

Article 2 - Woodland, Field Boundaries and Earthworks

Prominent in the landscape and visible from the roads, tracks and other public rights of way within Sawtry Civil Parish are woodlands, field boundaries, and the undulations of ridge-and-furrow ploughing and earthworks that are all ancient or historic in origin. There are three woods that are considered to be historic, if not ancient, in origin; Archer's Wood, Monks' Wood and The Odd Quarter. Other woodland, including Sawtry Gorse, Sawtry Field Plantation, Aversley Wood and Oak Grove are more recently established, and certainly post-date the 1612 Cavendish estate map. Most of the current field boundaries are as a consequence of the 1804 Enclosure Act or more recent parcelling of land, however, many of the older pre-Enclosure Act open field system boundaries remain visible. Finally, although there are only a small number of surviving areas of ridge-and-furrow and earthworks, their undulations are generally distinctive.

Woodland

Archer's Wood is of historic, if not ancient, origin. It is likely that Archer's Wood is a surviving portion of a much larger wood, known as Sawtry Wood in the founding records of Sawtry Abbey in 1147, that encompassed Copmanford (Coppingford) Wood and Monk's Wood, and extended some distance to the west (Inskip Ladds, 1914: 359 & 369-370). The footprint of Archer's Wood has remained unchanged since at least 1884, and is little changed from that depicted in the Cavendish Estate map of 1612 (Figures 2.1a - 2.1d); those changes being at the north boundaries, as indicated in red in Figure 2.1c.



Figure 2.1a: Archer's Wood (Senior, 1612a)



Figure 2.1b: Archer's Wood (Ordnance Survey, 1898)



Figure 2.1c: Archer's Wood (Ordnance Survey, 2006)



Figure 2.1d: Archer's Wood (Google Earth, 2022)

Monks' Wood also has historic, if not ancient, origins. It too is likely to be a surviving portion of the much larger wood known as Sawtry Wood (Inskip Ladds, 1914: 359 & 369-370). Although the footprint of Archer's Wood has remained unchanged since at least 1884, it is much truncated from that depicted in the Cavendish Estate map of 1612 (Figures 2.2a - 2.2d); those changes primarily being at the west side and south boundary, as indicated in red in Figure 2.2c, whilst the east boundary has changed minimally.



Figure 2.2a: Monks' Wood (Senior, 1612b)



Figure 2.2b: Monks' Wood (Ordnance Survey, 1898)

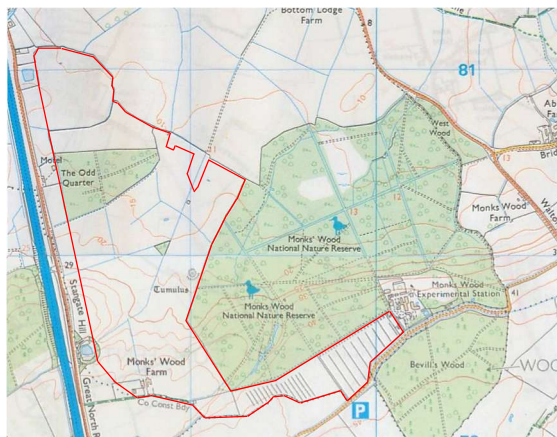


Figure 2.2c: Monks' Wood (Ordnance Survey, 2006)

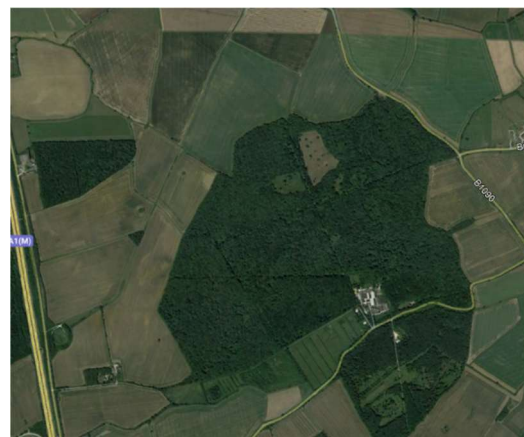


Figure 2.2d: Monks' Wood (Google Earth, 2022)

The Odd Quarter is also of historic, if not ancient, origin that is a surviving portion of Monk's Wood, becoming separated prior to 1884; as can be seen in Figures 2.2a to 2.2d).

