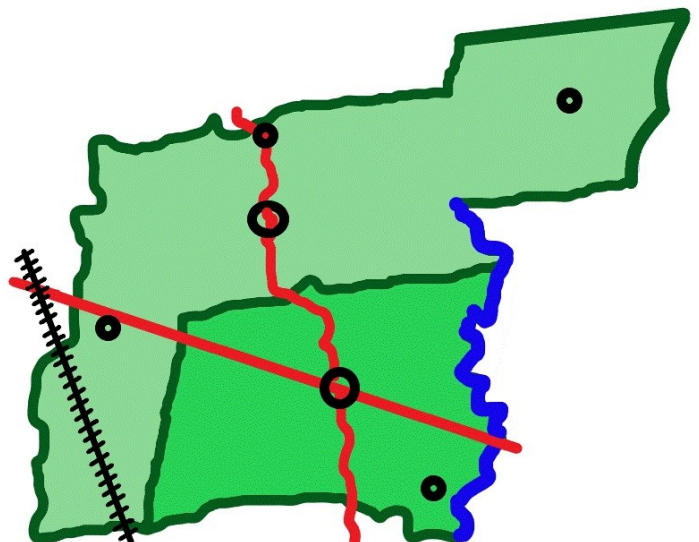


A Brief Summary of the Historic Environment of the Sturton by Stow & Stow neighbourhood Plan area

Mel Banham July 2020

1. Introduction
 2. The area in pre-Roman, Roman and Medieval periods
 3. Stow
 4. Sturton by Stow and Bransby
 5. The Village Ponds and Water Supply
 6. Drainage and flooding
 7. Effects of Enclosure, land use and changing times
 8. Milling
 9. Public Houses
 10. Local brick industry
 11. Non-conformist religion
 12. Education provision and access
 13. WW1, WW2 and immediate Post-War Development
 14. Transport development
 15. Recreation space
 16. Bransby Horses
 17. Natural and Landscape History
 18. Current times
 19. Further information
- Appendix 1 - Surviving wildlife habitats



1. Introduction

- i. This summary of the historic environment of the Sturton by Stow & Stow Neighbourhood Plan area is intended to help explain how matters of local historic significance have helped shape the character of the area as it is today. Evidence comes from various sources which include written publications, drawing from local residents' recollections, produced by the Sturton & Stow History Society.
- ii. The information is often brief, with few names of people, so that the summary is kept to a reasonable length and focuses mainly on changing physical aspects of character rather than social history. Any errors are unintentional and entirely the fault of the author.
- iii. Although there are historical and geographical connections with surrounding communities this document focuses only on the Sturton by Stow & Stow Neighbourhood Plan area.

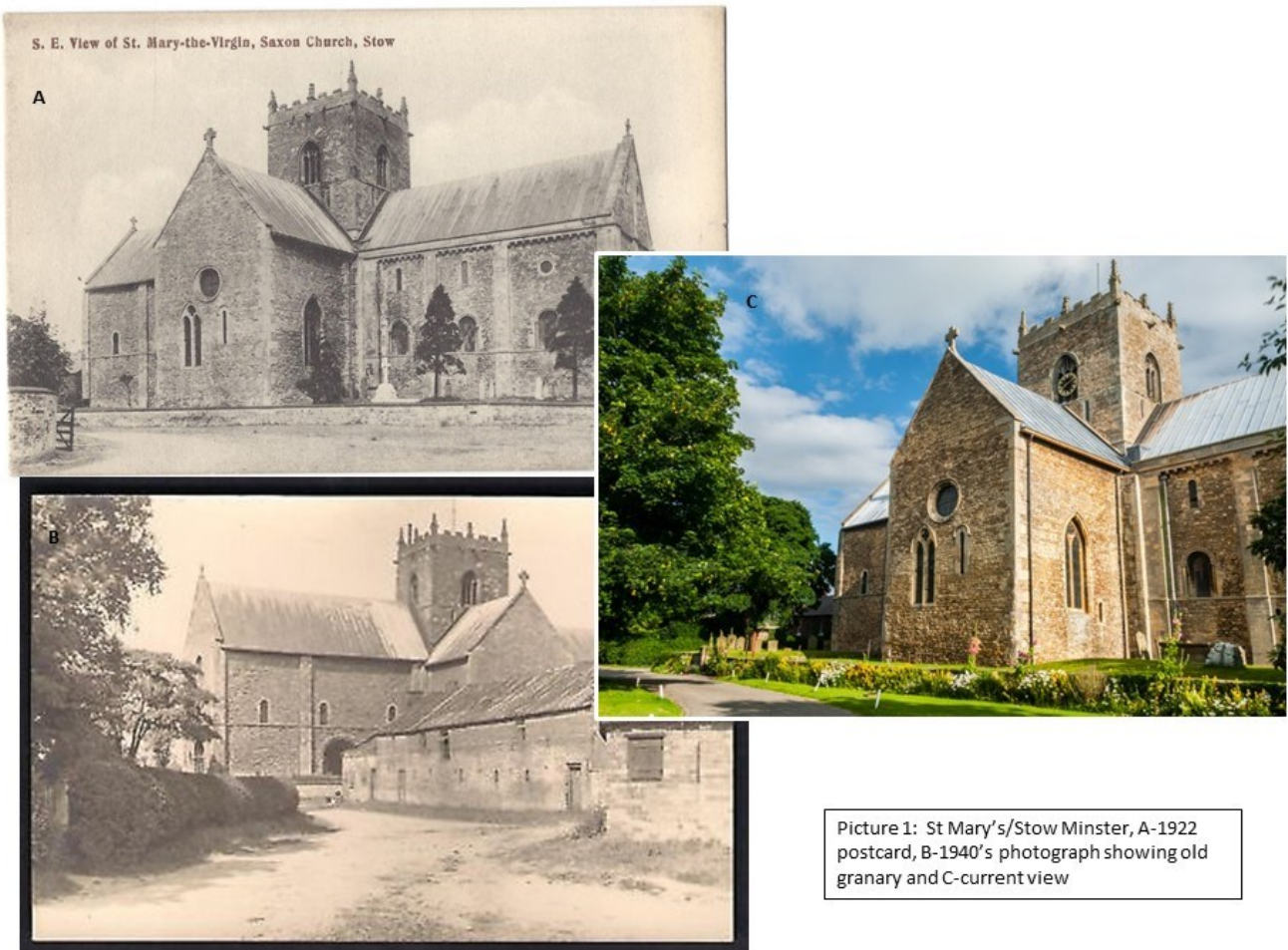
2. The area in pre-Roman, Roman and Medieval periods

