Nottinghamshire
County Council
Environment

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

BLYTH

Prepared
for

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Extensive Urban Survey Programme

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Gill Stroud, 2001

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Assessment

This assessment has been produced through the Extensive Urban Survey Programme, an English Heritage funded initiative to assist local planning authorities with the conservation of their urban archaeological resource. Blyth is one of 18 small towns in Nottinghamshire selected for such assessment.

The assessment is a desk-based survey, the scope of which includes both above and below ground archaeological remains of all periods, using information from the County Sites and Monuments Record, local histories, early maps and plan form analysis, with the results presented as a series of maps generated by GIS. It provides a foundation for the development of an archaeological management strategy that could be adopted by the local planning authority as supplementary planning guidance.

1.2 Overview of the town

Blyth lies in the north-west of Nottinghamshire, six miles north-east of Worksop and only a few miles south of the Yorkshire border. It stands at the crossroads of two important regional routes, the A 634 Sheffield/ Retford road and the A614/B6045 Worksop/Bawtry road, having been by-passed by the A1 since 1960.

Blyth was once one of the most important small towns in the county. It was chosen by Roger de Busli to be the site of a priory, founded by him sometime between 1086 and 1088 and endowed with various lands and churches, a market and fairs, and extensive toll and passage rights. More is known of this priory than of many other small monastic houses, including facets such as its relationship with the mother house of Rouen, as seen through correspondence, and its internal organisation as seen through visitation reports, as well as the considerable details of its lands and tenants as recorded in the Cartulary. A small but flourishing settlement grew up outside the gates of the priory, benefiting from its position on a major medieval road to the north and from the success of its markets and fairs. By the early 16th century, if not well before, the settlement had developed certain urban characteristics, particularly in terms of its organisation. Despite this, it failed to continue to develop, and was probably in decline by the 17th century.

Now an attractive village, essentially agricultural in character, it retains its market place as a village green and a good stock of standing buildings of different ages. The church, all that remains of the priory, contains an important early wall painting depicting the Last Judgement.

2. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

Blyth stands on a slightly elevated peninsula of land, with the river Ryton looping around it to the west, north and east. The church stands on raised ground at the northern end of the historic core of the village, at 20m AOD, the ground sloping away gently on all sides. To the north, it runs down to the bridge over the Ryton at 12.5m AOD, before rising up on the opposite side to Nornay. To the south, High Street is at about 16m AOD, rising again further south to *c.* 31m at Blyth Spital.

The solid geology underlying the village is the Nottingham Castle Formation (previously the Bunter Pebble Beds) of the Sherwood Sandstone Group. There are deposits of alluvium in the river valleys.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

Blyth was in Bassetlaw wapentake at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086. It now lies within the administrative area controlled by Bassetlaw District Council.

4. SOURCES

4.1 Primary sources

The main primary document relating to Blyth is the Cartulary, reported by Timson (1973) as being in the British Museum at that time. He also lists other primary documents. These include the 'Saunderson Roll', a medieval roll which apparently included abstracts of 219 documents relating to Blyth Priory. Although the original roll has been lost, a transcript of 102 of the 219 documents survives in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Timson 1973). In addition, the Clifton and Mellish collections in the University of Nottingham contain a range of documents, these two families having been successive lords of the manor. Of these, one of the most interesting is the *Blyth Town Book*, of 15th and 16th century date, in the Clifton Collection. Timson also refers to the ecclesiastical registers of the archbishops of York of C13 and C14 as being of relevance to Blyth.

It was evident from a brief search of the on-line catalogue of the Public Record Office that it holds a number of primary documents relating to Blyth. These include inquisitions, writs and extents relating to the property of alien priories in the second half of the 14th century, as well as a variety of other records including leases, disputes etc. of medieval and post-medieval date.

Nottinghamshire Archives holds a range of primary documentation relating to Blyth. This includes the parish registers from 1556-1879 (although with some gaps), the Vestry minutes of 1814-1838, a number of terriers and surveys, the earliest of which is probably 16th century, churchwardens' accounts from 1559-1954, some deeds from the 17th century onwards, Land Tax assessments 1781-1832, and various papers relating to the church, to poor relief, to charities and to the non-conformist congregations. The Archives office also has a copy of the *Blyth Town Book* on microfilm.

Primary documents were not consulted for this assessment, with the exception of historic maps (see below).

4.2 Secondary sources

One of the most important secondary sources for the history of Blyth is the two volume publication of the Blyth Priory Cartulary edited by Timson (1973); Timson draws on a number of other primary sources for his introduction to the volumes, which is also of considerable use. At the time Timson was editing the Cartulary, a Mr Cook 'of Sheffield and Cambridge' was apparently researching and indexing the Blyth Town Book; however, Nottingham University Manuscripts section, who hold the Town Book, have not received a copy of this research. The main town history is that written by Raine in 1860.