A word as to why Aversley Wood is not considered to be of historic or ancient origin, despite being identified as such in the 1936 History of the County of Huntingdon, Volume 3 and Transactions of the Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Archaeological Society Vol 3, and alluded as such in the 2005-6 Archer's & Aversley Woods Archaeological Survey. The basis for not considering Aversley Wood to be of historic or ancient origin is its absence (immediately north of *The Greate Pasture*) from the Cavendish Estate map of 1612 (Figure 2.3). The cartographer



Figure 2.3: The *Greate Pasture* and absence of Archer's Wood (Senior, 1612a)

of this map, William Senior (Professor of the Mathematiques) produced an extremely detailed map with numerous woods and miscellaneous stands of trees represented; it is considered highly unlikely, therefore, that he would omit a wood the size of Aversley, as suggested in the Archer's & Aversley Woods Archaeological Survey (Simco, 2006: 7).

A perambulation of woods and groves in 1301 listed 'the wood of William de Beaumes'; being in the manor of Sawtry Beaumes (which latterly would become the parish of Sawtry St Andrew). In the Transactions of the Cambridgeshire & Huntingdonshire Archaeological Society Vol 3, Inskip Ladds (1914: 369) identified this wood as Aversley Wood (it is assumed that this was due to their being no other wood in Sawtry St Andrew at the time). This identification of Aversley Wood being the medieval wood of Sawtry St Andrew was repeated in the 1936 History of the County of Huntingdon, Volume 3 (British History Online, 2016) (presumably due to Inskip Ladds being an editor of that volume).

There is no question that there was a wood of historic, if not ancient, origin within Sawtry Beaumes (Sawtry St Andrew), it is just unlikely to be Aversley Wood; a supposition that is partly supported by the existence of medieval ridge-and-furrow ploughing in the southwest portion shown as (Bradley) Bushey Close. A more likely candidate area for the medieval wood within Sawtry Beaumes (Sawtry St Andrew) is that consisting of *Jacobes wood ffield*, *Bradey wood ffield*, *Sir Philip Cromwell wood ffield*, *Abbotts wood field* and *Richard Bafs wood fields* (Figure 2.4) for the reason of their respective field names.



Figure 2.4: Possible location of medieval wood within Sawtry Beaumes (Senior, 1612a)

Field Boundaries

The parish boundary (Figure 2.5) is unchanged from those of the original Sawtry parishes of Sawtry All Saints, Sawtry St Andrew and Sawtry Judith, as depicted on the Cavendish Estate map of 1612 (Figure 2.6). It is more than likely that these boundaries are reflective of



Figure 2.5: Parish boundary (Google Earth, 2020)



Figure 2.6: Sawtry, showing parish boundaries (Senior, 1612a and 1612b)

their antecedent manors; Sawtry Moyne (Sawtry All Saints), Sawtry Beaumes (Sawtry St Andrew) and Sawtry Judith (erroneously known as Sawtry St Judith since at least 1804). The field boundaries that constitute the parish boundary can, therefore, be considered as being of historic, if not ancient, origin; with those bounding the Bullock Road on the west of Sawtry being the oldest of them.

There are numerous field boundaries that remain extant from those shown on the 1612 Cavendish Estate Map and, as such, are considered as historic, if not ancient, in origin (Figure 2.7). All but a few are located within Sawtry Judith, including much of the Sawtry St Andrew-Sawtry Judith inter-parish boundary.



Figure 2.7: Ancient and historic field boundaries (Google Earth, 2020)

Earthworks

A number of earthworks are visible within the parish boundary of Sawtry. The more readily visible from the road are several examples of ridge-and-furrow ploughing. On Tort Hill and in the field immediately to the south are a variety of structural and settlement earthworks, and more examples of ridge-and-furrow ploughing - albeit less prominent than the other instances. The last set of distinct earthworks are those of Sawtry Abbey; admittedly, these are difficult to fully appreciate from the public footpaths south and east of the site, and are better appreciated using Google Earth - historical imagery dated 19 Mar 22, 23 Nov 20, Oct 08 and Feb 03 provide the clearest detail of the earthworks.

