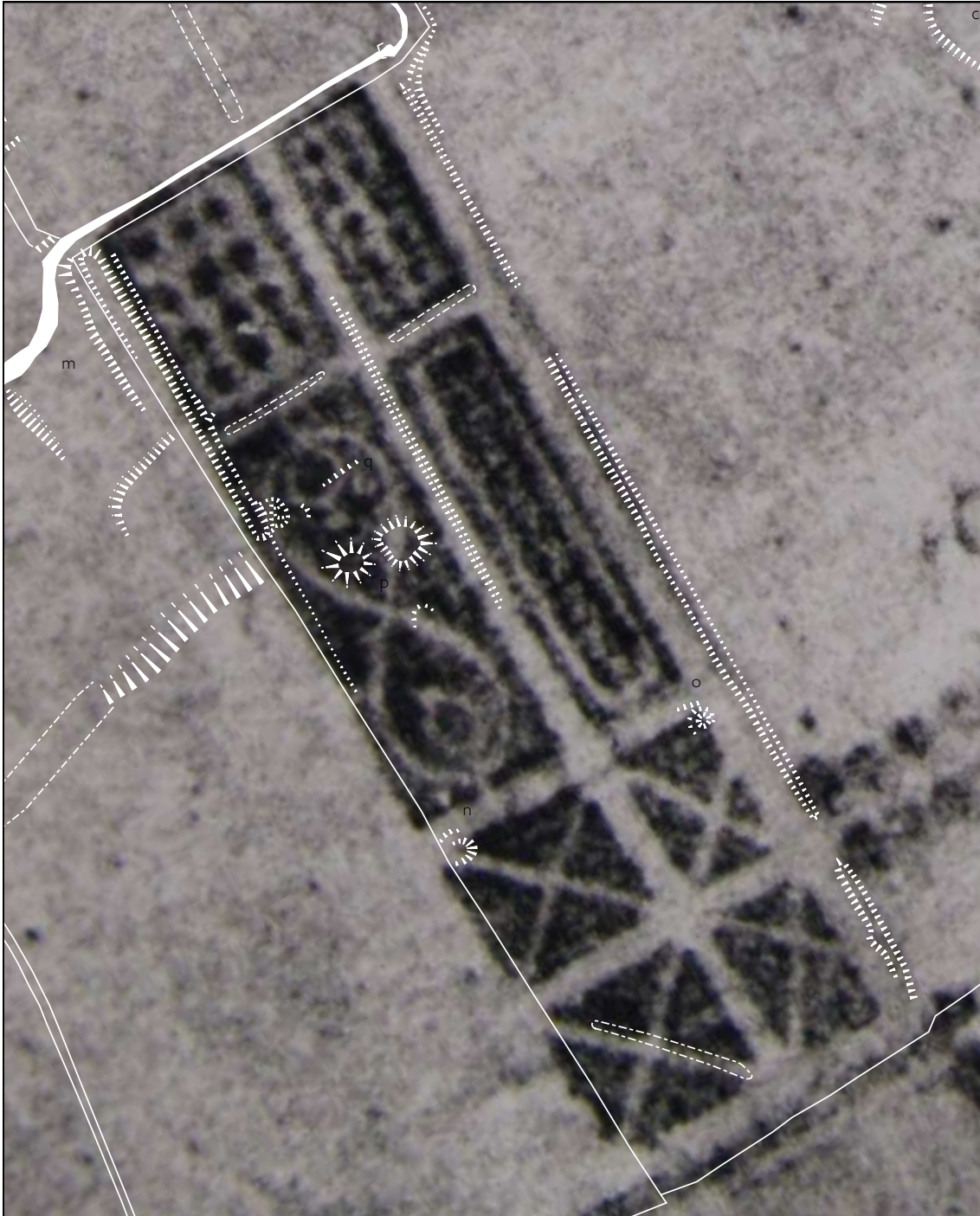


Figure 22: Plan showing the earthwork survey and aerial photographic transcription superimposed on the 18th-century map (NRO: Map 3281 B) (reproduced with permission Northamptonshire Record Office)

which must now be considered a relatively true representation of the garden Bridges described (Fig. 22). The construction of the Wilderness reflects the garden fashion of the day, and may have been influenced in part by work being carried out at Broughton House by one of Hatton's near neighbours, Ralph Montagu. Here, lavish gardens were laid out in the Dutch style and included elaborate parterres, water basins, fountains and extensive canals, elements of which survive to this day