4.3 Cartographic evidence

A partial plan of Blyth, showing Blyth Hall and grounds in 1758, is held by Nottinghamshire Archives. The earliest known surviving map to show the whole of Blyth is dated 1776. It is held by Trinity College Cambridge (Nichols 1987) and consequently was not consulted during the preparation of this assessment. However, a slightly later map of 1782 was consulted at Nottingham University Library. This is the earliest of several maps of Blyth which form part of the Spencer of Cuckney MSS, with slightly later maps of 1819 and 1828. The latter uses colour to distinguish between 'the Abbey lands, the Holme lands and the Spittle lands' for a case in the Exchequer. Nottinghamshire Archives has the enclosure map of 1817, although it

does not cover the whole of the township in detail. They also hold the tithe map of 1842 together with the schedule.

4.4 Archaeological evidence

There are eight entries on the county Sites and Monuments Record for the area of Blyth under consideration in this assessment. In addition, there have been two watching briefs (Abbott 1993, Priest 1994) and a small excavation (Drage 1983).

5. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

5.1 Prehistoric

There is currently no archaeological evidence of prehistoric activity from the built-up area of Blyth and only limited evidence from the surrounding area. Just to the south-west of the centre of Blyth (see Figure 1), a circular cropmark, which may represent a ring ditch, has been identified from an aerial photograph (SMR 4933). Further north, cropmarks indicate the presence of three circles, 15m, 20m and 40m in diameter, tentatively identified as ring ditches or barrows, with faint traces of possible linear features and a further circle (SMR 4928). In addition, some of the cropmarks identified as being of possible Romano-British date (see below) may well have their origins in the prehistoric period.

5.2 Roman

Evidence of the Roman period from Blyth and the surrounding area is currently limited, consisting of two unsubstantiated finds and a number of cropmarks as yet uninvestigated (see Figure 1). Raine (1860, 7) records the finding at Mantles House to the east of Blyth of what he describes as 'two Roman urns, the larger inclosing the smaller'. An alternative record states that a Roman urn, 10" in diameter, was found, covered with a globular vessel, during the excavation of the foundations of Mantles House in 1820. The house was said to have been named in remembrance of the covering of cloaks over a Roman soldier's grave. The whereabouts of the urn is not known, but following the examination in 1959 of a photograph, doubt was expressed as to whether it was in fact Roman (SMR 4785).

Roman coins were supposedly found at Blyth in 1692, although the findspot is not known and therefore cannot be marked on Figure 1 (SMR 4870).

A large number of cropmarks have been identified from aerial photographs of the area surrounding Blyth. Some, if not all of these, form part of a distinctive field system known as 'brickwork plan' fields. Not all the individual sites recorded on the SMR which relate to these fields have been shown on Figure 1. Only two have been included to illustrate the two main areas. An extensive area of cropmarks has been identified to the west and south-west of Blyth on a slight ridge running along the western side of the River Ryton (SMR 4924). Features include a number of subrectangular enclosures, at least two circular features and two small square enclosures, as well as possible pits. A second area lies to the north-east of Blyth, again on a ridge on the western side of the River Ryton, and includes a number of linear features thought to represent field boundaries, together with a single small enclosure (SMR 4930). Work on similar brickwork plan fields elsewhere in north Nottinghamshire has indicated that the field system and at least some of the enclosures were in use during the Roman period, although there is some evidence that they may have an earlier origin, perhaps in the 1st century BC.

5.3 Early Medieval

There is currently no archaeological or documentary evidence datable to the early medieval period from Blyth or from the surrounding area, although the fact that there is an entry in Domesday Book for Blyth, with eight households (see below), indicates the existence of a pre-conquest hamlet.

5.4 Medieval (1066-15th century)

5.4.1 Place-name evidence

Blyth takes its name from the river on which it stands, now known as the Ryton but originally *blidan* in a 14th century transcription of a document of 958 (Gover *et al* 1940).

The earliest written references to Nornay come from the 13th century. The place-name means 'north of the water' in Old English (Gover *et al* 1940).

5.4.2 Domesday Book, 1086

Blyth is included in Domesday Book with the estates of Roger de Busli and is listed as soc of the manor of Hodsock

> *S. In BLYTH 1 b. of land and the fourth part of 1 b. taxable. Land for 1 plough. 4 villagers and 4 smallholders have 1 plough. Meadow, 1 acre.* (Domesday Book, Phillimore edition).

5.4.3 The manor

The hamlet of Blyth formed part of the manor of Hodsock at the time of the Domesday Survey, when it was under the lordship of Thorold, as undertenant of Roger de Busli. Following the foundation of Blyth Priory in 1088, the prior became lord of the manor of Blyth, with independent powers and the rights and privileges which belonged to a manor (Raine 1860). The priory held the whole town in demesne with the exception of a small part held by Roche Abbey in exchange for the mill of Serlby (Thoroton 1677).

5.4.4 Communications

Blyth was situated on an important medieval road from Nottingham to the north. Blyth Cartulary has many references to this, as the *via regia*. Numerous other roads are also referred to, connecting Blyth with other settlements in all directions: with Farworth and Bawtry in the north; Torworth in the east; Retford and Barnby in the south-east; the high road via Boughton and Wellow in the south; Hodsock and Woodhouse in the south-west; Oldcoates in the west; and Styrrup and Tickhill in the north-west (Timson 1973).

