

# KIRK LANGLEY, MACKWORTH AND HORSLEY: ASPECTS OF MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

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During 1979-80, an archaeological survey of the Amber Valley District of Derbyshire was undertaken by the author on behalf of the Trent Valley Archaeological Research Committee, with the aid of a grant from Derbyshire County Council. One aspect of the survey was the recognition and recording of medieval earthwork sites, some of which are described below. Where time allowed, documentary research was also undertaken.

## KIRK LANGLEY (Fig. 1)

The parish of Kirk Langley, about three miles west of Derby, lies on Keuper Marl in the south of the Amber Valley District. The village church, with earthworks in the adjoining field Pool Close, lies on flat land near the edge of a Triassic mudstone outcrop, about 1.5m. to 2m. higher than the adjacent calcareous sandstone to the north. The earthworks in Pool Close at SK 286388 mark the edge of the higher deposit, which then curves northwards to run parallel to the road along which the village extends.

The Pool Close earthworks (Fig. 2) are bounded on the southern side by a ditch (1) about 15cm. deep; on the western side by a platform (2) about 20cm. high; and by a second platform (3) on the northern edge. Within this area, measuring about 70m. by 50m., is a number of indistinct and incomplete platforms and hollows. Platforms (4, 5)

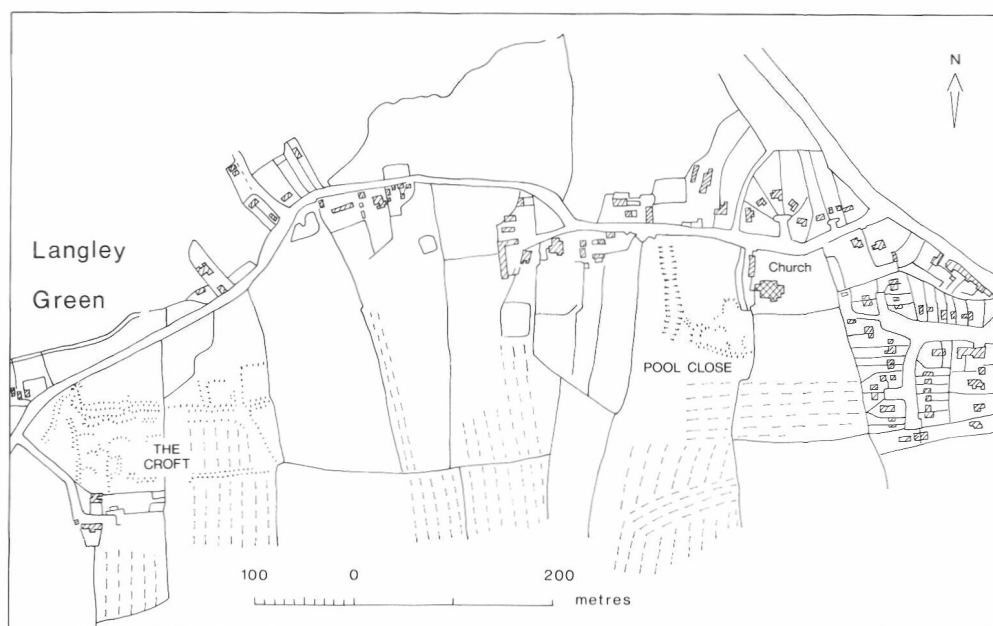


Fig. 1 Kirk Langley: medieval earthwork sites.