Looking at ridge-and-furrow ploughing first. These surviving vestiges of the medieval open field system of Sawtry have origins dating as far back as five hundred to a thousand years or so and are miniature palimpsests of a historic landscape that has remained unchanged for some two hundred years. Medieval ridge-and-furrow has a gradual S or 'aratra' (plough) curve along its length with broad ridges and headlands that denote changes of ownership (Figure 2.8), whereas ridge-and-furrow consisting of narrow straight ridges is the result of nineteenth century agricultural improvement methods (Aston & Rowley, 1974; 143-144). Individual ridge formation is the result of multiple passes of the plough, with the resultant furrow facilitating water retention and irrigation whilst ensuring excess water was drained-off (Figure 2.9).

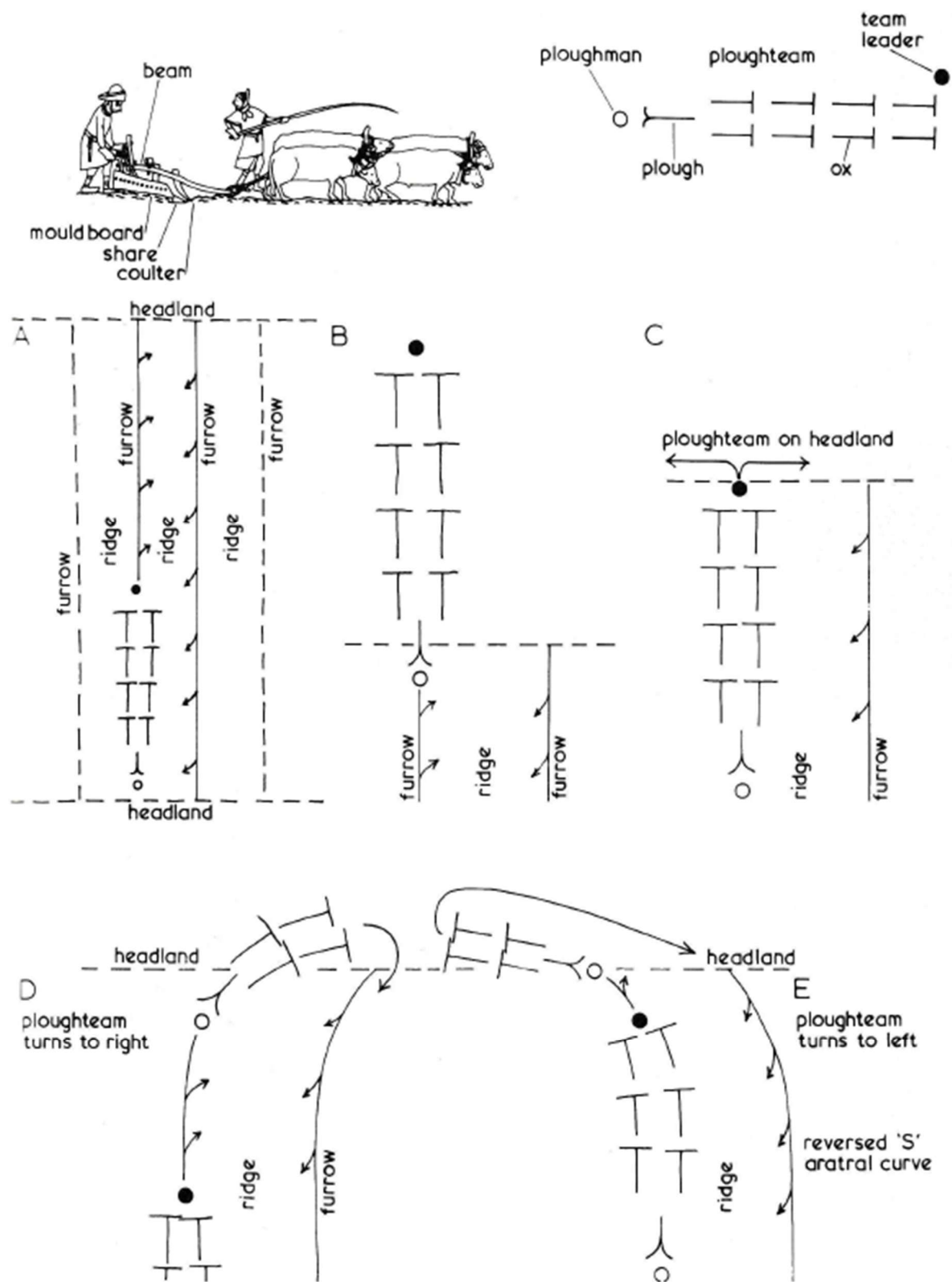


Figure 2.8: Medieval ploughing technique, and formation of 'S' aratral curve and headland (Aston, 1985; 123)