The Cartulary also includes several references to the bridge of Blyth. Two small rivers, the Ryton and the Roach (also called Oldcoates Dyke) flow very close together in this area, skirting Blyth to the west and north. The bridge of Blyth was probably the double bridge by which the *via regia* to the north crossed the two rivers (Timson 1973). According to Raine (1860) this was formerly known as the Rood Bridge, on which stood a small chapel with a rood, and with a priest in attendance to receive the devotions and offerings of travellers.

Stevenson (1901) quotes from a document of 1335 regarding

> '... protection for two years for brother John le marechal, a hermit, staying at the chapel of St Michael by Blyth, about the making of a causeway between Blyth and Mattersey, who is dependent upon Charity for the sustenance of himself and the men working at the causeway and bridge ...'.

Stevenson considered that this was the origin of the present road between the two places.

The road between Blyth and Holme (to the south-west) was partially blocked for several years when the Prior of Blyth made a ditch

> 'containing so much water than when a torrent comes then it floods that road, so that scarcely anyone can cross by that road now for years past' (White 1904, 381)

5.4.5 Blyth Priory

A charter of 1088 records the founding by Roger de Busli of a priory at Blyth, although it has been suggested that the priory may in fact already have been in existence before the death of King William, with its foundation being between 1086 and September 1087, so that the charter simply set down in writing what had been done earlier (Timson 1973). De Busli endowed the priory with 'the church and the whole vill of Blyth with its appurtenances and customs as the men of that vill used to render to him …'. Timson notes that it was exceptional for a religious house to obtain possession of a whole village in the Danelaw. The foundation charter details the services required from the men of the village at that time, which included 'ploughing, carrying, mowing, reaping, haymaking, paying merchet and making the mill pond' (Timson 1973, xxi). Further endowments included other of de Busli's lands and churches as well as gifts of tithes of demesne lands. In addition, the monks were granted extensive toll and passage rights over a very wide area, as well as a market and fair (see below).

From its foundation, Blyth priory was an 'alien' house dependent upon the Abbey of the Holy Trinity, Rouen, with which de Busli had been associated since the early 1060s. Some monks were sent to Blyth by the abbot at Rouen, the prior was usually appointed by the abbot and the monks followed the monastic rule of the house of Rouen. However, the Archbishops of York carried out visitations of Blyth priory during the later 13th and early 14th centuries, and occasionally returned monks to Rouen as a result of their bad conduct. Blyth was one of the few alien houses which escaped dissolution as a result of general expulsions of foreign monks in 1378 and 1404 and the confiscation of their possessions in 1414. However, the priory was taken into the hands of the crown in 1409 and following the death of the prior the same year, his successor and all following priors were appointed by the crown (Timson 1973).

Blyth priory seems to have had at least twelve monks and a prior at its head at the end of the 13th century, before going into serious decline in the 14th and 15th centuries. In 1379, when many alien monasteries were being dissolved, it housed, in addition to the retired prior and the monks, two chaplains, a vicar, three clerks, a steward, a sergeant-at-arms, nine corrodians and a number of servants. Only two monks subsequently obtained permission to stay. This number would have increased again after the wars with France ceased, but possibly never regained the late 13th century total (Timson 1973).

5.4.6 The settlement and its environs

The Cartulary refers to strips in the open fields, to meadows, to assarts (for example in the mid-13th century the monks were given all rights in the wood of Northlund to the north-east of Blyth, with pasture and the right to enclose and clear the wood) and to several granges within the vill of Blyth. It appears that such granges belonged to small independent landowners or to tenants of the monks. Timson (1973) suggests that from the limited details available it appears that these granges were not the same as the large arable farms associated mainly with Cistercian houses in Yorkshire but seem rather to have been large barns. An inquisition of priory income dated 1379 records, among other things, two mills and 'a water', the fishing of which was worth 6s 8d per year (Raine 1860, 42).

Blyth was one of five places licensed for public tournaments by Richard I in 1194, although the actual site lay some distance from the settlement, about half a mile from Styrrup. From the early 13th century, however, there were numerous bans against tournaments at Blyth (Timson 1973).

Royal writs are stated in the Cartulary to have been issued at Blyth on several occasions, while there are also references to the hearing of pleas there. In addition, there are numerous medieval references elsewhere to the 'castle of Blyth' and the 'honour of Blyth'. However, in all these cases the castle and

honour of Tickhill are undoubtedly meant, the two names being used indiscriminately up to 1200 and occasionally after that, the name of Blyth probably being better known and evidently preferred to that of the new vill of Tickhill developing around the castle (Timson 1973).

The words of the priory's foundation charter seem to suggest that an existing church at Blyth was given as part of the endowment. However, there is no evidence at present for such a church, as the Domesday Survey does not mention one and the present building contains no pre-conquest work. The charter may refer to a church either about to be built or in the process of construction. Presumably the monastic church served both monks and parishioners from the beginning.

There is no evidence of a vicarage at Blyth much before the middle of the 13th century. Following its institution, the prior and convent were the patrons. There was also a struggle between the vicars of Blyth and the monks over tithes. The resulting settlement provides an extremely detailed account of the 'relations (temporal and spiritual) between the monks of a religious house and the vicar of a small urban centre in which the monastic church was also the parish church ...' (lviii). (Timson 1973).