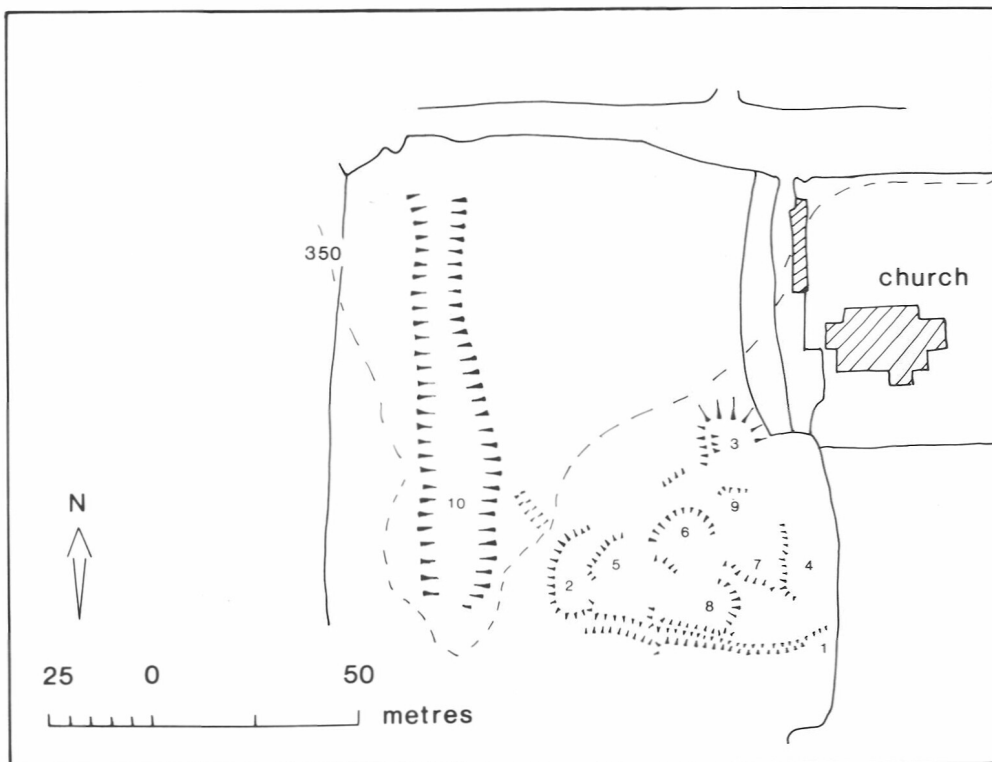


Fig. 2 Kirk Langley: earthworks in Pool Close. Contour in feet.

are about 5-10cms. high and enclose three hollows (6, 7, 8), which are all less than 5cm. deep. There are possible traces of another hollow to the south of the platform (3) at (9). Platform (5) and hollow (8) appear to be associated with breaks in the southern boundary ditch (1).

The eastern extent of the earthworks is not known, as the ground has been levelled for the village cricket pitch, although in the south of the playing field, ridge and furrow is visible running east-west into Pool Close (Fig. 1). To the west of the earthworks a ditch about 1m. deep (10) runs northwards to join a shallow depression next to the village street.

The indistinct nature of the earthworks makes interpretation difficult, although their general layout, topographic position and relationship to church and ridge and furrow, suggest that they are the remaining traces of the medieval village. William Senior's Estate Map of 1640 shows one house in this field, marked 'John Thomson's capital messuage', implying that this was the site of the Manor house or at least an important house on that estate (Nottinghamshire Record Office, Portland Folio, 69170).

Six hundred metres to the west, more earthworks survive at SK 280387 in the field known as the Croft (Fig. 1), which slopes gently down towards the stream (Tithe Award, Derby Central Library, 131). The area to the west, Langley Green, was the common pasture for the village by the mid-13th century (DCL, Derbyshire Deeds 1638).

The earthworks (Fig. 3) consist of a large platform, on which are set smaller platforms, with several more indistinct platforms to the east, together with a series of six ponds. Four of the ponds (10-13) are quite substantial, about 1m. to 1.5m. deep, and pond (13) is about 3m. deep; the more regular shaped depressions (14, 15) are only

