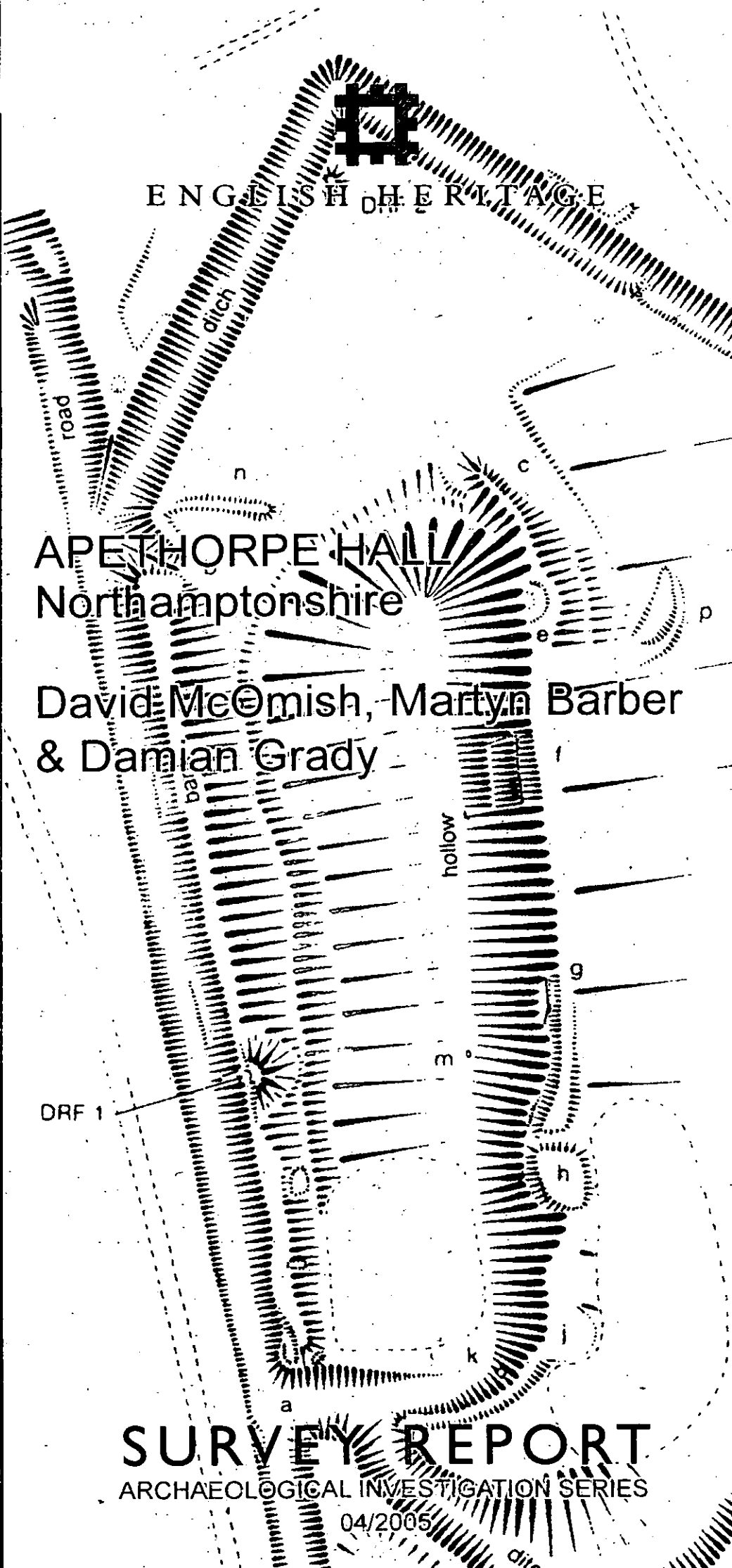




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APETHORPE HALL
Northamptonshire

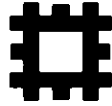
David McOmish, Martyn Barber
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**Landscape Assessment at
Apethorpe Hall, Northamptonshire**

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Introduction

Apethorpe Hall and its attendant village lie in the parish of Apethorpe towards the north-eastern fringes of the county of Northamptonshire, centred at TL 024 955. The parish covers nearly 730 hectares of land between 25m and 78m above Ordnance Datum on both sides of the Willow Brook valley, here draining south to the River Nene. It lies in the ancient hunting forest of Rockingham and the valley, which is broad, flat and not particularly well defined, is flanked by low terraces on both sides. That to the north and north-east is the more substantial rising, eventually, to a height of 79m above Ordnance Datum in the area around the village of King's Cliffe. The village and Hall at Apethorpe have developed close to the valley floor on a broad terrace at 35–40m above Ordnance Datum. To the west, the slope rises fairly steeply to a height of 50m above Ordnance Datum at a point where the terrain levels off and it is evident that former close boundaries extended westwards from the village to this marked topographical junction. The stream has cut deeply into the surrounding Jurassic deposits, and although the higher parts are still covered with Boulder Clay and Oxford Clay, the soils over most of the parish are derived from Limestones. The parish incorporates the former village of Hale, mentioned in the Domesday Book and deserted as a result of the Black Death (RCHM, Northants. I, 10). At Domesday, Apethorpe belonged to the Royal Vill of Nassington and was formerly a chapelry of Yarwell originating, possibly, as its daughter-settlement. Apethorpe was made a separate parish late in the 19th century.

In the late 15th century Hale and Apethorpe were acquired by Sir Guy Wolston who built a large house at the latter and also probably rebuilt the church. This estate passed to Sir Walter Mildmay c. 1550 and from his family to the Fanes, later Earls of Westmorland. The 1st Earl rebuilt much of Apethorpe Hall and also put up a monument to his father-in-law in the church. A large deer park was created in the 16th and early 17th centuries, incorporating much of the area of Hale, and the parish was enclosed in 1778. The landscape park was formed c. 1800 and the lake was made in 1908. After acquiring the Westmorland estate in 1904, Mr Leonard Brassey made many alterations to the fabric of the village and, under the guidance of Reginald Blomfield, the landscape park was altered.

The Pre-Medieval Landscape – Early Prehistoric Apethorpe

The earliest evidence for human activity in the area around Apethorpe Hall consists of a few stone axes of Neolithic date found during ploughing. Their exact provenance is unknown but they were recovered generally in the area of TL 0295 (NMR No. TL 09 NW 8) to the east of the Hall. Although unassessed as part of this appraisal, these finds belong to a period between 4500 and 2500 calBC. Isolated finds of similar sorts of artefacts have been made on an infrequent basis but occasionally multiple discoveries cluster in particular locales. Flint tools of Mesolithic date were recovered from a programme of fieldwalking on the limestone terraces (centred at TL 035 933) one kilometre to the east of Apethorpe village. The majority of artefacts discovered however, displayed later, Neolithic, characteristics and may well be indicative of the presence of settlement at this date – a very rare occurrence – or it could be that the implements were discarded or lost during use such as hunting. It is presumed that axes were used in the process of clearing woodland in the 5th – 4th millennia BC, but often they are recovered from contexts that suggest deliberate burial as part of a ritual process. Other finds of flint tools such as scrapers and arrowheads have been made at a wide

range of locales, particularly from the low-lying limestone terraces to the east of Apethorpe, suggesting that Neolithic and Early Bronze Age activity, probably settlement as well as ritual and burial complexes, was both prolific and extensive. A similar density of land use is to be expected both in the immediate area around Apethorpe Hall and on the flanks of the river valley to the north.