The office of reeve (*prepositura*) is mentioned in the Cartulary, possibly being the head man of the vill or to have had some special relation between the monks and their tenants of the vill. Little light is shed on the manorial organisation of Blyth, although in 1379 it appears that the monks held an ordinary court once every three weeks, plus two annual courts (Timson 1973).

There was a *reclusaria* probably to the south of Blyth, referred to in 1241 and possibly the same person as Joan, the recluse of the chapel of St John the Evangelist outside Blyth, to whom the monks gave a loaf, a gallon of conventual wine and an allowance of food from the kitchen every day for her lifetime according to a grant probably dating to around the late 1260s or early 1270s (Timson 1973).

In addition to numerous references in the Cartulary to tofts with buildings in Blyth, there are incidental references to a bakery, a storehouse, a stable, two *solaria* situated together on the high road, a small mill, a chapel of St James, an ordeal pit and a pillory and 'the ash trees' (Timson 1973).

Raine considered that the gallows were sited at Blyth Law Hill, about 1¾ miles to the south of Blyth. While this could fit in with one Cartulary record, other evidence in the Cartulary makes it clear that there was a different gallows site. Land granted in the fields of Blyth was stated to be below *Galgetrehil* and *in territorio de Blida* between that of the hospital in the place called *Galleretreh(il)* abutting upon the road from Blyth towards Bawtry. Timson considered that the hospital land must be that of St Edmund (see 5.4.7 below) and the location of Gallows Tree Hill must have been north of the vill and outside it, possibly on a piece of sharply rising ground on the right hand side of the road immediately north of Nornay. Since both documents referring to these gallows probably belong to the early 13th century, this might therefore be an earlier site, with other gallows being erected at Blyth Law Hill at a later date. These may have been in existence by 1278, when the monks were given sanction to hang thieves captured within their liberty of Blyth on the gallows at *Emmeslaw* (Timson 1973).

In 1306 there is a record relating to a dispute about a royal grant of pavage. The 'bailiffs and upright men' of the town were granted the right to 'take certain customs until a certain time in aid of the pavage of that town'; however, the 'commonalty' of the town, together with the Prior, requested that the grant be cancelled (Timson 1973).

Some idea of the relative wealth of Blyth in the early 14th century can be gained from the Lay Subsidy of 1334, when Blyth was taxed at £6.11.3¼. Only three settlements, from a total of 79 in Bassetlaw wapentake, had a higher tax quota (Glasscock 1975).

The *Blyth Town Book* mentions a *Gylde* with land and tenants in the late 15th century (Timson 1973). This is the only published reference to a guild, and it is possible that it could refer to Bawtry, then part of Blyth parish, where a guild was mentioned in the Chantry Certificate Rolls (Thompson 1913).

5.4.7 Market and fairs

As noted above, the foundation charter of Blyth Priory included the grant of a market and fair, although the day of the market and the date of the fair are not specified. Later markets were on a Thursday, so this was probably the medieval market day also, while there may have been two annual fairs, on the vigil, day and morrow of St Denis (October 8-10) and on the vigil, day and morrow of the Ascension. Henry II confirmed the priory's rights of fair, market and toll (Raine 1860). Both the market and fair are mentioned in the *Placito de Quo Warranto* in 1329 and again in a writ of Henry IV in 1411. The *Placito de Quo Warranto* provides evidence relating to the market tolls at Blyth, recording that cartloads of timber or bread were taxed at ½d; cartloads of other goods at 2d; packhorse loads of salmon at 1d; packhorse loads of other goods at ½d; merchandise carried on a man's back at ¼d; horses, oxen or cows at ½d; sheep or pigs at ¼d; and that if a sack of baled wool was sold at Blyth a tax of 4d was to be paid on it (Timson 1973, civ). An inquisition of 1379 records the annual income from 'toll, market, pleas and perquisites of court on market days' as £60 (Raine 1860, 42).

5.4.8 Hospitals

There is documentary evidence for the existence of two leper hospitals at Blyth, although for one of these the evidence is only slight. In 1228 Henry III granted letters of protection to the proctors of the leper hospital of St Edmund (SMR 5543) outside Blyth (*nuncii leprosorum hospitalis Sancti Edmundi extra Bliam*) (Cox 1910) while in 1334 protection was granted for one year for the master and brethren of the hospital of St Edmund 'without Blyth' collecting alms, protection which was renewed in 1335 for another year (White 1904). Cox (1910) suggested that this hospital lay at the northern entrance to the town. Cartulary documents refer to land *iuxta hospitale infirmorum* and to the croft of a hospital of infirm brethren; both land and croft were to the north of Blyth and Timson (1973) assumed that they therefore related to the hospital of St Edmund, although the Cartulary does not mention it by name.

There are numerous references to the second leper hospital, which lay to the south of Blyth and was dedicated to St John the Evangelist (SMR 4784, SMR 5544). It is believed to have been founded and endowed by William Cressy, lord of Hodsock. It had its own chaplain, the patronage being vested in the lords of Hodsock, initially the Cressys and later, at the end of the 14th century, the Cliftons. The hospital was in existence by 1226, as Pope Honorius III issued a bull in that year taking the *domus leprosorum* and its possessions into the protection of the Holy See. A charter of around the same date gives the site of the hospital as being next to the road in the southern part of Blyth in *territorio de Hoddesak.*

Other references include a licence from Edward II in 1316 for the alienation of seven messuages and four bovates of land in Blyth and Hodsock to three chaplains who were to celebrate mass daily in the chapel of St John the Evangelist. Two chaplains were appointed in 1320, with the appointment of a third due to follow when the rent of a messuage near to the gate of a cemetery of the hospital would permit it (Timson 1973).

