

FISKERTON, AN INTERNATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Fiskerton lies some five miles east of Lincoln on a back road to Bardney and Wragby that hugs the fen edge just above the floodline. The settlement lies on the northern side of the wide Witham valley with only two fields lying between the village and the present course of the river. In the period after the last glaciation the river and valley offered a route for travel and opportunities for fishing and hunting, and from the earliest times man has used the valley for access to the interior and its resources. The richness of the archaeological record in the valley, from Neolithic times onwards, has led archaeologists to see the Witham valley as second only to the Thames in archaeological importance. The river gave access to what became Fiskerton to early man so that the village and parish are particularly rich in important vestiges of the past.

Given the location of the village it is not surprising that the name Fiskerton means the settlement of the fishermen. Nor, given the importance of access by river, is it surprising that the name has Anglo Saxon and, later Scandinavian elements. It is thought that the Anglo Saxons arrived in Lincolnshire at the end of the fifth/early sixth century while the Danes had over-run our area by the end of the ninth century. The church has many Norman features and the only round tower in the county.

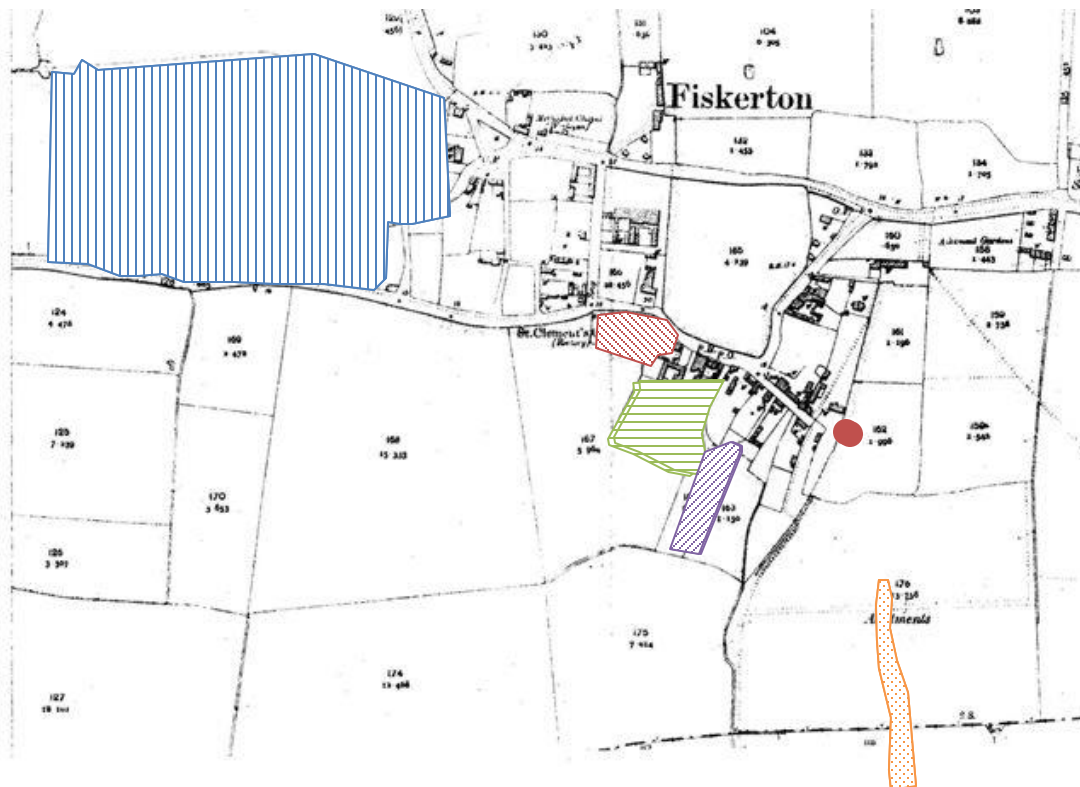
Two excavations in Fiskerton in 1981 and 2001 revealed a well-preserved Iron Age wooden causeway dating from about 457BC. The causeway would have had practical uses as a route over waterlogged ground but the richness of the associated artifacts and the fact that boats were revealed as having been pegged down, not sunk accidentally, reveal that high status, expensive goods were deposited deliberately. The excavations produced a number of associated finds, including metal work and iron swords. Some of the finds are unique, such as the first steel axe found in Britain.

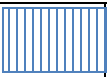
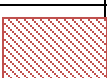




Earlier, Bronze Age, activity is evidenced by finds in the core village area as well as in other parts of the parish. Such finds in the village include Bronze Age axes and hammers like those below. Burial mounds from the period have been located near the village.



Evidence for early domestic activity, i.e. associated with a settlement, was discovered in what became the churchyard in the heart of the village when a beehive quern, certainly imported from elsewhere as they were not produced locally, was dug up in the 1970's. It provides good evidence for late Iron Age/early Roman domestic activity in the churchyard area as it is unlikely to have travelled far at the end of its useful life. This area is part of the core area of the present village.

The archaeological record continues into the Roman and later eras with evidence for farming, living and transport in the Roman period and for manorial activity, see map below for locations.



