

Settlement Analysis of the Village of East Halton, North Lincolnshire.



Figure 1: St. Peter's Church, East Halton.

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East Halton is a small village situated on the south bank of the Humber River in North Lincolnshire. The village was mentioned obliquely in Domesday as Haltune and in the records of Newsham and Thornton Abbey as Halton-on-Humber (Domesday Online, 2019).

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names states that 'Halton' comes from the Old English 'Halh' which in the North means 'haugh, a piece of flat alluvial land by the side of a river' and 'tun', the original meaning of which was 'enclosure' or 'fence' (Ekwall, 1960. P. 212). The 'East' must have been added later to differentiate from West Halton near Scunthorpe. East Halton or Halton-upon-Humber was



Figure 2: King Street, East Halton. Courtesy of Google Maps.

described in *A Topographical Dictionary of England* as irregularly built (Lewis, 1848). However, I would argue that the settlement of East Halton was a linear village, with the original main street of the village being that of King Street. The manorial site that once sat at corner of King Street and Townside (and can still be seen as earthworks), would have been ideally positioned and the addition of Back Lane suggests outward growth from the original line of settlement (See figure 2.). The foundation for at least one medieval building has been discovered on King Street and the site adjacent to Warren Farm Close is believed to be a

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shrunken medieval village (Heritage Gateway, 2007). The settlement becomes polyfocal only after the agglomeration with Lobingham on the southern boundary of East Halton (See figure 3), after 1086 (Rowley, 1979. P.21).

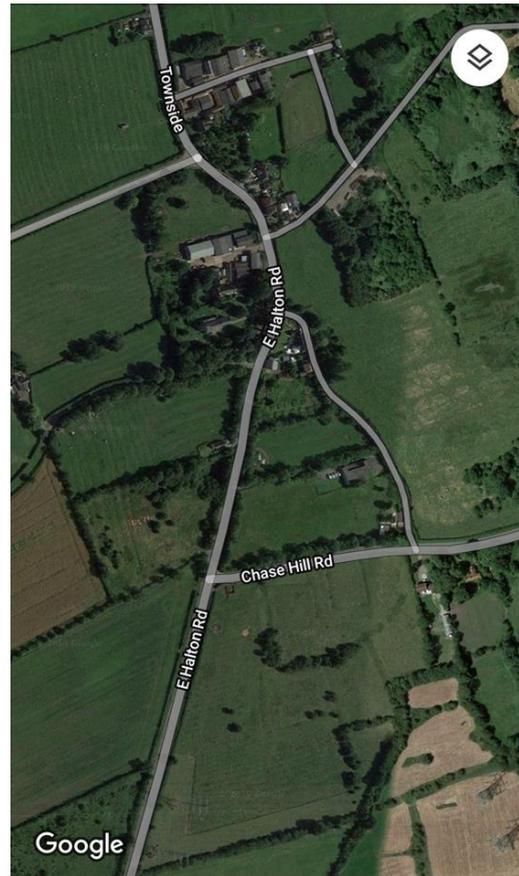


Figure 3: Site of Lobingham DMV. Courtesy of Google Maps.

Prehistory.

There have been archaeological studies in and around the village of East Halton, the majority of which have been related to the industrial growth of neighbouring Killingholme. The archaeology discovered is listed on Heritage Gateway and publicly available. Geophysical surveys, aerial photographs, test pits and watching briefs have made up the large portion of investigations. The available archaeological data points to three areas where there have been Mesolithic (8000-4000 BC) and Neolithic (4000-2500 BC) finds. The areas including land off Skitter Road, near East Halton Beck, land to the west of the village

(this would have been closer to the beck, which was once wider) and land to the north-east of Scrub Lane.



Figure 4: Mesolithic and Neolithic Finds.

The Mesolithic period was not a period of settlement but of hunter-gatherers and an ever-growing sophistication in their use of tools. Accordingly, the flint found in these areas is not suggestive of permanent settlement, although it is likely that seasonal camps were set up to enable the hunting of migratory species (Aston, 1985. P.21). The marshland that would have been a prominent part of East Halton's landscape in this period would have been an excellent location to source migratory and native birds for food. The origins of farming and thus, permanent settlement can be found in the Neolithic period. Tools continued to evolve as new skills were acquired. Neolithic tools found here include scraper tools (HER No.

20085) and a stone axe head (HER No. 1600), along with debitage as evidence of lithic reduction.