In 1446 an indulgence of 100 days was granted by the Archbishop of York to all penitents contributing to the 'erection and new construction of a certain house or hospital' in Blyth for receiving and lodging poor strangers and pregnant women. Raine (1860) takes this as an indication that the old leper hospital of St John the Evangelist had fallen into decay. The new hospital retained the name of the earlier foundation.

5.4.9 Trade and industry

Many of the Cartulary documents, with their numerous grants of land in the fields and meadows, suggest an agricultural community; however, the names of persons living in or near the vill over the course of the 12th, 13th and early 14th centuries are considered to show 'a diversity of occupations which suggest a community as much urban as rural in character' (Timson 1973, ci). Names indicative of a rural community included those meaning falconer, shepherd, carter, herdsman, forester, thresher, vintner and possibly bee-keeper and reaper. Those suggested to be indicative of an urban community included several relating to gold (*aurifaber, gilder, goldbeter*), cutler, buyer or purchaser, merchant; Timson (1973) also includes in

this list tawyer, brewer, butcher, tailor, cordwainer, potter, lorimer, skinner, baker, saddler, tanner, dyer (*tinctor*); names considered to be representative of either a rural or urban community he suggests are carpenter, cartwright, smith, miller, weaver (*textor*).

In addition to the evidence of trades from the personal names listed above, the Cartulary also refers to a windmill near Blyth in *c.*1274. There is a reference elsewhere to a fuller's mill which had fallen into disuse by 1365 (Timson 1973).

5.5 Post-medieval (16th - 18th century)

5.5.1 Communications

While the route of the Great North Road may once have gone through the centre of Blyth, it appears that by the late 17th century it no longer did so. The early 18th century road book *Britannia Depicta*, based on John Ogilby's *Britannia* of 1675, shows it running through Torworth and Ranskill, to the east of Blyth.

The original course of the road from Blyth to Oldcoates was diverted at the Blyth end in the later 18th century by the then owner of Blyth Hall so that it no longer passed across the western aspect of his house. To the west of Blyth there must have been either two fords or two small bridges where the original road from Blyth to the west crossed the two rivers. On the present road the bridge nearer to Blyth is called the 'New Bridge' while that further from Blyth is the 'Old Bridge' (Timson 1973).

5.5.2 The manor

Following the dissolution of the monasteries it appears that the site and demesnes of Blyth Priory were separated from the manor. The site and demesnes were granted to Richard Andrews and William Ramsden in 1543, later coming to the Saundersons and then the Mellish family. The manor was leased out until 1610, coming to the Clifton family in 1618. In 1738 it was sold to Edward Mellish, the owner of Blyth Hall, and following that time the manor descended with the Blyth estate (Raine 1860). The rectory was granted by Henry VIII to Trinity College Cambridge (Thoroton 1677).

5.5.3 Blyth Priory

Blyth Priory was surrendered under the terms of the Act of 1536 for the dissolution of the lesser monastic houses. At that time it had a gross income of £126-8-2½ per annum (eight monastic houses in Nottinghamshire dissolved at that time had higher incomes and four had lower, although none were among the wealthier monasteries in the country). By the 16th century it appears to have been quite small in terms of its manpower as only five monks are recorded as receiving pensions (Cameron 1975). The priory site and demesnes were initially leased to Gervase Clifton of neighbouring Hodsock, but in 1543 the king granted them to Andrews and Ramsden, who Raine (1860) describes as 'among the chief monastic stock-jobbers of the day'. Unsurprisingly, they sold them on soon afterwards.

5.5.4 The settlement and its environs

In 1521-1535 it is implied in the *Blyth Town Book* that a mayor, two chamberlains and 12 aldermen were appointed each year to carry out the business of the town. In Elizabeth's reign an alderman was appointed annually from 1560-1593, no mayor being mentioned, and there is reference to a charter, with the alderman being responsible for its custody. Sums of money were given by individuals to the 'beldynge of the Chapell' and to the 'mendynge of the bryges'. Payments in connection with the town's weapons are given for 1582-89 and there is a list of the weapons in 1571. There are references to a field called 'The Marshe', to regulations about sheep pasture in 'Blythe Field' and to the common bull (Timson 1973).

Some idea of the size of the settlement in the 17th century can be gained by using the Hearth Tax returns of 1664 and 1674. Each used different administrative procedures, resulting in certain discrepancies between the two when they are compared, however. The results for Blyth are as follows:

Number of hearths	**1664**	**1674**
>3	6	15
3	6	17
2	16	16
1	35	22
Total chargeable	**63**	**70**
Not chargeable/discharged	54	6
Total	**117**	**76**

It can be seen that, while the number of chargeable houses at Blyth is similar between the two dates, the number of non-chargeable dwellings dropped markedly. This discrepancy is fairly widespread throughout the county and suggests that the assessors in 1674 were far more lax in recording the non-chargeable buildings. Certainly there is no reason for thinking that the settlement had become not only considerably smaller but also relatively poverty-free over the course of a decade. Another interesting difference is the increased number of houses with three and more hearths in 1674 when compared with 1664, together with a decrease in the number of single-hearth dwellings. Again this is a widespread feature of the returns. The reasons are uncertain, but probably include both the improvement of assessment, with a decrease in fraud, and the improvement of at least some of the houses, as this was a period of considerable rebuilding (Webster 1988).