- i. Recorded evidence of human activity, within 10 kms of the plan area, dates back to around 5,000 BC with Mesolithic finds such as flint tools. Within the plan area several stone axe heads, dated 4000-2351 BC, show use of the area during the Neolithic period with spear heads from both the Bronze Ages (2500 until c. 800 BC) indicating use and possible settlement.
- ii. The presence of Iron Age (1200 B.C. until 600 B.C) hut circles at Coates by Stow offers perhaps the first evidence of settlement in the area.
- iii. Recorded Roman finds across the plan area include villa sites, coins, pottery and building materials from Stow, Sturton by Stow, Coates and Bransby. The A1500 is recorded as a Roman road but, as with many routes, may pre-date that.
- iv. The presence of a ford across the River Till, comprising natural Liassic Lime bedrock, just north of Thorpe Bridge, would have been of great importance to early travellers and any settlements. It appears that this feature survived until quite recently, being destroyed when flood alleviation work was undertaken.
- v. The Domesday Book (1086) records Stow (Stou), Coates (Cotes), Normanby by Stow (Normanebi), Sturton by Stow (Stratone) and Bransby (Branzbi. Recorded Medieval finds further indicate a settled area.

3. Stow

- i. Stow is a small village and civil parish within the West Lindsey district of Lincolnshire, England. It is 11 miles (18 km) north-west of the city of Lincoln and 6 miles (10 km) south-east of Gainsborough, and lies along the B1241 road. The parish encompasses Normanby by Stow, Coates by Stow and part of Stow Park. The total resident population was 365 (and including Thorpe in the Fallows) at the 2011 census.
- ii. Stow, which itself means "Holy Place", is an ancient settlement. It dates back at least to Roman times and in the Anglo-Saxon period was known as Sidnaceaster ("ceaster" meant fortification or camp). It has a long documented history with evidence of Roman activity within the village, including the discovery of ancient coins, ruins and foundations from this period. Finds of archaeological significance include Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Late Saxon and Medieval coinage, jewellery and pottery.
- iii. One of the oldest churches in Britain, Stow Minster or St Mary's, is a Grade 1 listed building. St Mary's is amongst the most important buildings in Lincolnshire; even the country.
- iv. According to legend, St Etheldreda (c.630-679) rested at a place called 'Stow' whilst travelling. Her ash staff, planted in the ground, is said to have miraculously burst into leaf. The church of 'St Etheldreda's Stow' (later renamed Stow St Mary) was then built. This legend is celebrated in a Victorian stained glass window in the church and is referred to on the village sign.

- vi. In 870, the Danes are documented to have burnt the church down. A graffito of a Viking ship can be seen on the Chancel arch in the church; it may date from the 10th or 11th century and is the earliest known representation of a Viking ship in England.
- vii. Stow was part of the ancient Kingdom of Lindsey and belonged to the Saxon bishops of Dorchester on Thames. Bishop Aelfnoth, in 975, built a church to serve as Head Minster (or mother church) for the Lincolnshire part of his vast diocese. This building was later damaged by fire.
- viii. In the 11th century, Bishop Eadnoth and Leofric, the powerful Earl of Mercia and Lord of Coventry, rebuilt the church. Leofric was husband to, Godgifu or Godiva, more famous for her legendary exploits. Together Leofric and Godgifu gave an endowment to Stow to support rebuilding and pay for a number of canons to live on site.
- ix. The fortunes of St Mary's appear to have waxed and waned over the centuries, including depredations during the English Civil War and by the 19th century several parishioners wanted to allow the Minster to fall to ruin as it was deemed by many to be too big and expensive. The fighting spirit of the Rector, Revd. George Atkinson, helped to preserve it by appointing noted architect John Loughborough Pearson to oversee restoration work of 1846-1866 and thus started the idea of what we would now call conservation, leading to a revival in protecting Medieval buildings.



Picture 1: St Mary's/Stow Minster, A-1922 postcard, B-1940's photograph showing old granary and C-current view

- x. In the village there are also a number of buildings which have historic significance:
 - Manor Farm, on Stow Park Road, includes a Grade 2 Listed farmhouse and a moat. The farmhouse was built in c.1636, but underwent alteration in c.1870.
 - A whipping post with one iron marked 1789 (and Grade 2 listed) is now positioned on the village green
 - The Cross Keys pub, 1799
 - a lovely thatched cottage at the start of Ingham Road which, according to Deeds, dates from 1758.

- The 17th century house at 9, Ingham Road is well known and Grade 2 listed, as are School House on School Lane, Belle Vue Farm, The Wesleyan Chapel (built in 1824 and now a private house), and the late 18th century Threshing Barn and Dove Cote at Church End Farm to the west of Stow Minster
 - Gothic House on Church Road is both large and of architecture unusual to the village.
- xi. In addition to the historical significance of Stow village, Stow Parish includes a scheduled monument in the hamlet of Coates by Stow. The hamlet itself is now little more than a farm and earthworks, which are designated as a scheduled ancient monument, but was a separate parish in 1086. The site of the scheduled monument includes the manorial hall and moat and the site of a medieval village with ridge and furrow fields plus Grade I listed 12th century St Edith's Church (with roodscreen that has survived both the Reformation and the Civil War) and a Grade 2 listed monument to the Maltby family (1790).
 - xii. The hamlet of Normanby by Stow to the north of the parish has two farmhouses (on the site of medieval and 19th century dwellings), an 18th century granary, and barns and is the site of a medieval shrunken village. A deserted medieval village (DMV) is sited to the west of the B1241, bounded on the north by the Till, to the south by a track and to the west by the drain.
 - xiii. There are a significant number of 19th century (ex) farmsteads along both Ingham and Stow Park Roads. There is a possible deserted medieval village (DMV) on the north side of Stow Park Road, just before Marton Road and also one on Ingham Road (previously known as Cow Lane) near the Till.
 - xiv. In the early 1960s a significant change was made to the road layout, with attendant demolition of buildings e.g. the Smithy and Blacksmith's house. The B1241 was realigned and a narrow lane to the east of the Minster was upgraded. Subsequently, but as a direct result of the development, significant amounts of house building occurred to the east of the realignment.