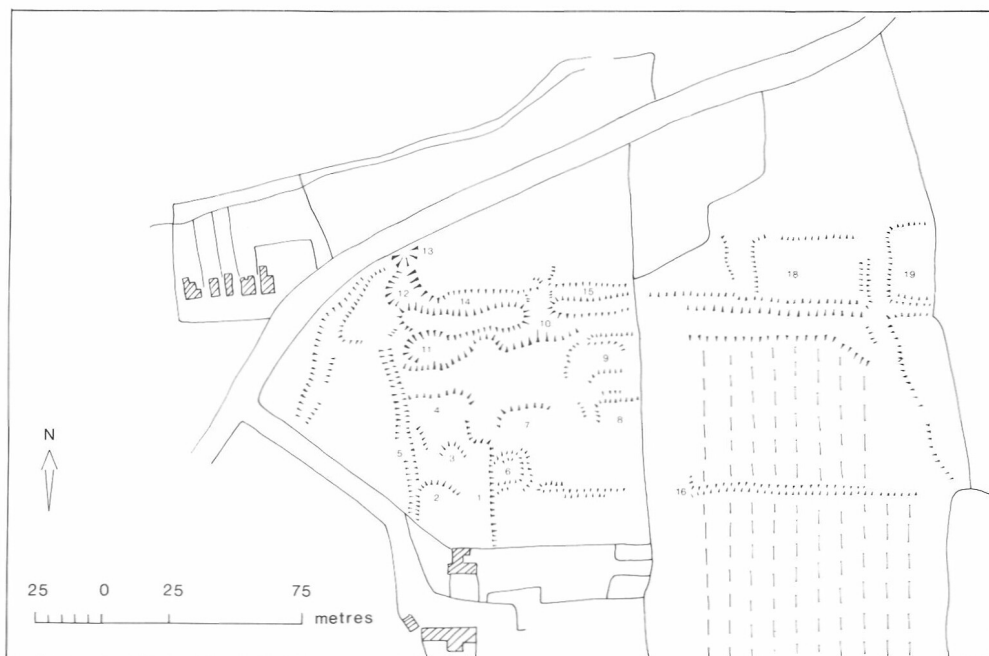


Fig. 3 Kirk Langley: earthworks in the Croft.

about 15-20cm. deep. Platform (1) is marked by a ditch on its western side (5) and is about 25cm. high; the smaller platforms (2) and (3) are 10cm. high, while platform (4) is 5-10cm. high. The platforms and hollows to the north-east (7, 9) are indistinct and less than 5cm. high.

A 20m. strip separates this area from the ridge and furrow to the east, through which a hollow-way (16) leads towards the main platform. The ridge and furrow is marked on its northern side by a headland and bank, associated with which are traces of further platforms (18, 19) about 5-10cm. high.

The platforms in the Croft may represent the individual tofts of villagers, but the layout and association of the main platform with the ponds suggest rather the site of a large dwelling, possibly a manor or farm, with out-buildings to the east. The 1843 Tithe Award shows a barn on the site of these earthworks, while the 1640 map shows a building next to the Green, although it is unclear whether this marks the site of the main earthworks or the adjacent farm. Platforms (18, 19) may represent the sites of village crofts. There was a house in this field in 1640 and 1843 although it is marked to the northwest of the sites of these platforms.

A scheme for the growth and development of the medieval village of Kirk Langley may be proposed combining early maps and the earthwork evidence (Fig. 1). The 1640 Estate Map shows the area to the east of the church (now covered by post-war housing) as two large and almost square crofts each containing a single dwelling. Together with the earthworks in Pool Close, this area formed a compact block of settlement on a prominent, flat and well-drained spur of land bounded on the west by the large hollow leading down to a possible shallow pond. This contrasts with the plan of the rest of the village and together with church and manorial complex represents a distinct earlier phase of settlement. The map of 1640 shows the village to the west and north as a series of long narrow field boundaries, with houses adjoining the street, extending as far as Langley Green. (The pattern still survives to a large extent south of the village street.)

This contrast in field boundaries implies an addition to the earlier village as population increased and strips in the open field were enclosed behind the new tenements. In this way the village expanded along the main droveway, which followed the base of the sandstone edge to the common pasture of the Green.