Other indicators of early, prehistoric, activity in the area immediately surrounding Apethorpe Hall are the small number of ring ditches that have been noted from aerial photographs in the river valley to the north and north-west of the house. These structures are the now buried remains of ditches that encircled Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age round burial mounds. All surface indications of the mounds have been destroyed by cultivation and other later activity. One of these at TL 022 964 (NMR No. TL 09 NW 16) has a diameter of 30m, fairly typical of this category of archaeological site, and sits on a low river terrace above the valley on the north side of Willow Brook. A second ring ditch of similar proportions lies immediately to the west (TL 09 NW 44) and it should be anticipated that other ploughed-out round barrows will be uncovered in this area. This riparian location fits a distribution pattern witnessed at a wide range of locales across the country and suggests that these valleys were as significant to early settlers as they are to modern day communities. The valleys provided efficient routes of communication, fertile and well-drained soils for early agriculture, as well as eminently suitable locations for settlement. The valley floors and flanking river terraces are clearly areas of high archaeological (and environmental) potential with a likelihood of deeply buried and securely stratified archaeological deposits.

The Pre-Medieval Landscape – Later Prehistoric and Roman Apethorpe

Evidence for later prehistoric and, indeed, Roman settlement (post 1000calBC to AD500) is more prolific on the higher terraces and slopes away from the main course of the river or stream. Again, this reflects a bias in terms of fieldwork response and observation – it is likely, for instance, that activity in the form of settlement, agriculture or low intensity industrial production took place in the river valleys but has yet to be recognised. The concentrations of settlement foci away from discrete zones in this later period indicates that all parts of the landscape were being exploited and, furthermore, that much of the surrounding landscape had been cleared of any extensive spreads of dense tree cover (Lewis *et al* 1997, 79). This fits well with a regionally recognised pattern of extensive clearance having taken place by the middle of the 2nd millennium BC followed by limited scrub regeneration in the succeeding centuries. It would appear that by the middle of the 1st millennium BC a fairly sophisticated and entirely recognisable farming system had emerged. There are a small number of suspected Iron Age settlement sites in the area immediately around Apethorpe Hall. The closest lies some 300m to the west of the Hall and consists of a now plough-flattened enclosure and ditch complex associated with later prehistoric pottery and small amounts of metalworking debris including slag (SMR No – 9209/0/0; TL 017 958). This had as its basis a mixed arable regime with fluctuating levels of arable and pastoral foci and would have included managed stands of woodland; timber was clearly an important resource providing fuel and building materials primarily. It is also likely that population levels had risen substantially during the 1st millennium BC – an assertion that is confirmed when looking at national trends in terms of areas of exploitation and intensity. This went hand-in-hand, certainly for the later centuries of the 1st millennium BC and in the two centuries following on from the Claudian Conquest of AD43, by warm and stable climatic conditions. One kilometre to the east of Apethorpe Hall an extensive spread

of Roman pottery including Nene Valley and Samian Wares suggests a possible settlement site of 1st to 4th C AD date (TL 034 953; NMR No. TL 09 NW 27). Indeed, this appears to be part of an extensive spread of settlement activity of this date dispersed across an area of at least 5 hectares. Aerial photographs indicate that this settlement comprised, now plough levelled, curvilinear and rectangular ditched enclosures as well as ditched field paddocks and interconnecting trackways located on a limestone terrace above the Willow Brook.

These sorts of settlement foci are indicative of small-scale rural farms and are a relatively common feature of the southern British Late Prehistoric/Roman countryside. The Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record currently contains approximately 1600 records related to the Roman period and a large proportion of these are cropmark complexes. Typically when they occur, they are grouped together in loose conglomerations of ditched enclosures, with associated field and trackways and many have a Late Iron Age origin (e.g. Wootton Hill, Jackson 1990; Blackthorn, Williams and McCarthy 1974; Wollaston, Meadows 1996; Earls Barton, Windell 1982). This transition was disrupted sometime in the 2nd century AD with a shift from the round house tradition, a form noted for several centuries, to the construction of aisled buildings and villas. In the county of Northamptonshire, this is most evident in the north-eastern district and particularly so at Apethorpe, where a Roman villa was built 500m to the south of the future location of Apethorpe Hall at TL 0206 9493 (NMR No. TL 09 SW 11).

The site of the villa is shown on modern Ordnance Survey maps and titled '*Gold Diggings*', perhaps deriving from the discovery of copious amounts of archaeological material there. It lies now in pasture and is partly shrouded by a small ornamental copse of trees but all surface evidence of the site has been erased by cultivation. After discovery in 1859 it was partly excavated (RCHM 1975, 8-9) and this uncovered a villa of courtyard arrangement in its final phase, i.e. a rectangular arrangement of buildings set around a courtyard with a formal approach from the south. It extended across an area of 77m by 80m and the main block of buildings occupied the northern range. Only five rooms and part of a corridor were exposed but it seems likely, based on the 19th-century excavations, that further structures were attached on the north and south. Todd also suggests (1978) that in its earliest phase the villa consisted of an aisled building and one other small range of rooms, and in many respects the slightly asymmetrical layout of the wall footings supports a multi-phase villa development. One room had a hypocaust, two others mosaic pavements, one of unusual design, and another a plaster floor painted with a linear pattern. On the west side of the courtyard a large rectangular building, subdivided into a number of smaller rooms, was revealed while, on the east, parts of a bath block and some indeterminate walling were found. Finds of first to fourth century date included part of a stone column, Collyweston roof slates, flue tiles, Samian and Nene Valley wares, glass, a lead weight and animal bones. Two small altars were also discovered. Most of the coins were 4th century with one issue of Septimius Severus and the remainder Constantinian.

This large and imposing villa, presumably a higher status component within the neighbouring community, may well have acted as some sort of estate centre and was a key constituent in the local rural landscape. The other, smaller, ditched enclosure complexes surrounding Apethorpe may well have been part of this estate with the villa occupying the heart of a rural, heavily farmed and productive, landscape. The discovery of lead weights at the villa suggests that weighing and processing of agricultural produce took place on site and that the resultant goods were then transported out from the estate centre. The communications network at this time is unknown; the nearest

major route lies 2km to the north of Apethorpe in the vicinity of King's Cliffe village. Other subsidiary paths, tracks and lanes would undoubtedly have existed and a number of these will have served the villa and its attendant landscape. The villa location has been carefully chosen, close to a number of springlines and adjacent to the Willow Brook. Indeed, the site of the villa is perched above a major palaeo-channel of the stream and it is conceivable that goods (and people) were transported on shallow boats/barges along this river course which is connected to the River Nene, itself a feeder for the River Great Ouse that drains ultimately into the Wash at King's Lynn.

The significance of the villa location certainly resonated into the historic period as it is clear that the parish boundary separating Apethorpe from Southwick is aligned on what may well have been, at the time, a locally significant landmark – the ruined structures of the villa. An aerial photograph taken in 1947 (RAF CPE/UK/1925/3119) shows the line of the parish boundary delineated as a low bank with a ditch on the south extending towards the copse of trees marking the site of the villa (plate 1). Other notable features on this photograph include good detail on the layout of, later, medieval cultivation, the parallel linear strips, surviving then as earthworks, giving the land surface a corrugated appearance. The strips are confined to small field paddocks, especially in the area immediately to the north and north-west of the villa, of unequal size and orientation. It would appear from the aerial photographic evidence that this medieval cultivation was superimposed upon an earlier field layout and re-used a number of the pre-existing field boundaries. Only a very slight surface trace of these earthworks can now be seen, principally in the area to the south of the southernmost walled garden compartment, in an area that has been utilised more recently as a football pitch. Further to the east, and extending as far as the Willow Brook, some field boundaries as well as ridge-and-furrow cultivation remains, survive on the surface. In all likelihood though, it should be anticipated that a good degree of buried archaeology, in the form of cultivation surfaces and field boundaries, will survive in the area surrounding the villa site and reach as far north as the current walled garden.