Picture 3: View from tower of Stow Minster looking south circa 1910 showing road layout, former farm and other buildings - courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David Lucas Collection



Picture 4: View from south into Stow circa 1960 showing initial work on farm demolition and clearance for re-routing B1241 - courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David Lucas Collection



Picture 5: View northwards in Stow on former main road showing former buildings - courtesy of David Curtis and David Lucas

- xiv. At Stow Park, the Medieval Bishop's Palace was the official residence of St Hugh and the location for the legend of the swan (which lived on the moat that still survives; also a scheduled monument). This led to the long association with Lincoln and the swan, still seen today in, for example, the University of Lincoln's Coat of Arms and village sign of Sturton by Stow and village school logo. Together the Medieval Bishop's Palace and Deer Park form a listed scheduled monument. The former 275ha Deer Park connected to the palace site retains two notable boundaries, East Lawn and West Lawn, both of which are wide banks and ditches with mature oak trees. The earthworks protected in these two areas represent the only surviving parts of a formerly extensive landscape feature now viewed as modern farmland, although the ground beneath is included.

4. Sturton by Stow and Bransby

- i. Whilst an ancient settlement, Sturton by Stow is not an ancient parish. The parish we know today was formed in 1866 out of a township, forming part of Stow parish. The parish encompasses Bransby (Bransby cum Sturton), Westwoods and Gallows Dale. The total resident population was 1,369 at the 2011 census.
- ii. The village is situated on the north-south B1241 and east-west A1500 Tillbridge Lane, a Roman road. Sturton by Stow falls within the ecclesiastical parish of Stow, consequently the parish church of Sturton is Stow Minster. Until recently the Church of England maintained a Mission Church in Sturton by Stow, a brick building erected in 1879, dedicated to St Hugh and designed by John Loughborough Pearson. Both the church and the gateway are Grade 2 listed.
- iii. 'Sturton' has held various names - Stratone, Straton, Streeton and Stretton, then in recent centuries, Sturton-in-the-Street, from its location on the Roman Road (Tillbridge Lane). After the coming of the railways in the 19th century, it became Sturton by Stow.

iv. In the village there are also a number of buildings with historic significance:

- Manor Farm House and part of No 1 White House Farm Cottages on Fleets Lane, are remaining parts of a larger 16th Century site. Several farm buildings were demolished and land used in the 1970s to create Manor Farm Drive
- The Old Hall, part of which dates to 17th century and encompassed land now occupied by The Close, the Recreation Ground and other dwellings
- The Old School Room (1840)
- The Plough pub (1856)
- The Old Rectory
- The 17th century house building now housing The Tastery, former Board School House (1878) on School Lane (now a private house), Home Farm House and Rome Farm in Bransby, various former chapels including the Wesleyan Chapel (1805) on Tillbridge Road (now a private house), the late 18th Century granary on Tillbridge Road (now a terrace of private houses) and Subscription Mill 1815 (now a private house),

v. Bransby hamlet has a number of traditional brick and tile buildings, almost certainly made from local materials, together with two listed buildings. The origins of Bransby are unclear as it appears that its current form developed after the Enclosures.

