



Why survey Ridge and Furrow?

Strip farming systems were a farming method used prior to enclosure of medieval open fields by Enclosure Acts which varied between about 1780 and 1830.

Ridge and furrow earthworks were created in both medieval and post medieval times and are the physical result of ploughing by oxen or horse. It is usually easy to differentiate between medieval and post-medieval ridge and furrow as the former has a distinctive 'S'-shaped form and the latter is usually much straighter and narrower.

The remains of ridge and furrow indicates the fact that the land was in arable farming before a change to pastoral farming which has resulted in the 'fossilisation' of the former farming method under grassland. It also shows that there has been change in farming methods since that time.

'Strip farming' tended to take its name from the furrow created as individual owners might own 'strips' of ridge and furrow in a common open field. There tended to be parish regulations about how the open fields were managed communally.

Identifying ridge and furrow farming systems can sometimes help identify lost medieval villages, as such systems were often related to large landholdings from the period.

In medieval times in the Wolds there was a massive change in farming when the wool trade was at its peak and sheep farming became more profitable. There is a lot of ridge and furrow still evident in the Wolds because large landholders 'closed down' villages with their arable fields and turned them into sheep runs.

By surveying ridge and furrow you will be monitoring the impact the environment and farming is having on the earthworks. Your survey will provide a snapshot in time and will be a useful comparison for future and previous studies. You may also discover earthworks which may not already be included in the Historic Environment Record.

If mapped extensively enough, the data can help you to understand the medieval landscape in the Wolds and how it might have functioned. However, it is always best to start on a small area as your survey results will need to be combined with wider evidence to build a more complete picture of historic settlement patterns and farming practises.



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Equipment needed:

- Digital camera
- Appropriate clothing and footwear
- Clipboard
- Pencils.

Method:

Fields containing ridge and furrow could be anywhere within the Wolds. They could be single, isolated fields surrounded by arable fields, or you could find it near a lumpy, bumpy bit of land that you know of. They can even be found in woodland, where the land has been left to succession and woodland has developed. So keep your eyes peeled, you can't miss it once your eye is in!

All you need to do, once you've found some, is print off a survey form to take with you to fill in whilst you're there. Photographs would really be appreciated too, so if you can take a camera with you and then email or send a photo or two in with your survey form, that would be great.

Always ensure you have full permission from the landowner before you begin and follow the Countryside Code.





Where to find out more:

Website

For information on previously recorded Ridge and Furrow: www.heritagegateway.org.uk. The team at the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record has access to the RCHM survey of ridge and furrow which can be overlaid on OS maps. They also have information on all the known Deserted Medieval Villages - lincssmr@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Books

Start, David. (2014) *Lost medieval villages in the ancient county of Lincolnshire*, Deserted Medieval Villages, Heritage Lincolnshire

Hall, David. (reprinted in 2010) *Medieval Fields*, Shire Archaeology

Roberts, Brian (1982) *Village Plans*, Shire Archaeology

Gardiner, Mark and Rippon, Stephen (2007) *Medieval Landscapes*, part of the Medieval Landscapes series from Windgather Press

Muir, Richard (2007) *How to read a village*, Ebury Press



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