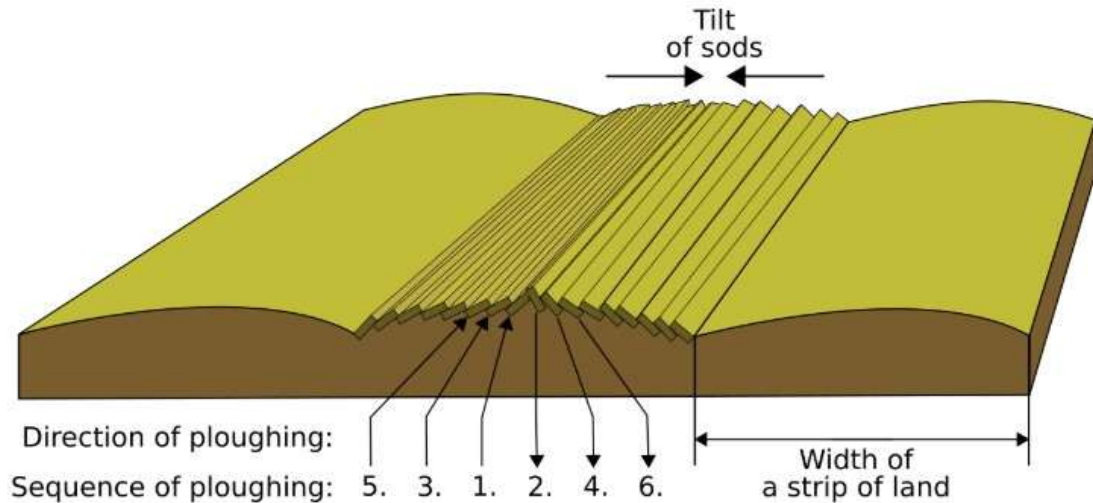


Figure 2.9: Ridge formation (RuralHistoria, n.d)

The example of ridge-and-furrow on Gidding Road covers an approximate area of 29,350 square metres and is likely the remaining remains of the much larger pre-enclosed Wood Field in Sawtry All Saints. The ridge-and-furrow is aligned northwest/southeast, with the exception of the southwest corner of the field where there are two differing alignments of ridge-and-furrow (Figure 2.10). These varying alignments possibly indicate elements of three separate allotments of ownership under the open field system. The distance between ridge crests varies from 5 metres to 8 metres.



Figure 2.10: Ridge-and-furrow on Gidding Road - shown as crop marks, with possible ownership boundaries (Google Earth, 2022)

The example of ridge-and-furrow between the A1(M) and the Old Great North Road (B1043) covers an approximate area of 35,700 square metres and is most likely a surviving element of the much larger pre-enclosed Middle Field in Sawtry All Saints. The northern area is aligned east-northeast/west-southwest, the central area is aligned north-northwest/south-southeast, whilst the south area is aligned east/west (Figure 2.11). This again is a possible indication of elements of three different allotments of ownership under the open field system. The distance between ridge crests also varies from 5 metres to 8 metres.



Figure 2.11: Ridge-and-furrow between the A1(M) and the Old Great North Road (B1043) (Google Earth, 2022)



Figure 2.12: Ridge-and-furrow at Tort Hill and east of Chapel End (Google Earth, 2022)

The examples of ridge-and-furrow on Tort Hill and east of Chapel End cover approximate areas of 3,145 square metres, 1,685 square metres and 4,645 square metres respectively, and are also most likely to be further surviving elements of the much larger pre-enclosed Middle Field in Sawtry All Saints. The Tort Hill example is aligned northeast/southwest, the northern example east of Chapel End is aligned east-northeast/west-southwest, whilst the southern example east of Chapel End is aligned north/south (Figure 2.12). These alignments suggest an association with the ridge-and-furrow east of the A1M and are also possible indications of further elements of different allotments of ownership under the open field system. The distance between ridge crests also varies from 5 metres to 8 metres.