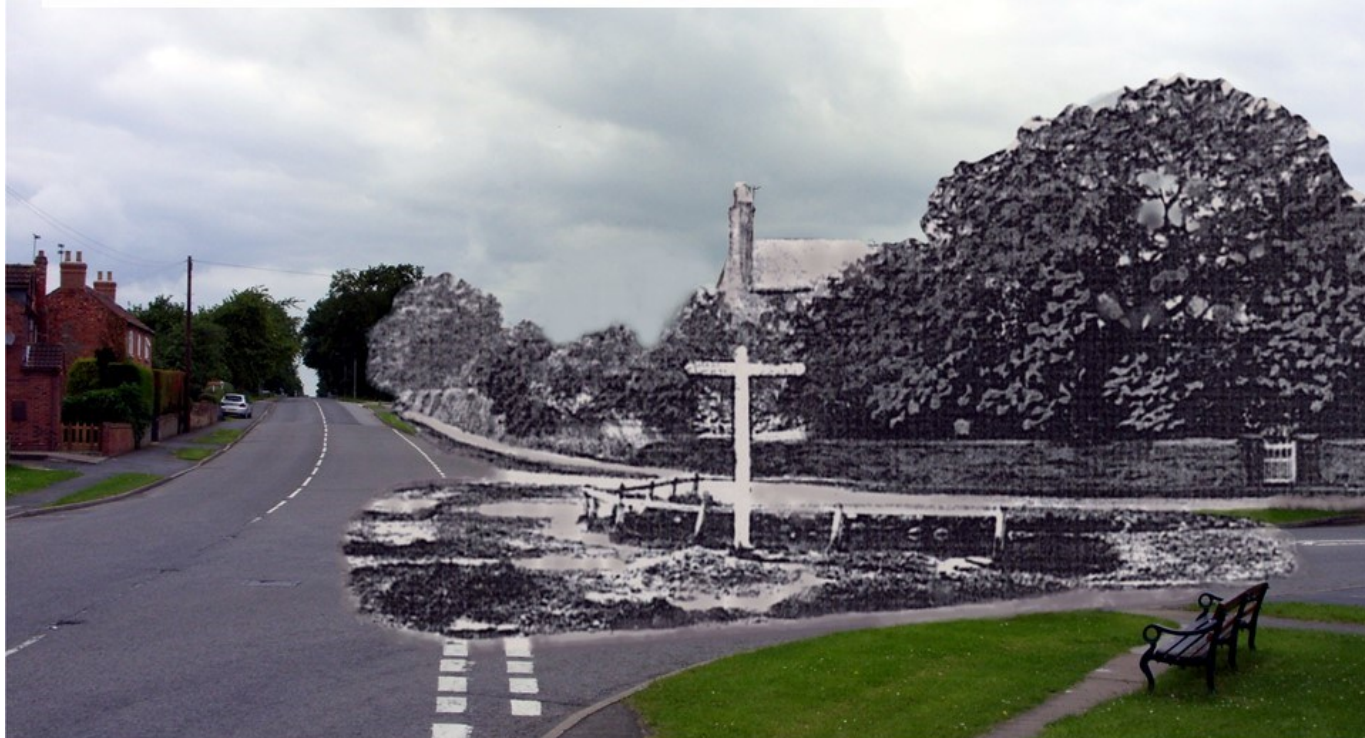
5. The Village Ponds and Water Supply

i. Sturton by Stow had a village pond, possibly spring fed, until the 1950s. It appears that the pond was not only a source of water for stock but also for some villagers until mains water was installed in the late 1940s. The pond was situated at the junction of the A1500 and B1241 and explains the unusually wide T-junction.



Picture 6: An early postcard of Sturton by Stow circa 1900 showing road layout, former pond and other buildings - courtesy of David Lucas

Picture 7: View west from Sturton by Stow village centre showing siting of old village pond - courtesy of David Curtis and David Lucas



Picture 8: The old village pond in Sturton by Stow being filled in in c1950 - courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David Lucas Collection

- ii. Evidenced by the 1888 Ordnance Survey map and remains above ground, many properties in the plan area had wells. Subterranean water sources do not appear to be generally recorded but clearly were a factor in the built environment until the late 1940s and installation of mains water supply.
- iii. In Bransby, a pond in a private garden thought possibly to be called Bonny Well, is spring fed and may have gained its name as it is reputed to have never dried out. Bonny Well may have served the inhabitants of Bransby until mains water was installed.
- iv. Mains water supply, drainage and sewerage were installed around 1950. This infrastructure development had a major effect on the character of the area as it enabled property development for whatever use wherever mains supply could reach. Together with the growth in motorised transport, it also led to the filling in of the Sturton by Stow village pond in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

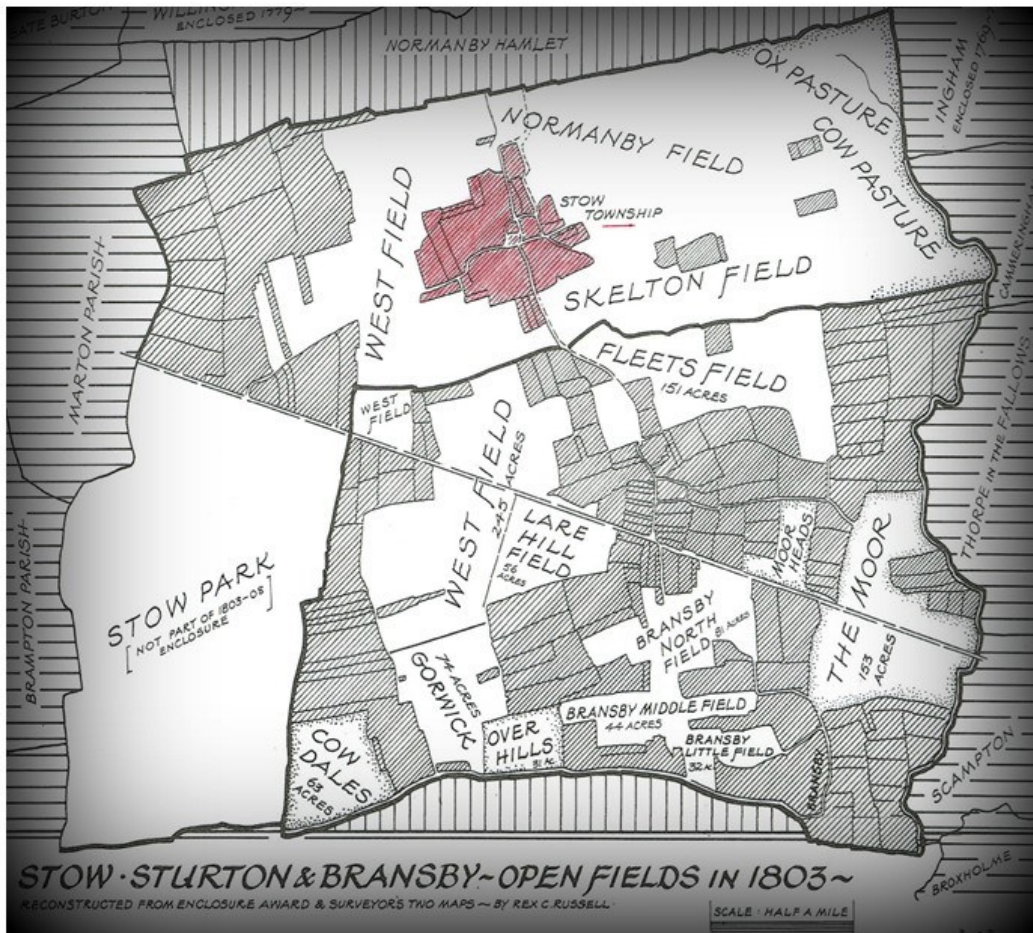


- ii. The River Till, ultimately a tributary of the River Witham, marks the eastern boundary of the plan area. Much of the channel is managed by the Environment Agency as it is classified as a main river. The river is enclosed by earth embankments on both sides of the channel to increase its capacity and to prevent flood water from inundating the surrounding land. Most of the embanking was undertaken by the Lincoln West (North District) Drainage Board (established 1804) and was in place by 1886, when the first Ordnance Survey maps of the area were published, then extended during the 20th century.
- iii. Following flooding of the High Street and properties in Sturton by Stow during 2007 the Internal Drainage Board installed a flood relief dyke to the immediate east and north of the village in order to combat flooding and hold water for slow release into the River Till. This appears to have been largely successful with more recent episodes of flooding due to lack of maintenance of piped drains under the High Street.

