

SHEARBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

FIELDS WITH EVIDENCE OF RIDGE AND FURROW

The ridge and furrow feature on some fields usually marks the remains of the medieval strip system of farming, where fields were once under the plough.

In medieval England each village was surrounded by four unfenced open fields which were farmed in strips. Every village household had strips in each field. Each strip measured eleven yards by one furlong, and as no one was awarded strips lying together, everyone got a mixture of fertile and less fertile soil.

These strips were known as yardlands.

In Shearsby the four open fields were named, **Rowlow** field, **Thorpehill** field, **Beanhill** field and **Wheathill** field, and you will recognise these names as farms in the village today.

In 1773 the Enclosure Act was organised and in 1774 it came into force, so that the open field system was done away with and farmers and villagers were awarded tracts of land which had to be hedged. In 1994 Mavis Jeffery transcribed the Enclosure Document for Shearsby and copies are available. In 1996 John Burton, Mavis Jeffery and several village children took part in the County Hedge Hunt and they concluded that Shearsby has several ancient hedges, at least dating from 1774.

Present day deep ploughing of arable land easily erases the characteristic ridge and furrow pattern of the medieval system, but Shearsby still has fields which have remained as pasture and clearly show the historic strips. These fields and the ancient hedges are shown on the accompanying map.