	Piper Hills Field, Romano British finds, a fragment of an Anglo Saxon funerary urn plus. Medieval toft and croft sites have been identified on part of the field
	Churchyard finds include a Bronze Age axe hammer, beehive quern
	Rear of Perrins' cottages [now demolished] and Five Mile House, Romano British finds associated with a landing area for boats
	Allotments [also known as Church Piece and earlier as Oysier Bank] a hoard of Bronze Age socketed axes found in 1890.
	Fiskerton Iron Age Causeway, approximate alignment. Many associated finds.
	Fourteenth century manor house remains: written evidence corroborates the activities here

Shape of the settlement

There were signs of very early houses and plots [tofts and crofts] on the edge of the village in the last field on the right coming from the Lincoln/Cherry Willingham road but these have mainly been ploughed out now.

The core of the present village is grouped around the area known today as the Manor paddock, an area of open space of 4.253 acres which forms the setting for the church and Manor Farm, both of which are listed buildings, Grade 1 and Grade 2 respectively. The church has many Norman features while Manor Farm was built in the eighteenth century, possibly incorporating stone from the much older manor house nearby. Other important buildings framed by the paddock are The Carpenters Arms pub and 2 former pubs, Five Mile House and The Lord Nelson The paddock is the central feature of the village and it is what gives the village its character.

The road north of the paddock is now called Chapel Road but was formerly Town Street or Back Lane, along which there were a few of farmsteads before modern development took place.

The road to the south of the paddock linked the church with the fourteenth century manor house at the bottom of what was then the street of Dornthorpe, now Nelson Road: the paddock was part of the manorial demesne or home farm, lying very close the manorial buildings at the end of the street of Dornthorpe. The houses along the stretch of High Street from the church and those to the south of Nelson Road were built on ancient plots above the flood level and with long plots behind them.

In the twentieth century development has taken place mainly to the east, along Ferry Road, until the largest scale development at Holmfield, north of Chapel Road.

Population

Population Growth

The short table below indicates the fluctuations in the population numbers in Fiskerton from 1801 to 2011.

1801	1851	1861	1891	1901	1911	1951	1961	1991	2011
270	463	524	423	386	399	977	567	955	1209

The population grew in the first half of the nineteenth century, reaching a peak in 1861 when agriculture was in a period of prosperity and when farm workers were hired in large numbers. It had dropped by 1881 and again in 1891 and was down to 386 in 1901 due to the major depression in farming and the growth in factory jobs in Lincoln paying higher wages. In the post war period there were jobs in the village at the Tanya knitware factory from 1948 to 2006 when it finally closed and at the Royal Observer Corps as well as the possibility of commuting into Lincoln. The Corps closed around 1991 and the premises were bought by Primetake who now run a business there providing some employment opportunities.

Housing development

Up to the mid nineteenth century

There were a number of farmhouses and houses of smallholders both in the village and dispersed throughout the parish. Most of the other houses were clustered loosely around the core of the village.

Mid nineteenth century to the 1930's

The number of houses in the nineteenth century increased slightly when a few more houses were crammed onto existing plots. Housing began to spread eastwards in the latter half of the century when five cottages for agricultural labourers were built by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners on Ferry Road, opposite the school. The early twentieth century saw the first few council houses built by 1925, also along Ferry Road.

1940 to 1970

The greatest change in the housing stock came in the Second World War when the airfield was built west of the village, along the Reepham Road. The 1150 airmen and women stationed in Fiskerton by 1944 were accommodated on sites in and near the village in Nissen style huts.

The acute housing shortage after the war led the then Welton Rural District Council to refurbish many of the "huts", as they were known, and by May 1948 around 179 families were housed this way. The subsequent rise in the post war population is reflected in the 1951 census figures.

This could only ever be a temporary solution and so in the 1950's the first major new building programme was underway. Welton Rural District Council completed the High Meadows council housing estate of 35 houses, on a plot north of Chapel Road in the mid 1950's and the "huts" were closed down. Some additional council housing was provided, most notably on The Crescent, which included housing for the elderly. Any former council houses that have not been sold privately are now owned by a Housing Association, ACIS.

In the latter part of the period the County Council built The Close which provided sheltered housing on Chapel Road [since redeveloped privately]. Two housing estates were built south of Ferry Road: Ferryside estate, 24 dwellings, mainly bungalows and another, larger, estate centred on Church View Crescent with a total of 84 detached bungalows.

1970's onwards

There has been some more infilling at various places in the village such as on Chapel Road plus small scale development north of Ferry Road, namely Corn Close, 6 detached bungalows, Ridings Close, 5 detached houses and bungalows and Hall Court, 5 bungalows. South of Ferry Road a few houses were built on the site of an old farm called the Holt and on the old scrap yard at the bottom of Nelson Road where excavations revealed the fourteenth century manor house complex. The largest development has been the most recent, namely the Holmfield estate north of Chapel Road where 79 detached houses were built.

Land Ownership

There has been a continuity of land ownership in the parish from before the Norman Conquest. The Lord of the Manor was the Abbot of the Abbey of Peterborough until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530's when it passed to the Dean and Chapter of the Peterborough cathedral which had previously been the Abbey church. In the nineteenth century ownership passed to a new body, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners who were superseded by the Church Commissioners who still own much of the land in the parish.