7. Effects of Enclosure, land use and changing times

- i. Following ownership of the plan area under the manorial system, the successive Inclosure or Enclosure Acts between 1773 and 1808, influenced both the landscape and nature of settlements in the area. By the 19th century according to the Poor Law Commission both Stow and Sturton by Stow were open villages i.e. not owned by any single landowner. Ownership of land by more people, boundary and drainage development, development of small farms and trades premises changed the nature of the two main centres of Stow and Sturton by Stow. Maps 1, 2 and 3 overleaf show the changes in land holding, boundaries and the built footprint between 1803, 1888 and recent times.
- ii. Several families arrived with a Settlement Certificate in the late 18th century and when remaining fields were enclosed by 1808 about 50% of the land was already enclosed.
- iii. Sturton by Stow is recorded as having a pinfold (near Kiftsgate) for holding stray stock. This is recorded only in an unpublished memory and appears to have been derelict by the late 1800s.
- iv. The development of local brickworks meant that by the early 19th century even smallholders of very modest means were buying and using clay tiles and drainage pipes, thus improving productivity and aiding economic development.
- v. As with many rural areas, by the mid 19th Century an increasingly affluent community was largely self-sufficient. Many trades were established, using and re-using buildings and leaving traces behind which influenced existing village layout, roads and building design e.g. Middleton's Boot & Shoe Maker on High Street, Sturton by Stow. The original 1850 building still exists complete with stone plaque but after conversion it has been a private house for many years.
- vi. Most dwellings in the area had substantial gardens or were small holdings so that vegetables and home grown meat was produced. The layout and nature of many older buildings reflect this way of life.
- vii. A feature of the 1808 Enclosure Act was the provision of public allotments, to aid the poor, by enabling them to grow fresh garden produce. In Sturton by Stow it is thought that at least two sets of allotments existed. One is understood to have been at the eastern end of the village where Jubilee Community Wood has now been created. The other was definitely on the site of the play park to the rear of the Village Hall. In Stow it seems likely that the Parish Fields, again at the eastern end of the village and now managed as a nature reserve, may have been allotments.
- viii. Although the area was settled for many hundreds of years, the effects of the Enclosures on land ownership and the local economy helped develop the character of the built environment. Through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries trades in both communities included the following, often with more than one supplier:

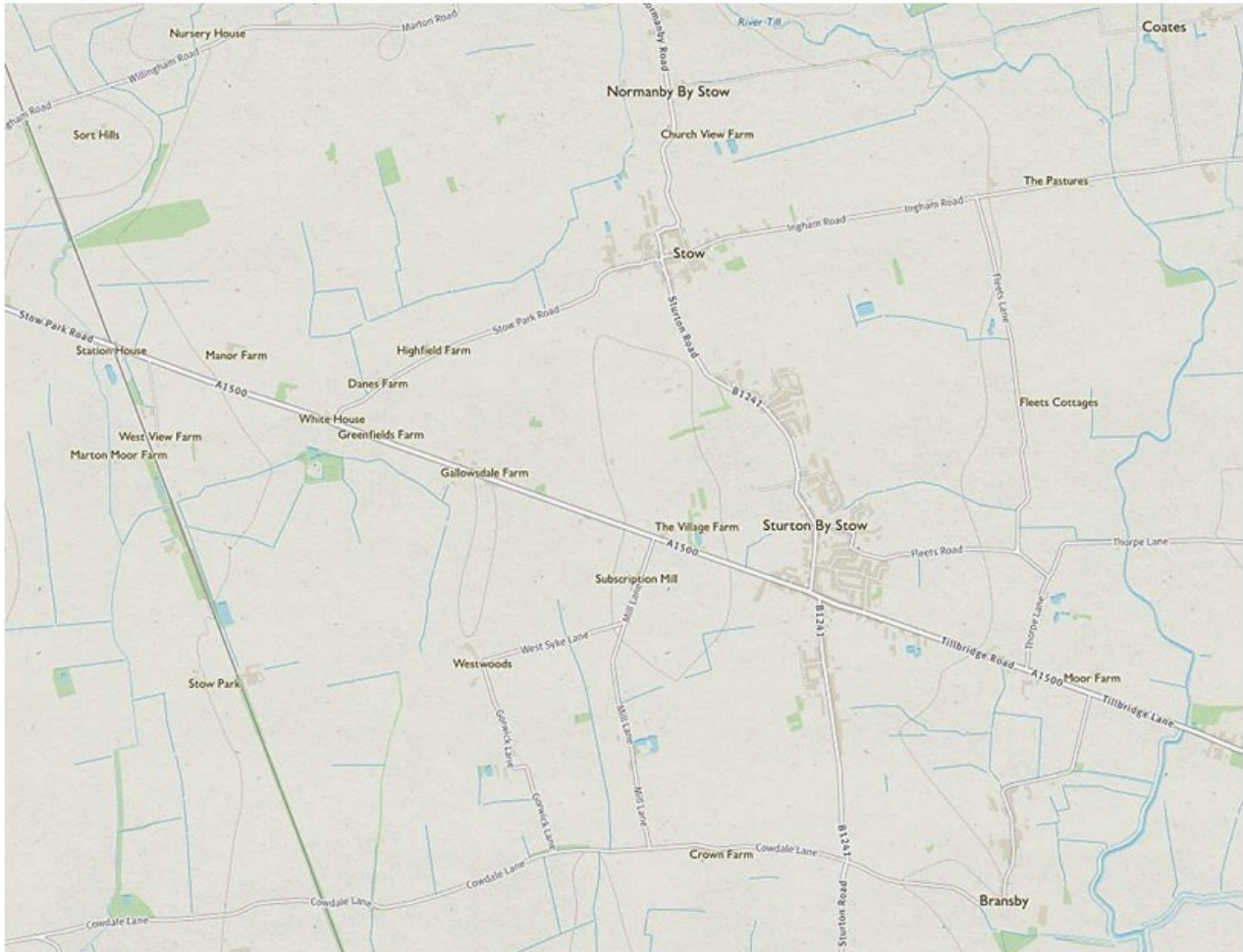
Blacksmith	Tinsmith	Saddler
Boot and shoemaker (Cordwainer)	Boot, shoe and leather repairer (Cobbler)	Maltster
Publican/Beerhouse keeper	Grocer	Weaver
Wheelwright	Miller	Carrier
Baker	Butcher	Agricultural engineer
Wood turner and joiner	Farrier (horse and cow)	Carpenter/glazier
Builder/plumber/electrician	Tailor/Seamstress	Undertaker
Hairdresser	Agricultural/ horticultural merchant	Druggist
Post Office	Motor engineer	Newsagent



