

Archaeological Walk in the Park – Wednesday 6th July 2016

Ursilla Spence (County Archaeologist) and Emily Gillott (Community Archaeologist) spent the morning in Meadow Park pointing out features which indicate what may have existed in the past. Members of East Leake History Society were able to give more detail of what the Park looked like in the past and the archaeologists gave their interpretation of aerial photographs.



It seems that most of the Park area is likely to be a natural flood plain, that is, one that was not controlled by sluice gates. On these damp planes new grass could grow earlier than elsewhere. This new growth was suitable for cattle anything up to three weeks earlier. Play Field is the clearest example of being a long term flood plain. However, it is unusual to have so many bridges in such a relatively small area as Meadow Park and would suggest it has always been a very wet area. Aerial photography suggests that the area around Kingston Brook has been channelled over a long period of time to regulate the drainage where possible.

With so much water around there is speculation that there may have been one or more water mills in East Leake. The archaeologists thought that the mill stone at the Manor Farm entrance to the Park was original Anglo-Saxon. There was speculation about the possible siting of a mill as it would need a reliable source of water and a mill pond to regulate the power for mill use. The size of the stone suggests it would have been a large mill. Every manor would have at least one mill. The picture is complicated in East Leake as the Domesday Book puts East and West Leake together and it is unclear where any of the mills were placed.

The land north of the Brook was much more fertile than that south of the Brook and there is evidence of ridge and furrow Medieval ploughing patterns in Stonebridge Field. However, as this area was not cross-ploughed it indicates that the field was not cross-ploughed after the village was enclosed in 1798. The archaeologists suggest that the site of the Manor Farm housing development may well have been a moated manorial site and that in the late 18thC Thomas Parkyns built his house on top of the western arm of the moated site in the late 18thC.



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Work done by the Kingston Brook Internal Drainage Board about six years ago has altered the course of the brook and lots of pebbles were taken out and some black poplar trees cut down. This was regrettable. The archaeologists had some ideas about how the course of the brook had changed over the centuries and will continue to change.

A close inspection of the stone and brick feature immediately downstream of Kestrel Bridge was thought to have been intended to funnel water into a narrow sluice.



This was done in order to provide water management for improved willow cultivation for the basket-making industry here. This valuable work was carried on from the early 19th century, and it is thought that the sluice, with possible bridge over, dates from the same period.



More work is being done on this and we hope to have a full report from the archaeologists in the near future.

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