The largest of the domestic buildings of post-medieval Blyth would have been Blyth Hall, built on the site of the priory. Towards the end of the 18th century William Mellish, then owner of the Hall, made substantial changes to the landscape and the village. He is described as having dammed up the river Ryton and a small brook to create 'an extensive piece of water which is formed on a most magnificent scale'. He diverted the Sheffield Road, as noted in 5.5.1 above and built a new bridge, he built or radically altered several farmhouses and over 30 cottages, constructed large stables and planted several plantations (White's Directory 1832).

5.5.5 Markets and fairs

Blyth's weekly market appears to have survived into the post-medieval period, unlike many other medieval markets. It is depicted as a market town on Speed's map of 1610 and on the Rampton tapestry map of 1632 as well as being included in a list of markets in Cox's *Magna Britannia* of 1727 (Clayton 1934). The market apparently fell into disuse at some point during the later 18th century, with Throsby (1790) referring to Blyth as 'a market town without a market'. Annual fairs were still being held in the 19th century, however, and are therefore assumed to have continued throughout the post-medieval period.

5.5.6 Population

Some estimate of population during this period can be calculated using Hearth Tax data and the returns to visitations which required the number of recusants and communicants in each parish to be provided. In 1603, there were reported to be 600 communicants at Blyth, a suspiciously round number, with no recusants recorded. No figure was provided for non-communicants (ie those under the age of 16). Wood (1942) assumed they would have made up some 60% of the population and consequently estimated that there were approximately 960 inhabitants of the parish at that date. (Thoroton notes the parish of Blyth

was ‘exceeding large’, including Hodsock, Ranskill, Torworth, Serlby and Barnby Moor in addition to Blyth itself).

In 1676 the then vicar, Samuel Turner, returned the figure of 327 communicants at Blyth, with no Catholics and 12 dissenters (Guilford 1924). Adding an estimated 60% for non-communicants gives a population of about 523. This represents a very dramatic drop in numbers from the beginning of the 17th century. Population stagnation or decline at that time is not unusual; out of 138 parishes where a straight comparison of the 1603 and 1676 figures was possible, only 38 returned a larger number of communicants (and of recusants and non-communicants or dissenters) in 1676 than in 1603 (Wood 1942).

The number of Hearth Tax households can be multiplied by 4 and 5 for each household to give an approximate lower and upper estimate of individuals. It seems highly likely that the 1674 figure would underestimate the population, with the probable under-recording of non-chargeable households. The figure for 1664, with 117 households, gives an estimated population of some 468-585 individuals. This fits in well with the 1676 estimate of *c.* 523 individuals and adds strength to the possibility that the 1603 return was a considerable over-estimate.

Further returns were made following Archbishop Herring’s visitation of 1743. The return for Blyth was ‘about 200 families’ (Ollard & Walker 1930). Using multipliers of 4.5 and 5 for each family, to produce an approximate lower and upper figure, this produces a population estimate of 900-1000 individuals.

In 1798 Lowe recorded 1429 inhabitants of what he terms ‘Blyth and Hamlets’.

5.5.7 The hospital of St John the Evangelist

By 1534 it appears that the hospital and its property was much reduced, with a value recorded in the Chantry Certificate Rolls of £8 14s. There were no church goods apart from ‘one vestment and one altar cloth of no valewe and a bell of small valewe’. The hospital itself appears to have escaped dissolution following the survey of Henry VIII’s commissioners in 1545-46 and again under Edward VI. It is referred to in Sir Gervase Clifton’s will of 1662, where he described himself as patron of the house or hospital of St John the Evangelist without Blyth and again in 1703, when there is a record of the master of the hospital (Cox 1910).

5.5.8 Other religious buildings

It seems that there was a Friends meeting house in Blyth from an early date. A subscription list survives dated 1701 for building a meeting house in Blyth ‘on that piece of ground upon the back of the hospitals endowed by Friend John Seaton unless a more convenient piece of land fall vacant’. A certificate of 1702 appear to relate to this building, while accounts of 1702 refer to the removal of seats from the old meeting-house (Royal Commission 1986).

By 1743 a small almshouse had been built adjoining the meeting house and endowed with £10 a year for the maintenance of two poor widows, one Anglican and one Quaker. Eight Quaker families were recorded in Blyth at that time, according to the returns made to Archbishop Herring’s visitation. Eight Roman Catholic families were also reported, worshipping at Hodsock Park chapel. There was one Independent family and one Baptist family, with a Baptist chapel in Blyth (Ollard & Walker 1930).

5.5.9 Education

There appears to have been a school at Blyth as early as 1641, since there is a document of that date included in the Public Record Office catalogue which is indexed as ‘Blyth: Subject - School’. It was

certainly in existence by 1695, as Edward Mellish took a lease of the school land at that time. However, it seems that only 10 children were being taught in 1743 (Ollard & Walker 1930).