Map 1: Extract from reconstruction of 1803 maps showing open field boundaries



Map 2: Extract from Ordnance Survey 1888 map showing field boundary detail after Enclosure – courtesy of ARCHI UK



Map 3: Extract from recent Ordnance Survey map indicating built footprint compared to 1888 map – OS Copyright 100053419

8. Milling

- i. Various types of grain have always been a main agricultural product in the area, leading to the need for storage and milling. 18th Century granaries are recorded in both Stow (demolished) and Sturton by Stow (now a terrace of cottages).
- ii. The Domesday Book records a mill in Stow but not its whereabouts. A smock mill existed on what is now the boundary of Sturton by Stow and Stow parishes. This mill was known as Stow Mill and was in existence in 1815, according to a map and sales information. It is thought that it was possibly destroyed by fire.
- iii. A co-operative venture among farmers named Subscription Mill, to the west of Sturton by Stow, was built between 1801 and 1805, operating until the mid-1950s when the cap and sails were taken to Lincoln for use restoring Ellis Mill. The tower of Subscription Mill and its house remain, although the dwelling has been significantly modernised.
- iv. There appear to have been no other kind of mill e.g. oil or bone mills recorded in the Plan area.

9. Public Houses

- i. In common with other rural communities, public houses were a vital part of social life. The following table records the inns and pubs, known dates of existence and current situation:

Cross Keys Hotel, Stow	1799	Remains in business as pub and restaurant with no accommodation
Red Lion Inn, Sturton by Stow	1799	Developed from a previous building on the site. Demolished and replaced by Co-operative store in 2019
The Plough, Sturton by Stow	1856	Remains in business
The Railway Inn, Stow Park	1861	Although situated just outside the plan area the Inn was significant to the local economy. Now a private dwelling
The White Hart, Sturton by Stow	1869	Appears in photographs up to the 1940s. Now a private dwelling



Picture 10: Subscription Mill in operation circa 1940
- courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David_Lucas_Collection

10. Local brick industry

- i. Existing buildings and written evidence show that bricks were being manufactured in and around Sturton by Stow in the early 19th century. The history of this industry remains unclear but is survived by one disused pit to the east and one now used as a fishing pond and holiday accommodation to the west of Sturton by Stow.



Picture 11: One of several Sturton by Stow brickyards in operation circa 1820 - courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David Lucas Collection

11. Non-conformist religion

i. The area was not immune to the widespread general reaction to church doctrine in the 18th century. In 1771 there was a Dissenters’ meeting in Sturton by Stow. Following this meeting it is thought that the first Methodist Society in Lincolnshire was formed. John Wesley is reputed to have preached and stayed in 1779. Together with a Quaker burial ground, the following buildings chart the rise and fall of this aspect of religion and the remaining buildings form part of the fabric and character of the built area:

Sturton by Stow Wesleyan Chapel (1806) on Tillbridge Road now a private house	Sturton by Stow Primitive Chapel (1850) on Fleets Road now demolished
Stow Wesleyan Chapel (1824) now a private house	Sturton by Stow Friends Meeting House (1861) on High Street now a private house
Bransby Primitive Chapel (1836) now a private house	Sturton by Stow Methodist Chapel (1964) now closed with planning permission for a private house

ii. An increase in general literacy and numeracy during the early part of the 19th century is credited largely to education provided by non-conformist groups. Sunday schools offered a mix of education and moral guidance, paving the way for the Education Act 1870 which formalised and standardised education provision offering access for all children.

12. Education provision and access

- i. Both villages had schools evidenced by School Lanes and following the Education Act 1870 schools were built in both Stow and Sturton by Stow to replace the voluntary schools already present. A surviving example of a school built prior to the Act is the Old School Room on Tillbridge Lane, also built of donated local brick and materials in 1840.
- ii. Now a private house, Stow's school was built in the late 18th century and closed as a school in 1893. Schooling in Stow prior to the 18th Century school was in the church and court house (now demolished).
- iii. Part of the reason for the closure of these schools was the opening of a Board School in Sturton by Stow in 1878, together with an adjoining School House. This was built by local benefactors using clay bricks made in the village by a local brick and tile maker.
- iv. The Board School building in Sturton by Stow became redundant following conversion of the former secondary modern school in 1990. Both the school building and house were sold and now form separate dwellings.
- v. The secondary modern school was opened in 1961, closing in the late 1980s. The building was subsequently reopened as Sturton by Stow Primary School in the early 1990s and still fulfils that function. Part of the land occupied by the school was sold for housing development in the mid-1990s, together with part of the land occupied by the former Free School and paddock known as Ashfield.

13. WW1, WW2 and immediate Post-War Development

- i. The intervening 20 years between the end of WW1 and outbreak of WW2 saw little change in the built footprint of the area. Individual properties were built and existing properties were modified.
- ii. The years following WW2 saw the development of council houses in the area, together with private housing development on former agricultural land, particularly from the 1950s until the 1980s. In Sturton by Stow the building of some 175 bungalows, between 1970 and 1985, on land once belonging to the Old Hall has had a major infill effect on the village centre.



View northwards on B1241 in Sturton by Stow showing the Old Hall on the eastern side with farm buildings and gate standing where the entrance to The Close now exists—courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David Lucas Collection



- ii. Part of the Government Pipelines and Storage System (GPSS) runs on a West to East axis through the parishes of Stow & Sturton -by-Stow. Running underground from a depot at Stow Park to RAF Scampton, the pipeline runs a distance of some 7 miles and was installed in 1941. In the most part the pipeline crosses under arable land but in Sturton-by Stow the pipeline runs beneath the road through The Glebe housing estate and contributed to the design of that estate.
- iii. In 2015, the GPSS was sold and parts of the pipeline were decommissioned or mothballed. With the closure of RAF Scampton due in 2021, the future of this part of the pipeline is unknown but seems unlikely to influence any future development.

