

# ROADS TO THE PAST

## The Archaeology and History of Thornton-le-Street



Thornton-le-Street nestles on the eastern edge of the Vale of Mowbray in a landscape that has been settled for millennia. The modern village is surrounded by the remains of medieval houses and fields, many showing as lumps and bumps in the ground, known as 'earthworks'. Between 2017 and 2019, a community archaeology and history project investigated the past of this fascinating shrunken medieval village.



The medieval vaillagers lived in timber-and-thatch houses with stone foundations. The narrow property boundaries can still be seen as ditches and banks today. The pottery we found suggests that the population declined around the late 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, though the village was not completely deserted like some other English rural settlements.



St Leonard's Church is at least 800 years old with evidence of additions over the centuries. Re-roofed and renovated thanks to National Lottery support, inside a locally designed stained glass Community Window, contrasts with Kempe's 1894 East Window.

A large earth bank or 'causeway' runs down the middle of the medieval village. It was thought it might be an earlier Roman road, known to exist somewhere in the area but never found. Excavations showed that while it was not of Roman origin, it was the main road through the medieval village for many centuries.



Also suspected as the earlier Roman road, an unusual bank across the field was shown to be part of the medieval land boundaries. A large amount of pottery was found, mainly dating to between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.



The earthwork remains of the medieval village are protected as a Scheduled Monument. Any disturbance to the ground without written Scheduled Monument Consent is illegal. Many of the archaeological remains are visible but on private land—please keep to the public footpath.

A large amount of metalworking waste was found near the road. Possibly dating to after the medieval village had shrunk in size, this shows that people were smelting and working metal on the edge of the settlement.