5.5.10 Trade and industry

Nothing appears to be published relating to trade and industry in Blyth at this period. It presumably retained its earlier character of semi-agricultural and semi-urban while the markets continued to be successful. With their decline, however, agriculture would have been the mainstay of the economy.

5.6 19th century

5.6.1 Communications

In 1826 the Rotherham-Barnby Moor road, which ran through Blyth, was turnpiked. It appears that this was the only one of the main roads passing through the town to be turnpiked.

5.6.2 The settlement and its environs

Parliamentary enclosure of Blyth was by an Act of 1814, although this affected some areas of open stinted and unstinted commons or pastures only, the open arable fields already having been enclosed. Blyth was one of the townships where the proprietors were not unanimous in desiring enclosure; nevertheless those in favour were in the majority. Nornay had been subject to enclosure at a slightly earlier date, in 1802. The commissioners were prohibited from altering the course of the highways forming the town street in Blyth village. A clause was also inserted that small scraps of land in front of several houses were to be allotted to the house owners. (Tate 1935)

By the 19th century Blyth had completely lost its former importance. Pigot's *Nottinghamshire Directory* for 1831 noted that it was barely recognisable as an ancient market town and that it had 'retrograded in consequence to the rank of an inconsiderable village'. Nornay too had probably not grown, and may even have shrunk. In 1864 it was described as comprising only four farms and a few cottages (White's *Directory*).

5.6.3 Markets and fairs

Markets were no longer being held at Blyth in the 19th century but, according to Raine (1860), a remnant of the medieval tolls survived until the 1840s in the form of charges made on Scottish cattle passing through Blyth on their way to markets in the south. These tolls were apparently discontinued at the same time as tolls taken at the two annual fairs. The fairs appear to have continued throughout the 19th century. White's *Directory* of 1832 records them as being on Holy Thursday for horses and cattle and on October 20 for sheep and swine.

5.6.4 Population

The 10-yearly census, which commenced in 1801, provides the following figures for Blyth:

Year	Population
1801	589
1811	670
1821	801
1831	811
1841	758
1851	765
1861	698

1871	621
1881	618
1891	529
1901	540

This shows a rise in population over the course of the first few decades of the 19th century, in line with many other Nottinghamshire villages. However, this was followed by a considerable decline, to the extent that the settlement at the end of the century had a lower population than a hundred years earlier.

5.6.5 Religious buildings

By 1864 the Wesleyan Methodists and the Primitive Methodists each had chapels in the village, the latter using the building which had formerly been the Quaker meeting house (White's *Directory* 1864).

5.6.6 Education

A school continued to be held in the medieval building on the green. However, in 1842 educational facilities were expanded by the construction of a girls' school nearby.

5.6.7 Trade and industry

In the 1840s the inhabitants of Blyth were described as being chiefly employed in 'agriculture, handicrafts and retail trade' (Curtis 1843-4). White's *Directory* of 1885-6 shows that in addition to the many farmers there was the range of occupations associated with rural economies such as blacksmith, basketmaker, wheelwright, saddler and butcher. There was also a tailor, a couple of bootmakers, a couple of grocers, a surgeon and a man described as 'glazier, painter, paper-hanger and gilder'.

6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLYTH

The town has been divided into plan elements, or components, based on map evidence and documentary sources. These plan elements have been subdivided below according to the earliest date of their assumed occurrence in that form, although some of the area of the medieval settlement was almost certainly occupied in the early medieval period. At present, however, no early medieval components can be defined. All subdivisions are tentative only, and need to be confirmed by further work. Subsequent major changes are briefly summarised, together with the degree of survival of early features to the present day.

6.1 Medieval components

Fourteen components have been identified as probably belonging to the medieval period and are shown on figure 3. Their identification is based on documentary evidence and on plan form analysis of early maps. A copy of part of one of these, Sanderson's map of 20 Miles around Mansfield, 1835, is reproduced as figure 2.

Component 1 ***Site of Blyth Priory*** *(SMR 4816, SAM 78)* ***and later Blyth Hall*** *(SMR 4816a)*

As the extent of the priory precinct cannot be determined at present, this component has been defined by taking the boundary of the present cemetery to the south, the lines of roads to east and west and by part of the parish boundary to the north.

The church is the only building which survives from the priory, although it is incomplete, having lost its east end. It is now in use as the parish church, dedicated to St Mary and St Martin. Originally the church combined both monastic and parish functions, the choir being used by the monks and the nave by the parishioners. The nave and north aisle still remain from the original late 11th century church. Regarding this part of the church Pevsner (1979, 77) notes 'There is nothing like Blyth ... to get a feeling for early

Norman grimness'. The south aisle was rebuilt around the end of the 13th century at twice its original width; traditionally this is said to be because the parish was allocated this part of the priory church. The west tower was built in the 14th century. A wall blocking off the east end bay of the nave and north aisle was constructed before the dissolution, as its west side bears a 15th/early 16th century painting depicting The Last Judgement.