Indeed, there is a strong probability that a substantial part of the area under investigation, including the site of Apethorpe Hall and village, has developed on top of a well ordered and organised agricultural landscape of fields and trackways of 3rd – 4th century AD date. The regional pattern of development suggests that an even earlier origin for at least part of this layout is fitting, with good evidence for later prehistoric patterns of land use, including settlement, continuing into the 2nd century AD. The two circular structures and small rectilinear enclosure revealed during the geophysical survey (Brooks and Laws 2002) lie just 150m to the south-east of the Hall and may well be the subterranean remnants of a later prehistoric settlement, again highlighting the archaeological potential, as well as antiquity, of buried landscape features contiguous with the house.

The Post-Roman Landscape – Saxon Apethorpe

Little is known about the Apethorpe landscape in the period from c. 450 to c. 1066 following on from the end of the Roman occupation. There are no surviving texts or plans relating to this period that deal specifically with the village. Much work has been undertaken, though, in the wider area and the results of this, published in a number of fora but helpfully summarised by Glen Foard in the East Midlands Archaeological Research Framework (Foard nd), help to underpin any characterisation of the village and its landscape at this time. Analysis of the regional pattern indicates that large-



Plate 1: Aerial photograph taken in 1947 showing a relatively undamaged landscape surrounding Apethorpe Hall and village. The site of the Roman villa is marked at 'A'. To the north of this the field pattern ('B') is notably irregular and on a different alignment from the fields further to the north and west. The double-lynchet trackway ('C') is axial to the medieval field pattern with blocks of fields ('D') laid out on either side of it. The track leads south from the main road to King's Cliffe and extends for at least 1.5km to the south-west. Other historic features visible on the photograph include two tree rings ('E') part of a wider landscape park, and the remains of the long pond shown on the Enclosure map of 1778 (F). RAF CPE/UK/1925/3119

scale, intensive and extensive, Roman settlement was subject to an abrupt episode of abandonment and where continuity can be attested it was on a much smaller scale at the various sites than had previously been witnessed. Only 23% of the 270 known Early-Middle Saxon sites in Northamptonshire are associated with Roman settlement or other activities such as intensive agricultural land use, pottery manufacture or iron-working. There would also appear to have been a significant transformation in the economic sphere with an initially widespread shift away from long established traditions of agriculture, primarily an abandonment of large areas of field system. This was exacerbated by a notable retraction from boulder clays and more intractable soils to a riverine based pattern of land management. It may well be that at this time there was significant woodland regeneration, and it is worth noting again that Apethorpe sits now in the Royal hunting forest of Rockingham. However, it is likely that the village and its immediate landscape remained open with significant stands of trees and more established spreads of forest lying to the south and south-east away from the river valley.

The first reference to the placename is in 1086 when it is listed as *Patorp* in Domesday book. It is named *Apetorp* and *Appetorp* in the Pipe Rolls of 1163 and 1167 respectively. Ekwall (1940, 10) regarded the Domesday nomenclature as a corruption of *Api's thorp*, combining a personal name *Api* with the Old Danish or Old Swedish suffix of *thorp* meaning village or hamlet belonging to – in effect, the village or hamlet belonging to *Appi*. The Scandinavian origin of the place name is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it suggests that a village was already in existence at the time of Domesday and, secondly, that it may well have already been long established. Apethorpe lay within the Danelaw established in the mid 9th-century, and it is plausible that an existing centre here was colonised at this time or that the appearance of the place name indicated the arrival of a significant immigrant population in the Danish period. It is impossible to establish a tenurial history of Apethorpe from the end of the Roman period through to Domesday but it should be anticipated that a significant element of settlement spanned this time and it may well have taken the form of a shift in the locus of 'manorial' ownership from the villa area to a location closer to the present day village.

The reconquest of the Danelaw by the kings of Wessex in 920 initiated a significant transformation in the landscape of north-eastern Northamptonshire, with an emphasis on large-scale settlement replanning, the establishment of new urban centres, and the re-organisation of the agricultural environment. In particular, it has been suggested that the open field system originated in the 9th or 10th centuries and was representative of a period of massive arable intensification. This incorporated the conversion of river floodplain to hay meadow and a shift at Apethorpe from predominantly pastoral concerns to a mixed farming system. Elements of this can still be seen in the area surrounding Apethorpe Hall and village.

Aerial photograph RAF CPE/UK/1925/3119 (plate 1) documents this agrarian landscape very clearly indeed. Extensive traces of former ridge-and-furrow cultivation can be seen to the north, south and west of Apethorpe Hall. Large blocks of long furlongs aligned roughly east to west are evident especially to the south-west of the Hall's garden compartments, and these are arranged in large square or rectangular fields laid out on an approximately north-to-south axis. The substantial nature of this cultivation as well as the size of the furlongs and field units suggests that this area, immediately to the south and west of the Hall, had not suffered any significant woodland encroachment at the end of the Roman period and, indeed, may well have seen some low intensity cultivation before the establishment of the open fields in the 9th/10th centuries. The fields are articulated either side of a major trackway that extends in a loop to the north

of the village from the direction of King's Cliffe and leads south for a distance of at least 1.5km to the south-west.

The trackway is clearly an important and, potentially, early component in the local communication network. All surface trace of it has now been removed but its general form is apparent in the short stretch between the Hall and the village and further to the south alongside the western edge of the garden compartments (plate 2).



Plate 2:
View, looking south,
along the route of the
double-lynchet
trackway. It was re-
used as a road in
more recent times.

The line of the route can still be seen as a terrace leading north from the north-western corner of the Hall – it is the current direct route through the village to the Hall – with a clear drop on the eastern side (plate 3). A small element of terracing can be seen on the western edge of the former cricket field where there remains a low step up to the road. This terracing effect is also evident to the south alongside the western flank of the garden compartments. Here, again, there is a significant drop-off in ground height to the east of the present day route which follows the earlier course. From these observations it would appear that the early route was of a form known as a double-lynchet track (Bowen 1961, 19). These are formed when ploughing takes place either side of a track resulting in a build up of soil on one side and a removal of soil on the other creating a well defined terrace. It implies that this routeway was at the very least contemporary with the open field system at Apethorpe and may well pre-date it. The Roman villa lies adjacent to it on the east and, as suggested previously, it may well be that the trackway was intertwined with this pre-medieval cultivation. Smaller and shorter groups of furlongs are evident in the area around the villa, possibly reflecting the influence of pre-existing field banks, and a similar pattern is witnessed further to the south and south-west including those fields around the former settlement at Hale. There is less axial coherence to these field groups and their small size and irregular

layout suggests a different history of land use than in the area around the Apethorpe village. The smaller fields may well have resulted from a process of assarting, piecemeal clearance of woodland, over a longer period of time and represent accretions to the planned extent of Late Saxon open fields.