14. Transport development

- i. The development of the railway system in the 1830s, together with Stow Park station, affected the economic development and thus the character of the area. Together with access to goods brought in such as coal and steel, the railway offered a new cost effective route for sending local goods, such as wool and produce much further afield than was previously, possibly accessing the canal system at Saxilby.
- ii. Linked to the railways, but also preceding, were the carriers of both goods and passengers during the 19th and 20th Centuries. Horse drawn carriers were succeeded by motor vehicles which affected development of buildings and roads – stables were replaced by warehousing and roads were modified to cope with vehicles.
- iii. An example of this was the development of J Bradshaw & Sons haulage firm. Originating in 1885 as an agricultural contractor, based in Bransby, the business moved to Sturton by Stow in 1894. By 1914 steam threshing and ploughing engines were being used and in the 1920s combustion engines were replacing steam driven waggons with continued developments up to present times. By 2014 some 70,000 sq ft of warehousing and a fleet of vehicles occupied a site near the village centre of Sturton by Stow which still is still in operation.



Picture 14: Goods and passenger transport circa 1830 - courtesy of David Curtis and David Lucas



Picture 15: View of the Village Stores in Sturton by Stow showing the former shop frontage, petrol pump and some employees- courtesy of David Lucas

- iv. The 1950s saw the development of Williams Coaches, with the subsequent development of a motor engineering business in Stow which still occupies premises in the village centre. The transport service provided regular access to Lincoln and Gainsborough, together with various day trips and Sunday School outings.
- v. Allied to the development of motor vehicles were successive enterprises trading in bicycles, motorcycles, cars and vans. One cycle and motorcycle business was in Sturton by Stow village centre but was demolished and replaced by a dwelling. A garage with petrol sales opened in 1925 on Saxilby Road, closing in the 1970s. Used afterwards as offices and storage for a construction company, it is now a private house. On Tillbridge Road a garage with petrol sales opened in 1962, with a motor workshop and car showroom. Although that business closed in the mid-1990s, the building continues as the base for an automotive parts business, although outline planning permission exists for house building on this site.



Picture 16: View of the Wiles' bicycle and motorcycle shop in Sturton by Stow showing the former village centre building, now demolished - courtesy of David Lucas

ssHs - David Lucas Collection



Picture 17: View of former garage on A1500 in Sturton by Stow showing continued use but not as a garage - with courtesy of David Lucas

15. Recreation space

- i. Sports and recreation were an important part of rural life with football and cricket teams remembered by team photographs, etc. Both the cricket and football pitches at Stow are now farmland, while the original pitches in Sturton by Stow are now occupied by housing.
- ii. In the late 1970s the land occupied by Sturton by Stow Recreation Ground was gifted to the Parish Council with the proviso that it should be used for recreation in perpetuity. In the mid-1970s the playpark to the rear of Sturton by Stow village hall was developed. A similar playpark exists in Stow. Subsequently two further play areas have been developed in Sturton by Stow, both linked to housing development in the 1990s and 2000s.
- iii. In 1920 a Village Institute was constructed in Sturton by Stow, re-using two ex-WW1 wooden huts to form one building raised on staddle stones. The 'Ut, as it was affectionately known, was replaced by the existing Village Hall in 1971.



The Village Institute 1921



1970: The Village Institute being pulled down to make way for the new Village Hall

There it was gone and replaced with the existing Village hall — courtesy of David Lucas

- iv. Informal recreation by walking in the area was a common form of exercise until the 1950s/60s. The existing network of public rights of way (PROWs) in the area form part of a more extensive previous network. Reasons for disappearance are many: fallen out of use, diverted, neglected or built on are some. The most recent update of the Lincolnshire Definitive Footpath map saw several PROWs removed. The further loss of PROWs may have an impact on the future of the area in terms of requirement for 'green recreation' and healthy communities.
- v. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a provision for a cut-off date of 1 January 2026 for the recording of historic rights of way. This was seen as an opportunity to bring more certainty for the public and landowners alike as to what and where the recorded Public Rights of Way are. The cut-off date may well have the effect of extinguishing certain routes not recorded on the Definitive Map by the deadline.

16. Bransby Horses

- i. Founded in 1968, Bransby Horses is one of the UK's largest equine welfare charities and owns some 660 acres of grazing land and various buildings in Bransby. The visitor centre and equine paddocks at Bransby is a recognised tourist attraction with some 60,000 visits per year thus adding associated traffic and environmental issues. One significant building, the old barn at Home Farm, was restored and converted for use as a visitor centre, café and offices in 1999. Bransby Horses employs some 120 staff and offers local volunteering opportunities.
- ii. A significant amount of tree and hedge planting has been undertaken by the charity, together with implementation of a land management plan which, in addition to improving equine welfare and visitor experience, includes work to benefit wildlife.



Bransby Horses Visitor Centre showing sympathetic renovation of late Georgian farm buildings —courtesy of Bransby Horses