It seemed probable that this occurred before the general decline in population which took place in England in the mid-14th century. The population of Kirk Langley at Domesday was probably about thirty (six heads of household), while the 1327 Lay Subsidy Return suggests a minimum of about thirty (Cox, 1908: 79), and allowing for evasion and exemption the figure was probably much higher. A late 14th century grant (British Library Add. MSS Wolley 6672 F146) records that the street ran through the middle of the village, implying that the village followed its present linear plan and that a degree of expansion had already taken place. A grant of common pasture in 1257 (DCL, Derbyshire Deeds 1638) records that 'the house of William Russell' marked the boundary on one side, although it is unknown whether at this time the house, possibly represented by the earthworks in the Croft, stood separate from or on the edge of the expansion of the village. The 1640 map shows three rectangular crofts marking the edge of the Green, only one of which contained a dwelling, and the contrast in field boundaries suggests that the settlement here preceded the expansion of the village.

#### MEYNELL LANGLEY

During fieldwalking in the parish of Kirk Langley, medieval pottery spanning the late 12th to 17th centuries was found in the ploughed fields to the north and south of Flagshaw Lane, centred on SK 289395 (Fig. 4). This scatter covers about 1½ hectares and lies about 100m. to the east of Langley Hall and about 250m. east of Hall Farm. The crop growing in the field next to Hall Farm prevented fieldwalking here, while the decrease in pottery density towards Langley Hall may also have been due to

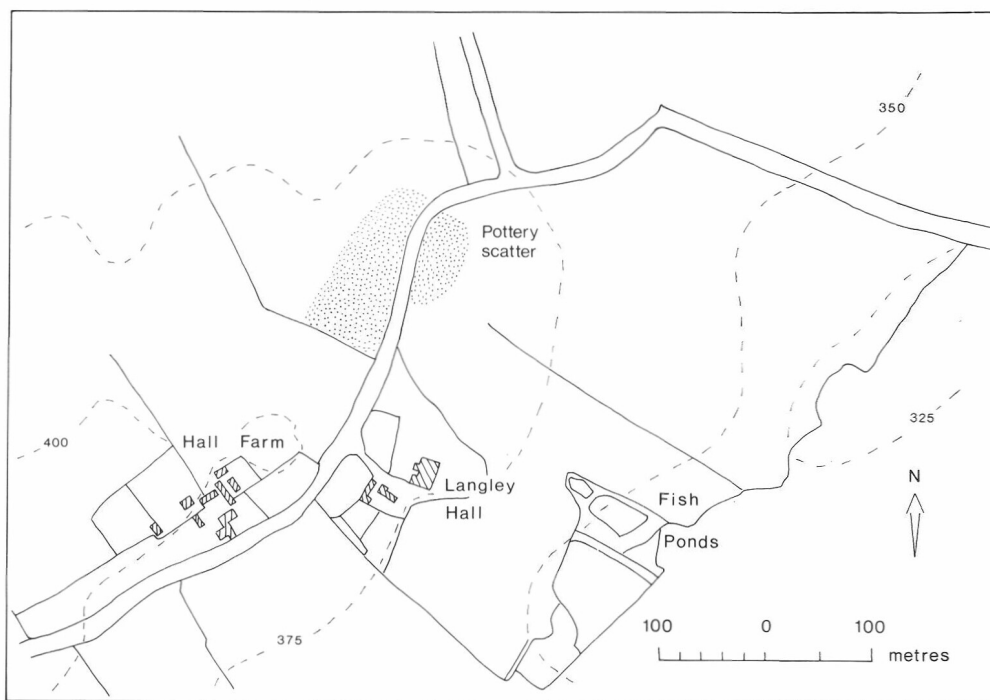


Fig. 4 Meynell Langley shrunken village. Contours in feet.

agricultural conditions during fieldwalking. This pottery represents the shrunken area of the medieval village of Meynell Langley.

In 1086 the village in the parish is referred to as Langley (*Langelei*), and it is not until 1269 (Page, 1905: 350) that the village with the church is first distinguished as Kirk Langley, probably representing the village mentioned in Domesday. Meynell Langley, named after the Meynell family, is first recorded in 1273 (Cameron, 1959: 476), suggesting that this village was a later, probably 12th century creation, when the population of the older village had outgrown its resources.