Plate 3:
The terraced scarp of the double-lynchet trackway to the north-west of the Hall shows clearly on the wall line (left of centre). This may have been used as an early approach route to the Hall.

The double-lynchet trackway is a pivotal component in the historic environment at Apethorpe in that it provides a skeletal framework for much of the organisation and layout of the medieval and later village as well as the surrounding landscape. The form of the village at this time is unknown but it most likely encompassed a linear settlement with properties arranged perpendicularly on either side of a street. The plots within these nucleated row settlements are usually all of equal length, and often of equal width (Lewis *et al* 1997, 57). Strong indications of the village morphology and those of the surrounding fields are detailed on the Enclosure map of 1778 which shows a highly developed medieval village layout with a number of significant elements (fig 1). Maps such as this one provide a significant start point from which to interrogate the mechanics of landscape development and it is largely accepted that they depict information relevant to much earlier settlement patterns (Lewis *et al* 1997, 71). On this the route of the double-lynchet track has been abandoned but its influence is still very evident both in the layout of more recent tracks and fields but also in the pattern of village morphology and communications networks. The early north-south route terminates abruptly and rather unexpectedly some distance to the north of Apethorpe Hall, its continuation marked by a walled enclosure boundary. A short distance to the north a T-junction is apparent with a road emanating on the east leading towards the church and then further east and south-east towards the neighbouring village of Woodnewton. It may well be that the depicted route was in fact never completed and that an alternative track led to the south of the church and eastwards across a bridge across the river at the north-eastern limit of the 'Farrying Ground'. The precise of

this change in the landscape is unclear but it pre-dates 1814 and probably post-dates 1778.

Much of the earliest surviving fabric of the church of St Leonard dates to the late 15th and early 16th centuries but a voussoir with chevron ornament, built into the north aisle wall, survives from an earlier, 12th-century building. Foard (nd) suggests that the ecclesiastical provision was closely linked to the secular development of the manor in the Late Saxon period, and if correct, there should be a much earlier antecedent to the building at Apethorpe.

On the late 18th-century plan, the church sits at a crossroads with blocks of settlement to the north and west. On the south a larger open area, Town Street, is depicted and this has now been incorporated into the front garden and approach to The Manor House, built in 1711 for the agent of the Earls of Westmorland. The open area would appear, though, to resemble a village green or open space, most likely a remnant of the Early to Middle Saxon hamlet, and may have been adapted at some stage and incorporated into a formal approach drive to the Hall.

On its eastern side, and immediately to the south of the church, there is a large oval enclosure within which there are a number of 'ancient' or 'old' inclosures. Morphologically, especially in the Apethorpe village environment, it stands out as being worthy of comment because of its curvilinear shape, contrasting with the regularity and grid-like character of the rest of the village. Its close juxtaposition with the church, linkage with a large open area, and unusual shape, mark it out as a very early feature in the Apethorpe landscape. All of the settlement development lies either further to the west or south of it. No medieval settlement had developed between it and the road on the north and, indeed, the road in this vicinity, as depicted on the Enclosure map (if reliable), alters course swinging north to avoid it. Furthermore, the property divisions within the enclosure would appear, again, to be a later infilling of a pre-existing feature.

The enclosure sits at 40m above Ordnance Datum on the leading edge of a low river terrace above the Willow Brook and as such it must have been prone to occasional flooding. The date of the enclosure is also problematic but could be prehistoric or Roman in origin, simply by virtue of its topographical location. A better analogy may well be the Early to Middle Saxon enclosure discovered recently at Higham Ferrers, just to the north of Rushden, Northamptonshire. This enclosure, also oval in outline, was part of a high status settlement at the site and dated to between 450 and 650 AD. A similar date is proffered here. The enclosure at Higham Ferrers was kept deliberately empty, probably as a reserved space for communal or other special activities and contemporary settlement grew up alongside it. Until further fieldwork is undertaken, it is unclear if the Apethorpe example shared a similar history of use, but it would seem likely the enclosure and church were accompanied by other settlement components and that these were located on either side of the road approaching the church from the east. A small segment of the enclosure boundary is reflected in the curving wall on the south side of the church (plate 4). The remainder of the circuit is now lost, having been swept away c. 1800 and then heavily landscaped. Much of the area, for instance, has been laid to lawn as part of the 20th-century developments on the estate. It is possible, though, that the north-eastern quadrant of the enclosure survives in the wooded plantation immediately to the south-east of the church. Future fieldwork will confirm this and any remains should be treated as being of national significance.

The form of the pre-Conquest settlement at Apethorpe can be glimpsed in the Enclosure plan of 1778 and would suggest that it was nucleated and took a very regular, almost

gridded outline, with buildings and closes extending perpendicularly back from the east to west route leading to/from the church. Settlement nucleation at the same time as the development of the open field system is a regional characteristic of Late Saxon settlement. A square unit affording a potential settlement area of 150m by 150m in area can be identified at Apethorpe and this is bisected evenly by the routeway. This double-row settlement incorporated houses on either side of the road with properties extending back from this for a distance of approximately 70m. The northern extent of this early settlement is marked now by an embanked and wooded boundary. To the south, the settlement limit is less well defined having been removed and altered by subsequent developments. A radical reorientation of the village layout took place in the early 18th century with the construction of the Manor House built for the agent of the Earls of Westmorland. This faced the formal approach road to Apethorpe Hall and its extensive garden stretched from this back to a far western edge bounded by the double-lynchet trackway. As a result, all of the earlier plots on the north were truncated. It is likely, however, that earlier settlement extended further to the south beyond, possibly, the current northern walled boundary to the cricket pitch north of the Hall. Indeed, slight and fragmentary remains of earthwork features are evident in a narrow strip on the south side of the wall.

This early settlement shares a similar alignment and axis with the open fields and although from this it could be suggested that the development of each is synchronous, it is equally plausible that the settlement has been superimposed upon components of the open field system.



Plate 4:
The curving wall on the south side of the church follows the line of the east-north-east section of the Town Street and an earlier, possibly Saxon, enclosure.

The Medieval and Later Landscape at Apethorpe

In its earliest depicted form, from the early 18th century, the square and rectangular plan of the house and gardens overlies, take the form and share the orientation of the

underlying open field system. The acquisition of the Apethorpe estate c.1480 by Sir Guy Wolston, again, led to a massive transformation in the local landscape. The building of Apethorpe Hall began soon after on a greenfield site well to the south of the village, the route connecting the two re-using the double-lynchet trackway. The site of the earlier Manor House is unknown, it may well have stood within the oval enclosure close by the church; it is also plausible, but less so, that an earlier manorial residence was incorporated in or buried by the present Hall. The development of the new estate centre at Apethorpe reflected the large scale agricultural restructuring that took place in the late 15th century. The most significant change at this time involved a reduction in the intensity of arable cultivation and, in particular, a shift away from grain production due to low product values, and a change to sheep pasture. It may well be that this shift in land use, with an abandonment of arable fields at Apethorpe, afforded the owner a new development opportunity. Whatever the reason, Wolston's decision to build on a fresh site resulted in the conversion of a large area of former cultivation.



Plate 5:
Avenue of horse chestnut trees planted at the western end of a block of medieval fields to the north of Dovecote Close.