Bronze Age (2500-800 BC) finds have been amongst those on Skitter Road and the site north-east of Scrub Lane. These finds have included flint assemblage, flakes, blades and scraper tools (HER No. 19725). The neighbouring village of Goxhill also has evidence of early Bronze Age cremation (HER No. 20072). This is suggestive of settlement along with, the appearance of the first of several prehistoric ditches, there are at least seven recorded ditches containing evidence from the Bronze and Iron Age (800 BC-43 AD). Most of the archaeology, again points to the fields by Skitter Road and the site north-east of Scrub Lane.

Here we see evidence of Iron Age field systems and a large D-shaped enclosure (See figure

5). The enclosure was investigated as a part of a planning application and was found to contain Iron Age pottery and animal bones as well as evidence of Roman settlement (HER No. 20700).

Iron Age Lincolnshire was the territory of the Corieltauvi tribe, unfortunately records do not detail how the Corieltauvi were conquered by Roman troops (Ellis and Crowther, 1990. P. 183).

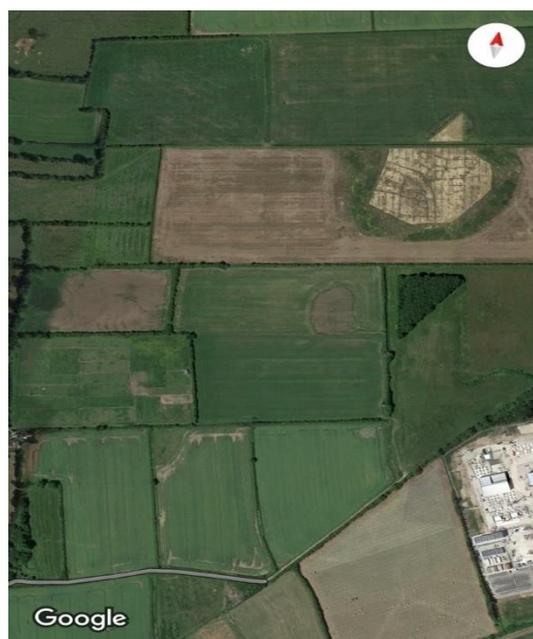


Figure 5: Iron Age Field System and D-Shaped Enclosure.

Romano-British (43 – 410 AD).

We know that by 47 AD the Roman army had conquered the area south of the Humber River (Ellis & Crowther, 1990. P. 183). The Scrub Lane site is significant in that the archaeology found dated from around 100 BC until the end of Roman Occupation in 409 AD. This evidence viewed with the earlier Neolithic and Bronze age finds are suggestive of a continuous settlement in this area of the village. The Roman archaeology includes a hearth, tegula and brick: there was obviously a building on this site. Romano-British finds are not confined to this area of East Halton. Pottery and animal remains have been found across the village in varying amounts. East Halton Skitter appears to have had significant activity, both

sides of East Halton Beck have had a large number of finds. An occupational site has been identified on the northern side of the Beck. Buildings, human remains and cremations have been found in this area (HER No. 8777). As well as evidence of saltworks: salt was a rare commodity at this time, highly valued by



Figure 6: Roman finds in East Halton.

Roman soldiers who were often part-paid in salt (Salt Association, 2019). South of Skitter Road the settlement appears to continue with evidence of domestic settlement and a mill (HER No. 20086).

Anglo-Saxon (410 – 1066 AD).

There has been little archaeological evidence of East Halton through the Anglo-Saxon period

found. So far, we have two pottery sherds, one on College Road in the area where there is known to be a shrunken medieval village (HER No. 1598). The other fragment of pottery at East Halton Skitter (HER No. 1589). Most domestic Saxon dwellings would have been built from materials such as timber, turf or clay, as such little evidence survives to the present day (Trevor Rowley, 1978). Field systems do tell us that the land in and around East Halton was in use through this period, the village has extensive examples of ridge and furrow, the most obvious being behind the Manor House moated site in the village. Obviously, it is difficult to