The village of Meynell Langley was located on the boulder clay capping of a sandstone ridge, overlooking Flagshaw Brook to the southwest. In 1327 there were six taxpayers compared with seven in Kirk Langley, although the taxable amount was only half that of the latter (Cox, 1908: 73). The 1334 tax of 12s 6d was again about half that of Kirk Langley (Glasscock, 1975: 44), indicating that the population was either smaller or less wealthy than its neighbouring village.

By 1640 the estate map shows that the village north of Flagshaw Lane had disappeared except for one house near the site of the present Hall Farm. From at least 1555 (P.R.O. Proc. Star Chamber, STAC 3, ff 25. ix), the area to the north of the lane was known as Meynell Langley Park. The park may have accounted for this shrinkage, but equally a 14th century decrease in the population may have encouraged the formation of a park. By the mid-17th century the manor of Maynell Langley was virtually totally enclosed, compared with Kirk Langley which still retained an open three-field system. The lack of successful opposition to enclosure in Meynell Langley might suggest a fall in the late-medieval population, but more probably it results from the fact that land tenure was almost solely in the hands of the lord of the manor.

To the south of Flagshaw Lane, the 1640 map shows five buildings arranged around a yard lying in the present enclosed area around Langley Hall, where only one building now survives in addition to the Hall (Fig. 4). An Estate Map of 1682 (BL. Add. MSS. Wolley 6696 f 162) describes this enclosure as 'the hall with yards' with a house in a small adjoining enclosure. This suggests that the shrinkage was virtually complete by the mid-17th century. Later settlement in Meynell Langley during the 17th and 18th centuries is represented by farmsteads with block holding of land, dispersed throughout the township.

### MACKWORTH

The village of Mackworth lies on the lower slope of a sandstone ridge above the alluvial flood plain of Mackworth Brook. The church, with earthworks to the north and south, centred on SK 321377, lies below the foot of the slope on the edge of a glacial terrace, at the northeastern perimeter of the village (Fig. 5).

The northern limit of the earthworks is marked by two roughly parallel ditches (1) about 10cm. deep, running east-west. The line of the ditches is carried into the field to the west by a 1m. high bank, to the south of which lies ridge and furrow. This line marks the boundary with the medieval meadow to the north and represents the junction of the glacial terrace with the alluvium.

To the south are earthworks covering an area of about 35 x 45m. The irregular platforms (2, 3) are the most significant, being about 30cm. high, and are set on a large platform about 15cm. high which shelves down to ground level near the church on the western side. Immediately to the south of this appear to be one or possibly two very shallow depressions (4, 5). A very indistinct platform about 1-2cm. high, probably associated with a break in the western side of the main platform, marks the northern limit (6). To the west, a bank about 10cm. high on its eastern side runs parallel to the main feature (7). The western side of the bank may form part of an indistinct regular depression, possibly a small pond.

To the south of the church, the banks marking the boundaries of the main feature on the east and south (8) are about 15cm. high, becoming very indistinct on the west side. The two rectangular platforms (9, 10) are about 5cm. high, rising to 10-15cm. where they form the western side of a shallow hollow-way. The area to the south of (10)