A similar process of encroachment upon former arable can be seen to the west of the T-junction with a series of properties flanking the double-lynchet trackway. In their current form the houses along this section are all of early 17th-century date (at the earliest) and were probably built or at least modified by the then owner, Sir Francis Fane, Earl of Westmorland. He was responsible for much rebuilding at the house alongside substantial capital investment in the wider estate and at this time the straight north to south route to the Hall may have been abandoned in favour of a new eastern approach. Close boundaries depicted on the Enclosure map of 1778 survive as low earthwork banks and scarps and continue west from these properties; their backs indicated by a sharply defined scarp or terrace into the hillslope. Beyond this other elements of the medieval field system extend west, terminating against a well defined

bank embellished by a single avenue of horse chestnuts trees, itself flanked to the west by a now largely infilled hollow way or track (plate 5). Further to the west are the remains of ridge-and-furrow cultivation. There is a strong likelihood that an earlier, medieval, layout is present in this area but one that probably post-dates the Late Saxon core nearer the church and enclosure. Again, it is clear that settlement in this area has spread out across pre-existing open fields, truncated furlongs of which, with plot number and size, are depicted on the Enclosure map of 1778. The fields in this area extended to the south of the present day walled boundary at the northern end of Dovecote Close to the north of the Hall. The RAF vertical photograph (plate 1) illustrates this, with a medieval field boundary aligned east to west immediately to the north of the Dovecote. Other lengths of ridge-and-furrow cultivation can be seen contiguously to the south and these share a common alignment with fields further to the south and evidently terminate on the western side of the double-lynchet track. It is feasible that much of this area was brought back into cultivation in the 17th and 18th centuries supporting an account of 1790 by John Byng who noted (to the east of the house) '*open cornfields opposite without tree planted & river running through rushy morass & ruinous mill*'.

Gardens and the Designed Landscape at Apethorpe Hall

The Dovecote Close was bounded on the west by an arcing length of substantial stone walling. No trace of this now survives, instead a well defined low grassy bank marks its course close, in particular, to the north-western apex (plate 6). This wall is again depicted on the map of 1778 where it is flanked externally by a narrow copse planted, presumably, to give additional privacy to the Hall and its contiguous gardens on the north. The curvilinearity of the wall and the associated wooded compartment appear ill-fitted to the surrounding landscape and cut across the earlier components such as cultivation remains and field boundaries. A track extends the line of the wall to the north on the 1778 map, corresponding with the location of a similar feature noted alongside the horse chestnut avenue. Furthermore, another local routeway, the Drift Road, connects with it from the west. The wall is flanked externally by a wide and still sharply defined ditch and this follows the course of the former wall line as it curves down the hillslope for a distance of at least 40m to a point where it appears to have been interrupted by small-scale digging or quarrying. Together, both wall and ditch, appear park pale-like in form. On the map of 1778 this point is indicated by a notable indentation as the wall appears to avoid an obstruction. To the south-east of this a much shallower but still narrow ditch is apparent and at its southern terminal it turns perpendicularly to the north-east and feeds into a largely buried, brick-built and concrete capped drain or culvert (plate 7). The implication, therefore, is that this section of ditch is a much later drain following the line of the wall surrounding Dovecote Close. Additionally, it is worth speculating that the obstacle on the line of the wall was a pre-existing springline.

The map of 1778 depicts another stretch of boundary to the west of and extending nearly parallel to the boundary of Dovecote Close. This demarcated the eastern edge of a field called '*Great Cocks Crofts*', a low earthen bank now marking its location, and it may well be that the slightly hollowed intervening space, varying from 6m to 10m wide, between the two walls was used as a track leading to the western side of the Hall. On the north this joins with the Drift Road, leading from the west, and the track shown skirting the periphery of the village on the north-west. To the south, however, its course is less clear. Later activity including superficial quarrying alongside dumping of bricks and other rubble, possibly associated with the construction of the tennis court



Plate 6:
The ruined course of the wall that once enclosed Dovecote Close survives as a low rubble bank (right of centre) flanked externally by a wide and deep ditch.

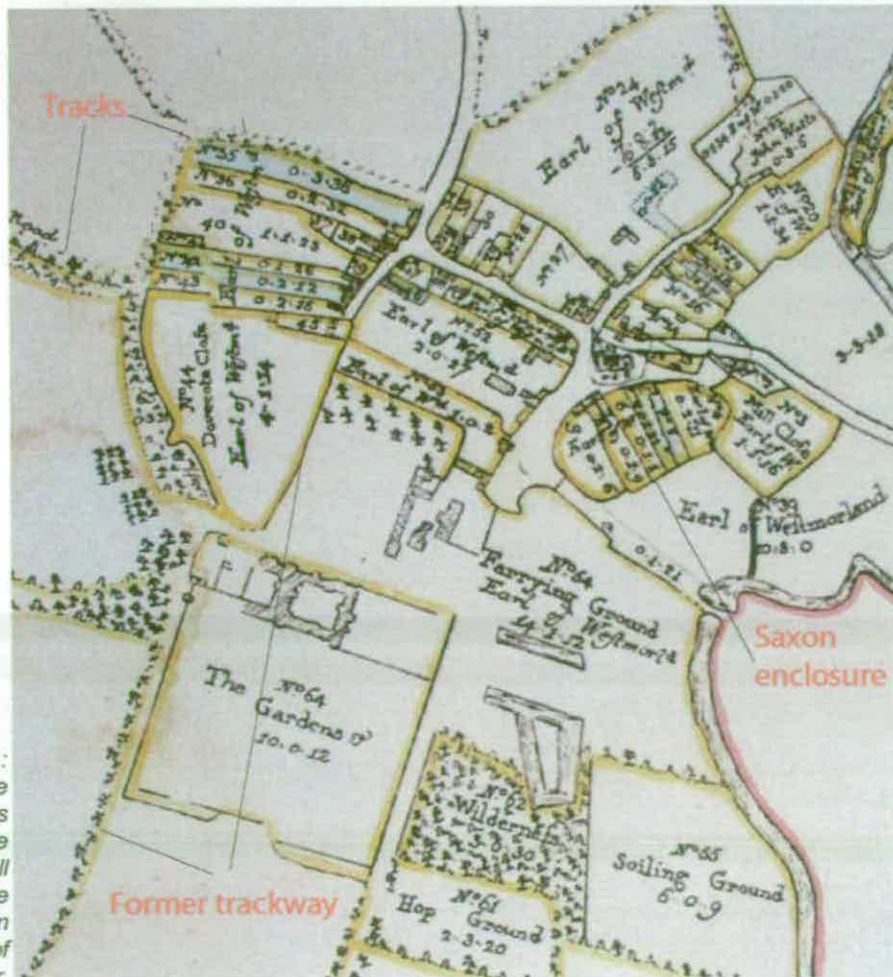


Figure 1:
Extract of the Enclosure map of 1778. This shows the basic form of the medieval village as well as the location of the possible Saxon enclosure to the south of the church. (C) JS Edgar.

in the late 20th century, have destroyed both courses of walling and interrupted the putative track.

Plate 7:
Brick-built and
concrete capped
drain or culvert
on the southern
flank of
Dovecote Close.



Plate 8:
Two trees mark the
edge of a track shown
here on the OS 1st ed
map of 1886.

A crude symmetry is apparent in that the line of both walls and the belt of woodland, partly mirrors that of the presumed formal approach to the east of the Hall which leads in a sweeping curve from the church. The southern end of this route is depicted on the early 18th-century plan of the house and gardens with an indication that the area immediately to the north of the house was known as *Walnut Tree Court*. Nothing of this now survives

and the entire lawn on the north front has been heavily landscaped. A line of trees parallel to the west end of the north façade of the house is shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2500 plan published in 1886 and may mark the remnant of an earlier tree lined avenue, perhaps a continuation of the hollow way that approaches from the west (plate 8). The only earthwork features visible are the shallow remains of a linear hollow that extends from a point close to the south-western corner of the lawn, north-eastwards for a distance of c. 100m. Again, this is shown as a track on the late 19th-century Ordnance Survey map.