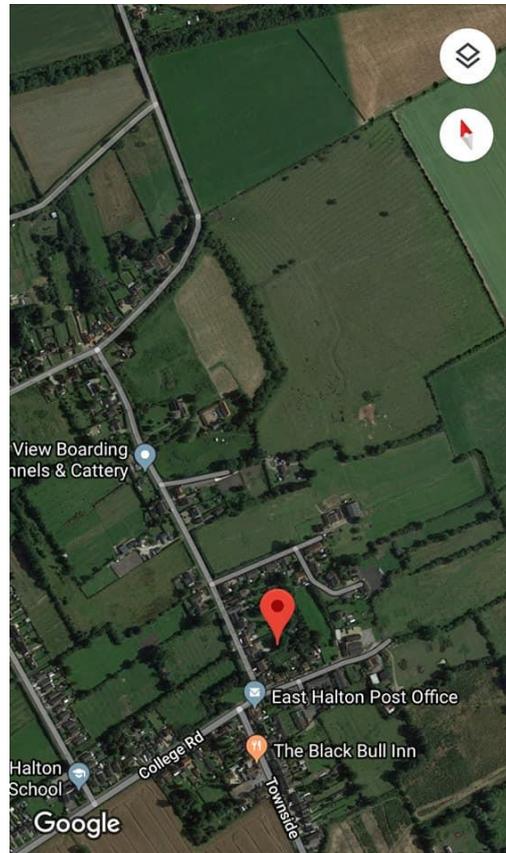


Figure 7: AS field system with ridge & furrow.
Courtesy of Google Maps.

chart the development of East Halton through this period with so little evidence. However, if we look to the south of the village where St. Peter's Church now stands, we find the deserted medieval village of Lobingham. Lobingham is now a series of earthworks but it did have its own entry in the Domesday book of 1086 (Domesday Online, 2019). Lobingham appears to have been a large settlement centred around Chase Hill Road and the site of St. Peter's Church. Due to Lobingham being a large settlement at the time of Domesday, we can assume that it had thrived in the later Anglo-Saxon period. We do know that villages as we understand them went into decline in the early Anglo-Saxon period, many of the nucleated villages we see today developed from the from the agglomeration of earlier settlements. In

some cases two or more settlements joined together, in other cases one settlement went into decline while the other thrived which is what may have happened in the case of Lobingham and East Halton – Lobingham going into decline with East Halton beginning to thrive or swallowing up the village of Lobingham through a period of growth.

Medieval (1066 – 1547).

There has been some speculation that St. Peter's Church was originally the church belonging to Lobingham due to its unusual position by the village boundary. However, the advowson for St. Peter's Church was granted to Newsham Abbey and the documentation clearly names the parish as Halton-on-Humber (William Page, 1906). Newsham was founded in 1143 and the church does appear to have been built in the 12th century. The church was at the centre of a dispute in the late 12th Century as the nuns at Elstow Abbey claimed that the church was theirs. This was a drawn-out case leading to an intervention from Pope Alexander III who found in favour of the monks of Newsham (Page, 1906.).

While it is probable that St. Peter's Church was built on an earlier religious site, there is no



Figure 8: North or 'Devil's' Door, St. Peter's Church.

available evidence to confirm this. The chancel has undergone some changes over the centuries but the three lancet windows at the eastern end are suggestive of Norman building styles, the materials used are roughly shaped ironstone, limestone and chalk (Geoffrey F Bryant, 1988). The addition of a south and north aisle to the church are indicative of a well-attended church enjoying a period of prosperity. Bryant suggests these

additions were added post-reformation: however, the north aisle was likely to have been added at an earlier time as the 'devil's door' is still evident in the north wall of the nave. Many medieval churches had a North or Devil's Door, there is some debate over the purpose of these doors, whether they were significant due to some ritualistic purpose or merely an earlier main entrance to the church (Groves, 2015). These doors were generally closed off after the reformation, so it is unlikely that this north aisle is a post-reformation addition (NCT, 2019). Further indication of wealth within the village in the medieval period was the addition of a lady chapel on the north side of the chancel. We have no information about this chapel other than the, now bricked up, archway that would have been the entrance, however, lady chapels were usually privately funded by a local lord.

East Halton Skitter was recorded as the medieval port of 'Skottermuth' in the 14th century (Simon Pawley, 1984). Along with Spalding, Wainfleet, Skegness and Saltfleet. Skottermuth was one of the main home ports for Lincolnshire's seasonal fishermen throughout the 14th century (Pawley, 1984). A piece of medieval graffiti found in St. Peter's church may be emblematic of East Halton's fishing heritage:



Figure 9: Ship Graffiti found in the doorway of St. Peter's Church.