17. Natural and Landscape History

- i. There appears to be no documented records of the ecology or natural history of the area. In keeping with much of lowland UK the area has lost significant amounts of wildlife habitat and wildlife through well documented activities associated with modern life. There are no designated wildlife sites in the area e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI's), and Local Nature Reserves (LNR's).
- ii. The area has a range of animal life, including a number of protected species and species of conservation concern. However most occur in low numbers and in many instances are rare and declining. There simply isn't enough high quality habitat available and managed for them. Appendix 1 summarises remaining wildlife habitat in the area.
- iii. Protected mammals are either absent or uncommon. Many endangered 'red listed' bird species have declined dramatically nationally and are now probably absent from our area. Several 'amber listed' species are present but probably in much lower numbers than ever before. One exception appears to the Barn Owl which, supported by several nest boxes in the area, appears to be succeeding. This must evidence the presence of enough small mammals to support population growth. Protected amphibians are present but subject to the effects of land management practice. Reptiles are represented probably only by the grass snake. Freshwater fish and molluscs occur mainly in the River Till. Breeding invertebrates are virtually absent due to lack of suitable habitat.
- iv. Stow Parish Council own a small area named Parish Field, donated to the parish some 50 years ago and after a series of rentals is now managed as a nature reserve by the current tenant. Sturton by Stow Parish Council are responsible for Jubilee Wood, a community woodland of some 4 acres, planted on former allotments on the eastern boundary of the parish.
- v. Medieval settlements in the plan area are associated with ridge and furrow field patterns at a number of locations such as to the south, east and west of Sturton by Stow, Coates and to the south, east and north of Stow. The pattern appears as parallel ridges (with furrows in between) created by oxen drawn plough. These fields would have been throughout the area and around each of the medieval settlements.
- vi. Since the 1960s Stow has lost approximately 84% and Sturton by Stow some 46% of ridge and furrow to farming and built development. What remains is of little wildlife value due to modern non-organic management but are important remnants of our heritage and worthy of conserving as 'non-designated heritage assets'.
- vii. Fragmentary presence of three ancient woodland indicator species (Wood Anemone – *Anemone nemorosa*, Dog's Mercury – *Mercurialis perennis* and Goldilocks Buttercup – *Ranunculus auricomus*) on certain road verges and possibly private land, provides the faintest of shadows of extensive former woodland cover. The East and West Lawns of the old medieval Stow Deer Park form the only remaining wooded fragments of the former ancient woodland. Hence, the area known as Westwoods, which lies adjacent to Stow Park, may have its name for good reason.
- viii. Likewise there are no 'unimproved' grasslands, although the presence of cowslips in several road verges and evidence of much more extensive ridge and furrow cultivation under meadow cover implies that this existed. Sturton by Stow parish records of 1903 indicate that between certain dates 11 road verges were rented out for grazing and hay. This was common practice which appears to have ceased by the 1990s with a probable bio-diversity decline due to enrichment.
- ix. A small area of about one acre of unimproved probable former meadow exists as the Sturton by Stow village cemetery owned and managed by the Parochial Church Council.

Recent hedge planting and tree planting to help create a 'new natural history' will help but those habitats which remain are to be valued for their wildlife value and natural history.

18. Current times

- i. Whereas the older Stow community is some three times the geographical area of that of Sturton By Stow, the latter's development overtook the older village and Sturton by Stow now has almost four times the population of Stow.
- ii. The parishes of Stow and Sturton by Stow are today a mixture of old and modern construction with Stow retaining some older stone built housing, with one remaining thatched roofed property. In Sturton by Stow significant development appears to have occurred since the late 1940s. This is evidenced by Ordnance Survey maps produced during this time.
- iii. Several small businesses are based in the plan area, together with many home based enterprises. Part of land initially designated for enterprise development in Sturton by Stow has subsequently seen housing built on it. This reflects the market pressure for housing in the area. Recent housing development in Stow has incorporated artisan workspace. The area currently has no new designated land for enterprise development.
- iv. Both communities have public houses, The Cross Keys (Stow) and The Plough (Sturton by Stow). Services include a visiting Post Office in St Mary's Church (Stow) and the Old School Room (Sturton by Stow), two grocery shops in Sturton by Stow, a cycle shop and a motor engineer in Stow, a village hall and a recreation ground in Sturton by Stow. Both villages have playparks. A bus services links both communities to Lincoln, Gainsborough and beyond.

19. Further information

- i. The Sturton & Stow History Society, a very active history society, has documented much of the history of both parishes together with an archive of information and an active website at www.sshs.btck.co.uk
- ii. More information about Stow Minster, St Mary's Church can be found at www.stowminster.co.ukReferences
- iii. Publications
 - Sturton by Stow Memories, Wendy Hedderick et al, 2000
 - Memories of Stow, Wendy Hedderick & Chris Turner, 2002
 - Memories of Local Business Life in Sturton by Stow, Sharron Banham & David Curtis, 2014
 - The Fiery Proprietary of Sturton by Stow, Linda Crust, 1989
 - Brightly Gleams Our Banner, Methodism at Sturton by Stow 1771-1987, Dennis Gilbert, 1987
 - Stow Wars, Linda Crust, original research during 1980s, revised and reprinted 2015
 - History of Sturton, F . W Gelder, unpublished but typed manuscript, date assumed 1960
 - Shadow Woods: a search for lost landscapes, Ian D. Rotherham, 2018
- iv. Websites
 - www.archiuk.com
 - https://historicengland.org.uk
 - www.heritagegateway.org.uk
 - www.wikipedia.org

Appendix 1

Surviving wildlife habitats, which help create wildlife corridors, in the Plan area include the following:

- Hedgerows – the area still has a good range of hedges including well managed, over managed and unmanaged which continue to provide good habitat for nesting birds;
- Hedgerow trees (standards) – Sadly lacking across most of the area but with some excellent exceptions in places. However many of our standards are Ash which are currently suffering from disease called Ash die-back which may result in large losses.
- Uncultivated field margins – provide important habitat for small mammals which in turn are food for barn owls and kestrels.
- Wet ditches – although designed to drain land which often means they only hold water for brief periods of time some may support wildlife with food and cover.
- Pasture/meadows – a small number are grazed by horses, cattle and sheep but probably now with little diversity of flowers, grasses and invertebrates.
- Roadside verges – the great majority are cut either too frequently or not enough and when cut the clippings are left to decay in situ which greatly reduces their value for wildlife. However, some are of great wildlife value although not protected in any way.
- Woodlands – occur as a handful of small plantations of limited value for wildlife. However when linked to scrub and ponds they can provide important habitat for a range of common species.
- Ponds – are found across our area either in field corners or in large gardens. Some will support aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and other wildlife.
- Rivers – the only significant water course in the area is the River Till. Although significantly modified by deepening with flood banks on both sides for most of its length and poor water quality due to high phosphates levels, it does support wildlife and act as an important wildlife corridor.
- Green Lanes and tracks—bounded by hedges, mature trees, unmanaged verges and often ditches these linear features provide a useful habitat and form part of the wildlife corridor through the area.
- Gardens—many properties in the area have larger than average gardens, often with remnant orchards and backing onto hedgerows, watercourses and/or open land. The presence of food and living sites, coupled with dwelling owner efforts to support wildlife make these areas an important part of the wildlife corridor through and around the Plan area.