It is unclear how long this formal layout of the Wilderness survived but the area was clearly modified, these changes including the addition of two flat-topped mounds. These mounds may have supported garden structures, planting schemes or could have served as vantage points from which the surrounding gardens could be viewed. The position of the mounds, to the west of the central axis, is also of interest as they appear to be aligned on the 'mount', a prospect mound on the south side of the Great Garden created during the 17th century (Dix *et al* 1995, 335). They also sit at approximately the same height, perhaps strengthening the suggestion they supported features designed to draw the eye out from the main garden into the wider landscape. A linear stone-revetted ditch was also constructed along the western edge of the enclosure and possibly represents a small cascade or rill; its close relationship to the mounds suggesting it may be contemporary.

Archaeological evidence indicates that changes were made to the gardens and wider landscape during the second half of the 18th century. This work included the construction of two linear ponds or lakes to the south and east of the house. The ponds were formed by damming the Gretton Brook, one of the dams surviving as a relatively modest stone-revetted earthwork. This dam clearly represents more than one phase of construction and functioned as a decorative bridge giving access to the southern side of the watercourse (Fig. 23). The date of the dam is at present unknown, but it sits within an area recorded as Pond Close on Treswell's map of 1584 and it is therefore possible it represents a much older feature reused or remodelled in the 18th century.

A sub-rectangular garden was also created downstream, at the eastern end of the second pond, and was defined by two enclosures named the 'Inner Garden' and 'Outer



Figure 23: The dam or bridge to the east of Kirby Hall



Figure 24: Detail of Deene Tithe Map showing the ponds and the 'Inner Garden' and 'Outer Garden' on the eastern side of the Gretton Brook (NRO: TA203) (reproduced with permission Northamptonshire Record Office)

Garden' on the 1846 tithe award (NRO: T203) (Fig. 24). This possibly represents a small kitchen garden or orchard, but by the time of the 1950's aerial photographs was visible as little more than an ordered row of trees (RAF/2319/29NOV57/0042). Little detail can be ascertained of the 18th-century garden layout, but it is clear that some investment was being made, possibly by George Finch-Hatton in the second half of the century. Analysis of the interiors of the house indicates the Hall was partly refurbished at this time, with the modernisation almost certainly extending to the garden. The garden alterations were modest however; not on the grand scale of earlier schemes, and clearly favoured a more naturalistic style – including the ubiquitous serpentine lake. Existing mature trees were kept, such as those in the former Wilderness and Wood Close, and the new ornamental planting had soft edges. It was undoubtedly this picturesque parkland landscape which helped to preserve the earthwork remains of the village and its fields.

The abandonment of the house obviously led to the gentle decay of the landscape around it, with much of the former pleasure grounds returned to agricultural use. The scheduling of the linear village remains in Deene parish has ensured their survival, but other areas of the landscape have been lost through more intensive arable farming. Iron ore mining in the 1960s and 70s has also removed much of the wider context for the settlement and mansion house. Following guardianship of the site in 1930 the garden underwent several phases of investigation and restoration, eventually leading to the reinstatement of the Great Gardens's late 17th-century cutwork parterre in the 1990s.

METHODOLOGY

The site was surveyed using Trimble differential GPS (Global Positioning System) equipment. The GPS data was processed using Trimble's Geomatics Office software and located to the National Grid using Trimble's OSTN02 transformation. The survey plot was completed in the field using graphical survey methods. A digital hachured plan of the survey was produced using AutoCAD software and completed using Adobe Illustrator software. The earthworks were recorded at 1:1000 scale.

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