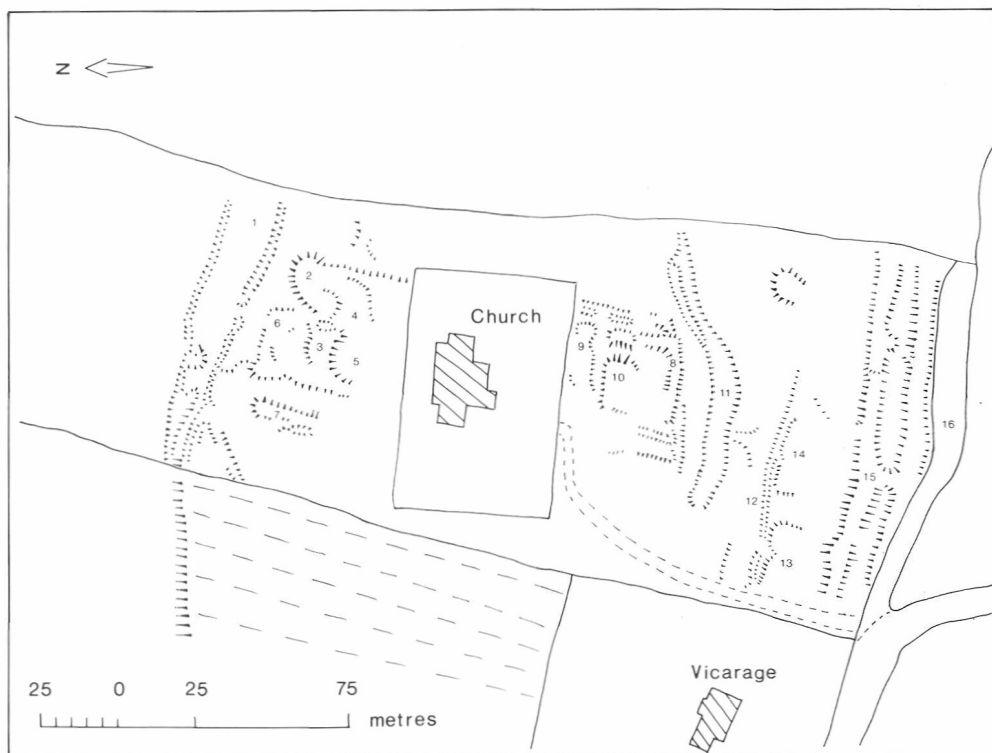


Fig. 5 Mackworth earthworks.

appears to be without features.

This large area is bounded to the south by the large ditch (11) about 85cm. deep, separating these features from those on the rising ground further to the south. The narrow bank (12) marks the break in slope and with the associated platforms (13-14), continues the alignment of the present village houses to the west. To the south again is the 4m. wide bank (15), which is about 75cm. high. Immediately to the south of this a now disused green lane (16) occupies the edge of a slightly higher terrace, continuing the alignment of the present village street.

The layout of these earthworks suggests two different house types resulting from either chronological or functional differences. Those to the north of the church appear to form one large unit, possibly a farm or manor house, rather than the individual peasant tofts of the village. These earthworks are the highest in the field and may represent the change to more substantial house construction noted in the 13th century rebuilding at Barton Blount, about 5 miles to the west (Beresford, 1975: 19-20).

The earthworks immediately to the south of the church are more indistinct, but the layout bears some similarity to the houses excavated at Barton Blount, where 13th century long houses, often with one or two internal partitions, averaged about 15 x 4m (Beresford, 1975: 35). The farms (indicating a higher status) were also of long house type, but the separate living and farm accommodation was set at right angles and enclosed a crew-yard. It is therefore more probable that these earthworks represent the individual dwellings of villeins. The churchyard may have destroyed others to the north.

The platforms associated with the low bank (12) may represent two platforms about 20m. long or four smaller ones of about 10m. in length. At Barton Blount the house

plans from the late Saxon to late 12th century represented small almost square houses (Beresford, 1975: 32-3). The Mackworth platforms, associated with the remains of a former road and aligned on the present village houses and street, represent part of the linear development of the village. The chronological relationship of this development to the earthworks next to the church is uncertain.

Excavations show that during the medieval period peasant houses were continually rebuilt, often on new alignments, and that village plans were often fundamentally changed (Aston and Rowley, 1974: 50). Bearing this in mind a tentative history of development may be suggested at Mackworth.

The earthworks next to the church appear to be the remains of late medieval houses and probably represent contraction of the village during the population decline affecting this part of Derbyshire in the mid-14th century (Wright, 1976: 150). These earthworks are probably masking earlier medieval development on the site, which was likely to have formed the original nucleus of the village next to the church (Aston and Rowley, 1974: 122-3). It is unclear whether this extended to the east, as the adjoining field was under a crop at the time of writing. The earthworks on the higher ground to the south aligned to the present village street may therefore represent development of the village later than this nucleus. With the fall in population in the mid-14th century, it was the settlement on the lower more poorly drained land that did not survive, apart from the church.