Formal gardens were created around the house in the 16th and 17th centuries but the earliest known depiction dates to 1830 (RCHM 1984, 13). This illustrates a formal and very geometric layout that included a '*Bowling Green*' placed centrally to the state apartment range on the south, and flanked on either side by parterres marked '*Flower Garden*'. Semi-circular steps led to the south from the '*Bowling Green*' on to a broad formal walk flanked on either side by yew trees and statues. To the east and

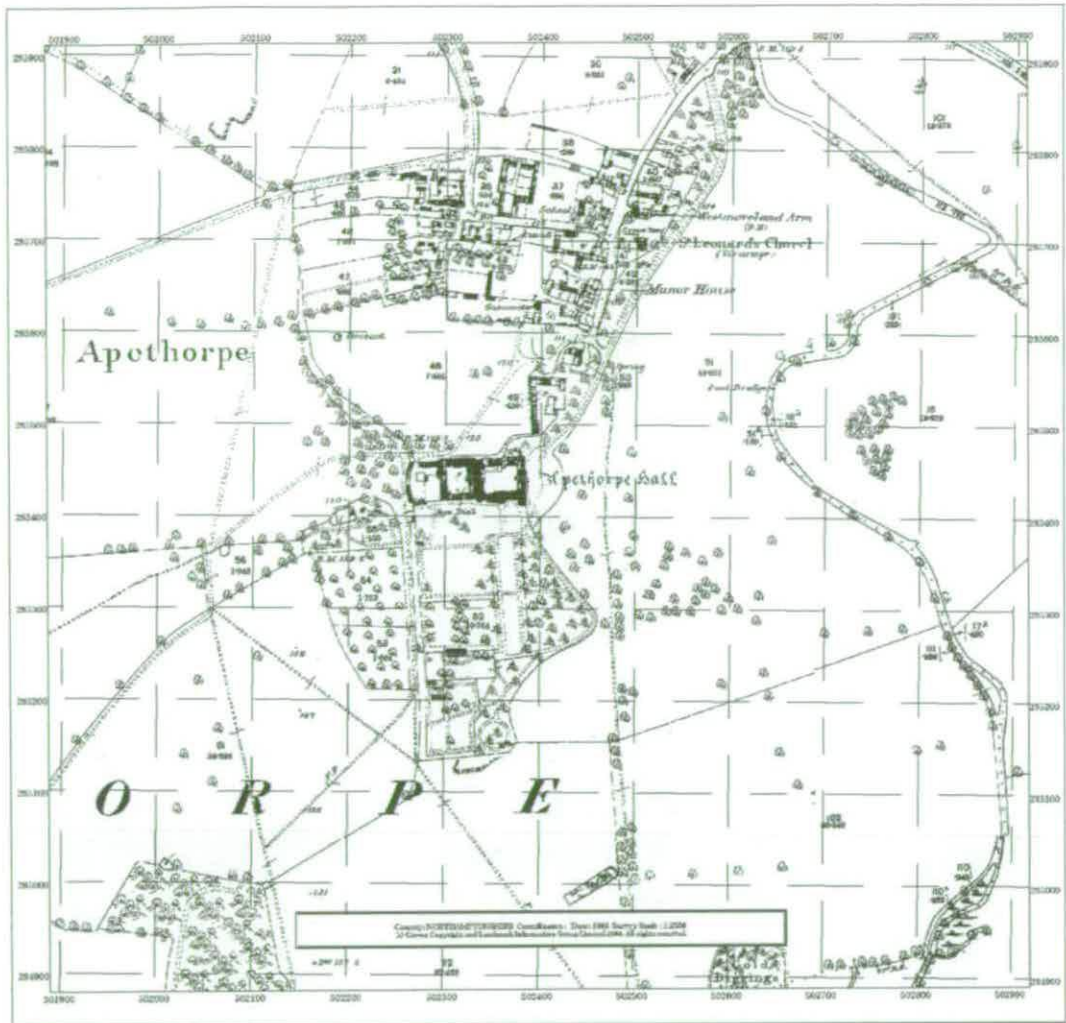


Figure 2: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale plan of 1886. This shows the Apethorpe landscape on the eve of Blomfield's transformation and before the village re-organisation of the early 20th century. Much of the landscape is still recognisable but the gardens to the south-west and south-east of the Hall are much changed from their current appearance. In particular, the area of woodland to the south and south-east and a remnant of an earlier 'Wilderness Garden', has been swept away. The orchard compartments to the south-west are shown on the 1886 plan as is the detached garden with pond immediately to their north.

west of this were large orchard and garden compartments and, to the east, a large area shown as *'The Wilderness'* with an ornamental moat adjacent on the north.



Plate 9:
A flight of steps lead south from the former *'Bowling Green'* towards the double avenue of yew trees.

From this early plan, only the *'Bowling Green'*, the westernmost *'Flower Garden'* and the line of yew trees to the south is still clearly identifiable (plate 9). However, the present *'bowling green'* and the westernmost *'flower garden'* are the creations of Blomfield - the early 18th-century layout had been significantly removed in the late 19th century. The remainder has

been altered or removed by subsequent garden developments. In particular there is now no formal trace at all of *'The Wilderness'* and *'Moat'*, their location indicated by some amorphous surface disturbance and the survival of a small number of ornamental trees. The *'Garden'* enclosure to the east of the yew tree avenue has been erased and although the outline of the *'Orchard'* to the west is still apparent, the walled compartment has been extended and the southern section is now occupied by a rectangular pond. The *'Gravel Garden'*, to the east of the principal range (long gallery) and evidently the Privy Garden, had certainly been removed by 1814 and possibly by the mid-1790s (JS Edgar, pers comm.).



Plate 10:
Tree ring/platform hosting the Lebanon cedar on the former *'Flower Garden'* parterre.

Further elements of a designed landscape are apparent to the east of the house and undermine the claim that no attempt was made to create a landscaped park or garden until Blomfield's works in the early 20th century. The Enclosure map of 1778 clearly shows a formal layout of ponds aligned with and on the same axis as the house, approximately 150m to the east in a field called *'Farrying Ground'*. Shallow earthworks

still survive and they are of a form that pre-dates the middle of the 18th century. In this general area to the east of the house there are at least two tree ring enclosures, each 30m in diameter, another of similar dimensions lies 600m to the south, and they were intended to act as an eye-catcher when viewed from the Hall. It may well be that the large tree ring hosting a Lebanon cedar on the lawn adjacent to the former 'Bowling Green' on the south side of the Hall, is contemporary with this phase of garden activity (plate 10). This could well relate to work carried out on the Hall and grounds between 1713 and 1725 by Thomas, 6th Earl.

Additional work was carried out on the Hall in the mid-19th century for the 11th Earl and this may have included a refashioning of the park to the west of the private gardens. Here, immediately adjacent to the north-south route to the west of the Hall, there are at least three, now redundant, orchard compartments bounded on the west by a single avenue of walnut trees and a redundant track. Within these, aligned east-west, are the remains of former ridge-and-furrow cultivation strips re-used as planting ridges for the fruit trees. To the north of the orchard and separated from it by a narrow track is a small detached garden, depicted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1886 (fig 2).