The example of ridge-and-furrow within Aversley Wood covers an approximate area of 180,000 square metres that equates closely with Bradley Bushy Close field (Figure 2.13) in Sawtry St Andrew; as shown on the 1612 Cavendish Estate Map, in an area that appears to be outside of the open field system and parcelled for individual ownership. The ridge-and-furrow is aligned northeast/southwest with the distance between ridge crests varying between 7 metres to 11 metres.



Figure 2.13: Location of ridge-and-furrow in Aversley Wood (Google Earth, 2020) and Bradley Bushy Close (Senior, 1612a)

On Tort Hill and in the field immediately to the south are a variety of structural and settlement earthworks (Figure 2.14) that are protected as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended) and appear on the Historic England National Heritage List for England (HLE) listings as record number 1006817 (Historic England, 1995a). The site is also recorded on the Cambridgeshire Historic

Environment Records (CHER) as record numbers 01392a, 01392b, 01392c, MCB18542 and MCB29614 (Heritage Gateway, 2012a - 2012e).



Figure 2.14: Earthworks on Tort Hill and immediately south (Google Earth, 2022)

#1 - a series of banks and platforms that are suggestive of being the remains of medieval housing, and due to their proximity to Sawtry All Saints church, may well be indicative of the origins of the manor of Sawtry Moyne, latterly the parish of Sawtry All Saints; there is also evidence of a post-medieval manorial house and associated gardens (Heritage Gateway, 2012c; 2012e).

#2 - a rectilinear ditched enclosure that is truncated by the A1(M) widening and within which is a circular hollow platform that was originally considered to be evidence of a Roman signal tower; as a result of investigations and surveys in the 1960s and 1970s the rectilinear enclosure is assessed as being part of a system of abandoned paddocks that extend beyond the existing field boundaries and medieval, or possibly earlier, in origin; however, this enclosure may well have been modified at the time the circular platform was established, as the circular platform is believed to be a Cromwellian gun platform of the English Civil War (ECW) due to its commanding views of the North Road north and south, and eastwards across the fens (Heritage Gateway, 2012b; 2012c).

#3 - a moated rectilinear platform that is attributed as being medieval with three associated linear hollows interpreted as fish stews; the platform itself is banked on all but the south face (Heritage Gateway, 2012a; 2012c) - one likelihood for this banking is the platform being utilized in conjunction with the ECW gun platform, with the banking being a defensive enhancement.

#4 - an overgrown sunken trackway that had fallen out of use by 1887, that aligns with the northwest corner of the Sawtry St Andrew parish church graveyard (Heritage Gateway, 2012c).

#5 - an overgrown cobbled trackway that continued Chapel End to the Old Great North Road just north of where the Chapel Houses once stood, and would have provided access to the Sawtry St Andrew parish church graveyard via the gates in the southwest corner (at the entrance to the new Oakwood Business Park); this continuation was truncated firstly by construction of the A1(T) and secondly by the subsequent widening construction to the A1(M); the line of the eastern end aligns with the tree-line west of what is now Eclat Sparkle (Heritage Gateway, 2012d).

The last set of distinct earthworks are those of Sawtry Abbey (Figure 2.15). Whilst the earthworks are not directly visible from the public footpath that runs along the southwest boundary of the site, the site itself is visible - and the earthworks can be viewed when participating in a Sawtry History Society organized site visit hosted by Sawtry Archaeology. The site too is protected as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended) and appears on the HLE listings as record number 1013280 (Historic England, 1995b). Sawtry Abbey is also recorded on the CHER as record number CB15419 (Heritage Gateway, 2012f).



Figure 2.15: Sawtry abbey (Google Earth, 2022)

Those earthworks resulting from the abbey's water management system and mid-19th century stone robbing activity provide a clear delineation of the abbey's claustral complex (church and east, south and west ranges) and inner precinct structures (monks' infirmary, abbot's lodging and guest house). Other significant earthworks are those of the abbey's southwest and southeast precinct boundary ditches, that would have been cut shortly after the founding community inhabited the site, and a series of asymmetric depressions either side of the southwest boundary ditch that are believed to be a result of clay-extraction for a short-lived 17th/18th century brick kiln; those within the precinct boundary are likely to have destroyed any evidence for abbey service or utilitarian buildings that are typically located in the west precinct of Cistercian abbeys, whilst those outside the precinct boundary have been taken as subjective evidence (CHER MCB16127 - Heritage Gateway, 2012g) for the location of the original village of Sawtry Judith manor.

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