Alternatively, the earthworks around the church in part at least suggest holdings of a higher social status, and may represent an area on the edge of the village separated by function from the contemporary 'street village'. Part at least of the present street-village to the west was surely a later medieval development, reflected in the long narrow field boundaries stretching down from the street to the brook, suggesting medieval enclosure of open field arable associated with population expansion.

### HORSLEY

The earthworks at SK 374443 lie in the valley to the south of Horsley village, between a break in the lower slope of the north-facing side and a brook about 25m. below. Two sets of ponds are linked by a ditch about 15cm. deep, running eastwards across the slope (Fig. 6).

The two ponds to the west (1, 2) lie about 1.2m. below the break in the slope and are partly terraced into the hillside. Pond (2) and the northern side of (1) are very slight, about 5cm. deep. Pond (1) is fed at its eastern end by a ditch about 10cm. deep running downslope through blocks of ridge and furrow (3). The eastern ponds (4, 5) also lie terraced into the hillside, about 1.3m. below the break in slope and drained down towards the stream by a shallow ditch (6) about 6cm. deep. The ditch (7) linking the ponds may have been the means of feeding water into (4, 5). This may also have acted as a boundary, as it continues the line of the ditched field boundary to the east. Ditch (8), beginning just below the break in slope, continues this line before turning northwards to run downslope towards the brook. The termination of the ditch at pond (1) lies about 80cm. higher than the floor of the pond. This ditch may also have served both for drainage and as a boundary. The break in its eastern side is continued by very slight earthworks which appear to mark the edge of the main ponds. The linear depression (9) may have been fed by this slight hollow-way, although it lies on ground too steep to have contained water easily, and so may have drained the ponds. It is unclear whether depression (10) marks the site of another pond as the farmer has recently dug into this area, exposing several stone blocks in the process. It also lies on sloping ground, although less steep than depression (9).

About 500m. southeast of the village in the field behind Park Gate Farm, at SK 38004405, lies another set of fishponds (Fig. 7). The field was named as Fish Ponds in the 1844 Tithe Award (DCL 38). The ponds are contained in a bank (1) about 1.5m. high which skirts the road running to the northwest. Two long rectangular ponds (2, 3) about 75cm. deep are dug into the southern side of this bank, roughly parallel to it, their western ends being contained by a slight bank. Beneath this bank and parallel to it



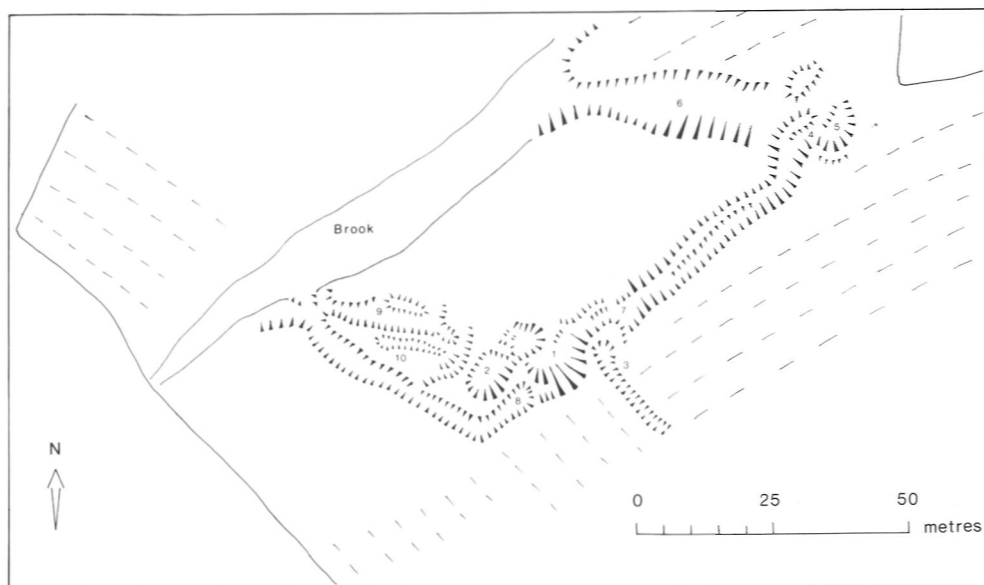


Fig. 6 Horsley fishponds.