Plate 11 (left):
South-western
corner of the pond.



Plate 12 (right):
The ruined
structure of the ice
house close to the
north-eastern
corner of the pond.



It consists of a rectangular pond (plate 11), now damaged on the north, with the domed remains of an ice-house at its north-eastern corner (plate 12), enclosed on the north-west by a well defined scarp, possibly the remains of a collapsed wall. This ice-house and its attendant plantation was formed by 1778 and is described as 'Ice House Plantation' on the Enclosure map. The pond was fed by a water supply leading from a spring 120m to the west; along a sharply defined channel furnished with a stone-built culvert (plate 13) that still survives a short distance from the south-western corner of the pond. To the south of the pond there is a serpentine pathway, still traceable on the ground, leading in a loop through this small copse.

Following the purchase of the estate in 1904 by Leonard Brassey, the gardens and parts of the Hall were remodelled by Reginald Blomfield over a period of several years. Blomfield created features within existing garden compartments, including many terraces and formal changes of level linked by steps. In the wider landscape, a lake was created in 1908 to the east of the house and alterations as part of this clearly removed elements of the earlier designed landscape including much of the 'Farrying Ground' depicted on the map of 1778. More recently still, a rectangular pond was dug in the early 20th century (plate 14) c. 100m to the south-east of the southernmost garden compartment.



Plate 13:
*Drain and stone
culvert to the west of
the pond. The drain
leads west for c.
150m towards a
pond/spring.*



Plate 14:
*Rectangular pond c.
600m to the south of the
Hall dug at some stage
in the early 20th century.*

Summary

This desk-top report on the historic environment of Apethorpe Hall was undertaken as part of a much wider and more intensive investigation of the building history and conservation at the Hall and its attendant structures. It is based on a small number of visits to the site and reconnaissance in the surrounding area as well as a rapid assessment of historic air photographs and other earlier cartographic sources, and should be regarded as an interim statement of the area's historic significance.

Nonetheless, it is evident that the surrounding landscape retains many features of historical significance and, in particular, there is good evidence for a complex multi-period pattern of medieval settlement and land use, the major elements are shown in Appendices 1 and 2. The earliest fragments of this include the site of a substantial Roman villa and hints of an attendant field system. In the immediate post-Roman period there are indications of a shift in the location of settlement and the establishment of a hamlet/small village on the present site at Apethorpe. This incorporated a pre-conquest church and putative Middle Saxon enclosure set around an open area or 'green' with further settlement to the west, later overlain by the developed medieval village. This early morphology is documented on the Enclosure map of 1778 and represents some of the rarest and most fragile settlement remains in the local area. Much of this Saxon landscape is now buried or has been erased by later activity but any future building works or excavation in the village should be aware of the potential historic value of this buried resource.

A well ordered system of settlement and fields was in place by the 11th century at Apethorpe and many fragments of this are apparent in the landscape around the Hall. One of the most important components of this is the track that extended south from the village towards the medieval village at Hale. Blocks of fields are laid out to either side of the track and a section of this may well have been used as an approach to the Hall at an earlier date. It had certainly been abandoned by the middle of the 18th century when formal garden compartments were constructed to the north and west of the Hall. That to the west, Dovecote Close, was enclosed by a substantial wall and external ditch and given further privacy by a belt of woodland; the Close also hosts a Dovecote built in 1740.

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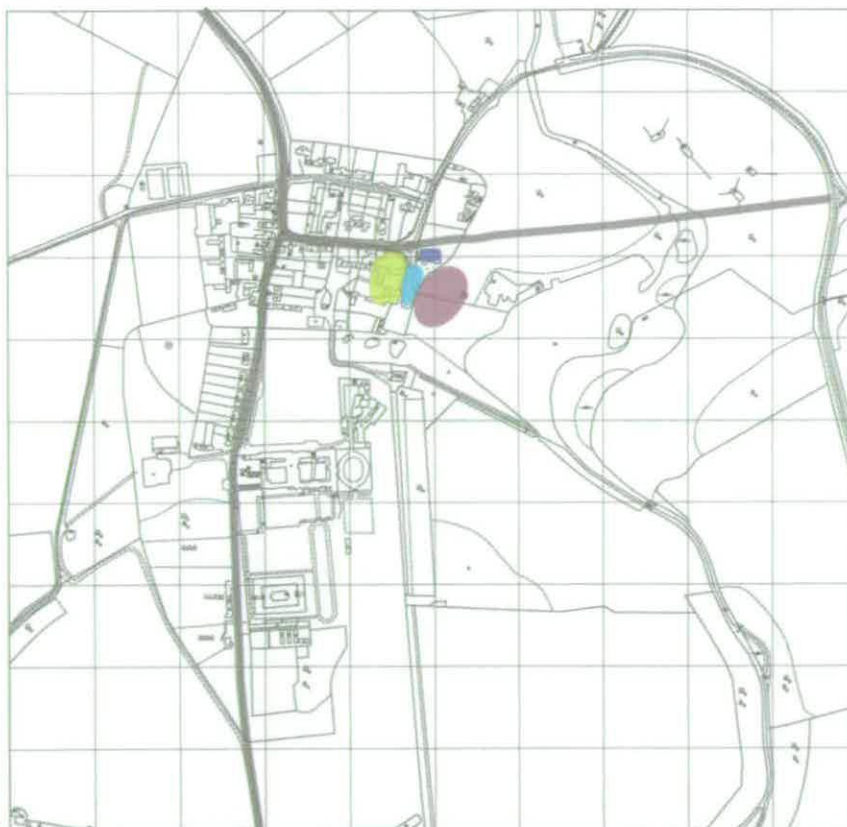
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Appendix 1

Early to Middle Saxon (c. 410 - c. 850)

The earliest identifiable routeways are shown in grey and these would have served both the settlement at Apethorpe and the surrounding landscape. The Middle Saxon enclosure (purple) may well have been accompanied by a 'green-like' open space and adjacent settlement. The extent of arable at this time is unknown.



Late Saxon to Early Medieval (c. 850 - c. 1480s)

A number of elements including the communications network and the Middle Saxon enclosure continue in use. The attendant village (yellow) is likely to have had a planned morphology with a gridded pattern set either side of the road leading to the church (blue). The open field system (green) may well have been established in the 9th/10th century and is accompanied here by extensive hay meadows along the valley floor (orange).



c.1480s - c. 1620s

The landscape established in the Late Saxon period remains recognisable and is dominated by a mix of arable (green) and pasture (orange). Settlement (yellow) has expanded to the west of the north-south route (grey), a section of which may well have been used as an early formal approach to the Hall (red). It is possible that the Hall was accompanied on the south by a walled garden on the south and both overlie abandoned open fields.



c. 1620s - mid-19th century

The landscape reorganisation undertaken by the Fanes was substantial and included the addition of enclosed gardens/parkland (purple) immediately to the north of the Hall. An enlarged hunting park (pink) was established in the early 17th century and this is likely to have extended west and south from the Hall. Settlement (yellow) also expanded at this time with new properties created on the road leading north from the church. The formal approach to the Hall is unclear at this stage but it is likely that the north to south route would have been abandoned and replaced by one to the east. By the mid-19th century the approach skirted the eastern side of the village. A number of other tracks/paths are evident including one flanking the Dovecote Close on the west. The road leading east from the church had been removed by the time of the OS 1st ed map (1886) in favour of its present course.