Although this type of graffiti can be found in churches across the country and so is not expressly seafaring, it does seem that there is a concentration of ship graffiti in coastal areas (Champion, 2015). It is difficult to ascertain the original meaning of the inscription but archaeologist, Matthew Champion suggests that because of the sacred nature of the space in which these ships were carved, it is likely they were intended as prayers, perhaps a prayer for a safe or successful trip to sea, perhaps a token of remembrance for loved ones lost (2015).

As in the Roman area, salt production was evident at East Halton Skitter, medieval salterns have been listed in archaeological finds (HER No. 1594). Although it was considered that the Lincolnshire coast to the south of Grimsby was responsible for the lion's share of Lincolnshire's salt production. We know salt was also produced at Habrough, Stallinborough and Keelby as early as the 11th century (Ellis and Crowther, 1990). It is uncertain whether Skottermuth was in fact a separate settlement to East Halton (Heritage Gateway, 2006). There was certainly significant industrial activity in and around the Skitter and people would have needed to live nearby to make these endeavours successful.

Although East Halton is merely mentioned in the Domesday book and does not appear to have its own entry, this description from the Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem of Edward I give us an insight into 13th century East Halton:

‘Halton on Humber. A little manor held of the earl of Lincoln by knight's service; a toft and 4 bovates land held of Sir Gilbert de Clayore (?) who formerly acquired them of Richard son of Stephen and of the fee of the said Peter; and 6*a*. and 17 perches land, a plot of meadow and two tofts held of the said Richard son of Stephen by service of 3 clove gillyflowers.

Rokeston. A messuage and 2½ bovates land held of the brethren of the Hospital of Jerusalem by service of 2s. yearly, and ½ mark after the decease of the said Peter and his heirs; and 2 bovates land held of Ralph de Goushill his uncle, by service of 16d. yearly.

Immyngham. A messuage and 2 bovates land and a toft ... Nicholas (?) de Maundevill by service of 6s. 10d. yearly, rendering ... yearly to the lady Amice a nun of Irreford.

Wyvelesby by Grymesby. 6 bovates land held of James de Bernolby by service ... Houton by Grimesby. 16s. rent held of Ralph de Goushill...' (Sharp, 1906).

From this description and the corresponding entries, we can see that the manor at East Halton compared favourably with two other coastal settlements – Immyngham and Grimsby. Historian Simon Pawley states that the lack documentary evidence for the port at Halton Skitter (Skottermuth) is suggestive of a decline in the port's activities (1984). Pawley suggests that silting in the Humber is responsible for this, however silting had been an issue in the Humber since the 13th century and had not hindered the progress of the port of Skottermuth. The mid-14th century is known for the outbreak of the black death that swept across Europe. Evidence recently uncovered at Thornton Abbey by archaeologists from the University of Sheffield has shown that the plague had a massive effect upon East Halton and the immediate area. A burial site found next to the site of the abbey's infirmary was found to contain forty-eight people, twenty-seven of these were children. Samples extracted from the teeth of those found the bacteria responsible for plague (Willmott, 2016). Could it then be argued that the black death epidemic that had been responsible for the deaths of

between a third and a half of England's population could be responsible for the decline in East Halton's port? The devastating effects that the plague had in towns and cities is well documented, the effects on a rural community would have been catastrophic. The loss of manpower may well have meant that the work required to keep the port at Halton Skitter operational was not possible.

Post-Medieval (1547 – 1700).

After the decline of the port at Halton Skitter, East Halton's primary industry was agriculture. Although East Halton's maritime heyday had been confined to the medieval period, weekly Ferries did run from the Skitter to Hull into the nineteenth century (Lewis, 1848). Evidence has been found for clay pits on Halton Marshes, brickmaking was commonplace along the Humber bank at this time (Ellis and Crowther, 1990). The village itself had at least three mills in operation, the street names of Crookmill Road and Mill Lane identifying the sites of two of these mills (Heritage Gateway, 2011).

Conclusion.

There are numerous, undated archaeological finds, earthworks and enclosures recorded for East Halton. There is a large portion of the village that has not been investigated as most of the investigations undertaken have been related to the industry along the Humber Bank. If I were to make any recommendations for future investigation of this intriguing site, they would perhaps include test pits and field walking, perhaps a community project involving the residents of the village uncovering East Halton's fascinating history. The documentary

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evidence is not as widely available for East Halton as it may be for other sites and it does seem that East Halton has been undeservedly overlooked, hopefully that will be remedied going forward.



Figure 10: East Halton Skitter.

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