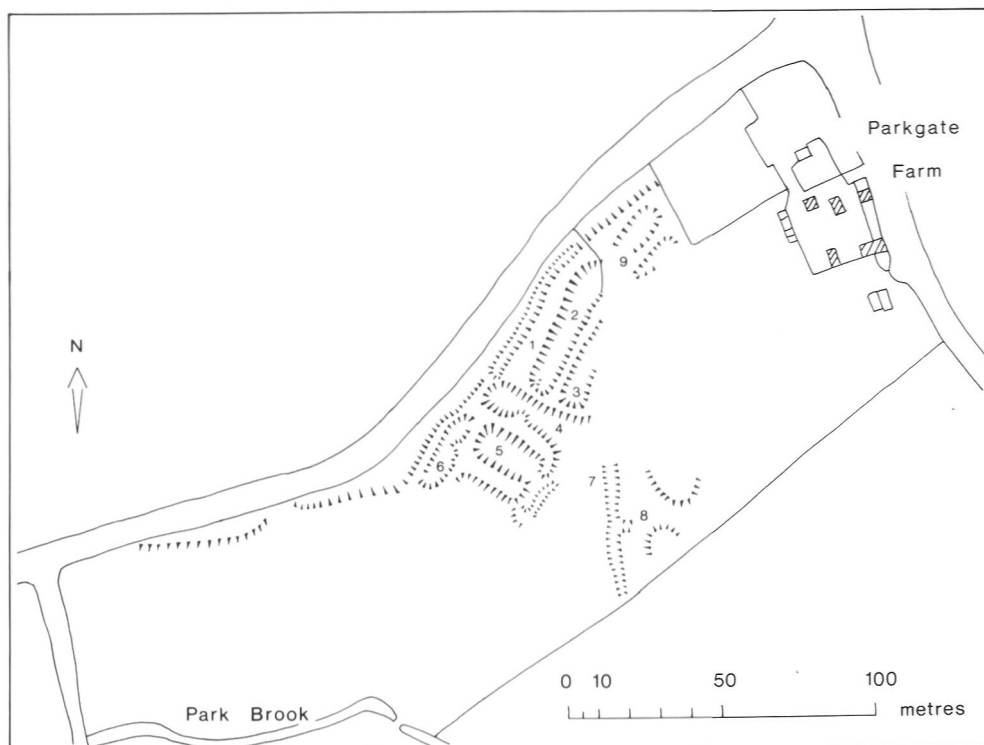


Fig. 7 Horsley fishponds.



is a third pond (4), open at the south-eastern end; this links with another pond (5) about 20cm. deep to the south, which has a low L-shaped bank across its mouth. A fifth pond (6) about 10cm. deep is set within and parallel to the main bank (1).

The ground falls away gradually from the southwestern side of the earthworks down to Park Brook. A ditch (7) with slight banks on each side runs southwards from the ponds although their relationship is obscured by tractor spread and slurry. About 30m. along the hollow-way the eastern side is interrupted to form an entrance between the edges of two indistinct platforms (8). To the northeast of the main ponds lie two less regular and shallow depressions about 2cm. deep (9), on slightly higher sloping ground. Their function is not clear, but they appear to be associated in some way with the ponds.

In the late 12th century Roger de Buron granted to the canons of Darley Abbey at Horsley two mills and a fishpond 'with water course and toft below' (Darlington, 1945: K4, 482). A confirmation of this grant also mentions the 'whole furlong called John's Lea at the head of the canon's fishpond' (Darlington, 1945: K5, 482-3). The position of the ponds at SK 374443 on the edge of the blocks of ridge and furrow suggests that these were the canon's ponds, and that one of these blocks of ridge and furrow was the furlong known as John's Lea. The farm on the opposite slope of the valley is called Grange Farm, possibly the 'grange at Horsley' referred to in early 14th century accounts (P.R.O. Min Acc. 1127/18). The nearest surviving ridge and furrow to the ponds at SK 38004405 is over 100m. away.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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