Appendix 2



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0218 9559		
<p>Dovecote built c. 1740 but later converted to a water tower set in a former garden compartment known as Dovecote Close. The line of a buried water pipe extends from it to the east. The slight remains of ridge-and-furrow cultivation can be seen in the pasture field around it.</p>		



Northamptonshire	North-East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0230 9560		
<p>The line of the double-lynchet trackway to the north-west of the Hall. Its course is marked along this stretch by a shallow terrace facing east across the cricket pitch. This may well have been the route of the earliest approach to Apethorpe Hall, abandoned in the 1620s by Fane's re-development of the village. The route was re-used in the 20th century.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0215 9561		
<p>Late 19th-century wall at the north-western corner of Dovecote Close. The wall has been damaged in places but clearly overlies the line of a ditch. To the south, this ditch flanks the wall of Dovecote Close and it may well be that it is reflecting the line of an earlier track. The Drift Road, shown on the map of 1778 connects with it on the west.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0215 9561		
<p>Late 19th-century/20th-century wall at the north-western apex of Dovecote Close. In places this is now in ruinous condition and is breached by at least one gateway. It overlies the ditch flanking the earlier walled boundary to the Close and the route of the Drift Road, a field track shown on the Enclosure map of 1778, approaches from the west (right on photograph).</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0222 9541		
<p>Rectangular pond, part of a mid to late 19th century detached garden lying in a wooded copse to the west of the Hall. It is depicted on the OS 1st edition map of 1886 and is generally well-preserved, though the northern side has been damaged. It is fed by a leat, extending from a brick-built culvert c. 20m to the west, that enters the pond at its south-western corner.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0223 9542		
<p>Ruined remains of an ice house close to the north-western corner of the pond. It is circular and some of the domed form survives with an entrance on the north-west.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0223 9542		

A large scarp demarcates the northern and north-eastern edge of the detached garden depicted on the OS 1st edition map of 1886. Much brick rubble and soil covers it on the east and it is likely that the terrace masks or marks the location of a now destroyed brick wall/revetment.



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0222 9542		
Narrow path to the south of the pond. Part of a serpentine walkway through a small plantation here. Depicted on the OS 1 st edition map of 1886.		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0222 9537		
<p>Former area of orchard depicted on OS 1st edition map of 1886. At least three compartments can be seen, each enclosed by small earthen banks. The trees were planted on ridges aligned east to west, survivals from earlier ridge-and-furrow cultivation.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0263 9493		
<p>Courtyard villa (site of) discovered in 1859, in all about 230ft by 240ft. Principal block on north side with hypocausts, geometric mosaics, etc. Baths at S end of E wing, well in middle of courtyard. Two small uninscribed house-altars were found. One coin of Septimus Severus, the remainder Constantinian, possibly indicating a 3rd/4th century date for the villa. In successive phases the villa combines a dwelling house with an earlier aisled house.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0236 9539		
<p>Area of lawn shown as 'Bowling Green' on map of 1721. Now, under lawn, it is levelled off and terraced on all but the northern side. The yew tree avenue is accessed via a set of raised steps on the south side of the lawn.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0215 9567		
<p>Single avenue of horse chestnuts at the western edge of the field to the north of Dovecote Close. The trees mark the headland boundary at the eastern edge of a block of medieval fields and they may have served an ornamental function on the periphery of another garden compartment – this area is depicted as an orchard on early 20th century OS maps. To the west of the avenue and extending parallel to it, there is a narrow trackway (shown on the Enclosure map of 1778) and the fragmentary remains of ridge-and-furrow cultivation lie adjacently on the west.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0226 9531		
<p>The line of the earlier double-lynchet trackway, integrated with the medieval open field system at Apethorpe is reflected in the route of the track that extends south from the village and skirts the western flank of the garden compartments. It extends further to the south and leads towards the deserted medieval village at Hall, c. 1.5km to the south-west of Apethorpe Hall.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0214 9558		
<p>The boundary of the field named as 'Great Cocks Wood' on the Enclosure map of 1778, survives as a low earth and stone rubble bank 10m to 20m to the west of and parallel to the wall and ditch enclosing Dovecote Close. The intervening space may well have been used as a subsidiary route to the western side of Apethorpe Hall. The field name may be a reference to its former role within the hunting park at Apethorpe.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0220 9551		
<p>Quarrying has disturbed the southern ellipse of the boundary enclosing Dovecote Close and removed any trace of the associated enclosing ditch. The quarry has been partly infilled with brick (?and concrete) rubble, and may well be related to earthmoving here to create a platform for the 20th century tennis court that lies 15m to the south-west.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0220 9551		
<p>Brick-built drain or culvert with concrete capping. A narrow drainage ditch extends north from it following the line of the Dovecote Close enclosure boundary. The drain terminates on the north in a heavily disturbed area where rubble and earth appears to have been dumped. This may mark the infilled site of a former spring.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0220 9551		
<p>Brick-built drain or culvert with concrete capping. A narrow drainage ditch extends north from it following the line of the Dovecote Close enclosure boundary. The drain terminates on the north in a heavily disturbed area where rubble and earth appears to have been dumped. This may mark the infilled site of a former spring.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0240 9544		
<p>The Privy Garden (picture left), shown on the plan of 1721 and named 'The Gravel Garden', survives as a modified terrace terminated at the east end by the remains of a stone wall and a pier standing on the south side. To the east of this, and at a lower level, there is another terrace defined on the south by a substantial scarp. Possibly part of Blomfield's early 20th century landscaping.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0247 9501		
<p>Rectangular pond, heavily embanked to the south-east and said to have been created by students and teachers at Apethorpe school earlier in the 20th century. It lies c. 150m to the south of the southernmost garden compartment and can clearly be seen on the 1947 RAF aerial photograph.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0245 9480		
Tree ring and copse c.600m to the south of Apethorpe Hall. Possibly established as part of late 18 th /early 19 th century landscaping.		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0236 9532		
<p>Double avenue of yew trees approached from the terraced lawn to the north (Bowling Green) by a flight of terraced steps. Both are depicted on a plan of 1721.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0218 9569		
<p>Area of former medieval open fields aligned east to west and depicted on the Enclosure map of 1778. Fragmentary earthwork banks and scarps of the fields survive but these have been truncated on the east by later croft boundaries, and are delimited on the west by a headland and trackway.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0231 9538		
<p>Substantial tree ring on parterre to the west of the 'Bowling Green'. This area is depicted as a 'Flower Garden' on the plan of 1721 and, so, tree and associated earthwork enclosure is later. It consists now of a raised platform c. 30m wide that hosts a Lebanon Cedar and though incorporated in the 20th century garden, it may well have an origin in late 18th/early 19th century landscaping.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0240 9583		
The extent of the medieval settlement is marked on the north by a tree-lined former embankment. At an earlier date this was accompanied on the north by a narrow track.		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0249 9567		
<p>The curve of the wall on the south of the churchyard reflects the outline of an earlier, Saxon, enclosure. No trace of this enclosure or the later properties that infilled it are evident on the surface.</p>		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0231 9542		
Remains of former tree-lined track shown on the 1 st edition OS map of 1886. Two trees now mark its course.		



Northamptonshire	East Northamptonshire	Apethorpe
TL 0243 9534		
<p>Location of 'The Wilderness' and 'Moat' shown on the plan of 1721. The entire area has been heavily landscaped but there are a number of amorphous low earthworks which may mark the site of the 'Moat'. A number of ornamental trees survive.</p>		



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