After the dissolution, the choir and transepts at Blyth were demolished, with the nave and aisles remaining in use as a parish church, although the easternmost bay of the nave and the north aisle became part of a manor house established on the east cloister range. This has since been returned to the church. Archaeological recording of the east end of the north aisle of the church was carried out in 1983, prior to its being faced with brick (Drage 1983).

The original plan of the demolished east end is unknown. One suggestion is that it consisted of simple transepts and an apsidal end, based on the discovery of a 'round wall' by a gardener in 1857. According to Raine (1860, 56):

> '...on receiving from him an account of the precise situation of such foundations, I made a measurement from the spot occupied by the head of this round wall, which was doubtless the boundary wall of the apse, to the foot of the outer arch now in the hall garden and found the distance to be 61 feet'.

A different plan with four transeptal chapels has also been put forward, following limited excavations in 1923 (Fairweather 1926). A trench was excavated along the churchyard side of the wall which extends eastwards from the south-eastern corner of the present church and which Fairweather assumed was on the line of the south transept wall. The excavations uncovered evidence of two buttresses and almost 3m of Norman wall. Further excavations were undertaken in the Hall gardens and uncovered parts of the wall foundations of the eastern chapel of the transept and of the eastern end of the choir aisle. Two skeletons were found, both of which had been interred within the building. Fairweather also opened the westernmost of the 'two round-headed recesses' on the northern side of the north wall, reputed to be the tombs of the founder and his wife, but found 'nothing more medieval than old wine bottles and animals' bones'.

The monastic buildings lay on the northern side of the church, but were destroyed following the dissolution. Reference to some earlier destruction comes from the Close Rolls of 1278, when the Prior of Blyth was granted 20 oaks from Sherwood Forest 'for the repair of the houses of his Priory burnt by mischance' (White 1904). Evidence of the south cloister walk is visible on the north side of the church in the form of pentice corbels and recesses. The fall in level of the ground to the north and east of the church led Fairweather (1926) to suggest that the cloister garth must have consisted of a raised platform, formed by filling in the space between its surrounding buildings, which must have been raised on undercrofts. One of these, probably under the refectory range, remained in the cellars of Blyth Hall, now itself demolished (see below). Partial remains of this vaulted undercroft are said to form an overhang and back wall to an ornamental pond in the back garden of one of the houses now built on the site. The area has been scheduled. Additional buildings, such as 'granges, granaries, dovecote, stables' Raine (1860) states were at a little distance from the claustral buildings, in the 'almry croft' (the almoner's croft) to the north-west of the church. Land in this area was incorporated into gardens and parkland around Blyth Hall (see below).

According to Raine (1860) the cemeteries of the parish and the priory occupied the entire south and east sides of the church respectively. The priory, including the monks' cemetery, was enclosed by what was probably a high wall. The 'magna porta' is suggested by Timson to have been on the main road somewhere on the eastern side of the church. The Cartulary also includes references to a south gate of the cemetery. Five skeletons are reported to have been found buried face downwards in the area thought to have been the monks' cemetery during the construction of an ornamental pond in the early 20th century (Fairweather 1926). These were apparently reburied in 'a very deep hole near the house called Centry Garth' (Eastland 1977).

Blyth Hall and pleasure grounds

It is not clear exactly when the first Hall was constructed on the site of part of the priory or when the wall was built which cuts off the approach to the eastern and northern sides of the church. In 1684 the existing hall was demolished by the then owner, Edward Mellish, and a new house was constructed. Receipts and expenses for this new house survive and include timber (42 trees), bricks made on Lindrick Common, and seven marble chimney-pieces. The total cost by 1689 was £6083 4s 11¼d, which included

> 'building the abbey house, out-houses, and walls about the grounds, repairing the church end, making the vault and pew in the church, the garden and fish-ponds, levelling and planting the said grounds and cutting the river straight before the said house' (Raine 1860, 82).

Further changes were made to the course of the Ryton in the 18th century. A plan of 1758 shows ornamental canals fed by water from the river (see also components 17 and 18). These had disappeared by 1782, to be replaced by a broad ribbon of water which later had several small islands formed within it and which had a boat house constructed at the edge of the water to the west of the hall (SMR 4906). This elongated lake was already beginning to silt up at the end of the 19th century and has now been channelled into a narrow stream. Landscaping for new houses destroyed much of the masonry at the edge of the old lake although the footings of the boathouse were still visible in 1977. Masonry was also said to be visible at that time on the 'islands' that had been made in the lake, while timbers and masonry could be seen in the bed of the river (Armor 1977).

Changes were also made to the Hall and outbuildings in the second half of the 18th century. The plan of 1758 shows a number of buildings to the west of the church, one of which abuts its western end. These had all been demolished by 1782. At the end of the 18th century Throsby (1790, 429) described Blyth Hall as

> 'a building of considerable magnitude, of brick, ornamented with stone. Far and near, upon this domain, are clumps of fir, and plantations rising all around you in this part of the forest, which seem congenial with the soil. Here are appendages of water and pleasure grounds as in other family residences, but nothing extraordinarily striking...'.

although an alternative opinion was offered by Viscount Torrington in 1792, who commented on the hall and gardens

> 'it seems to be a bad house, and the taste around is execrable ....' (Andrews 1936).

The Hall was demolished in 1972 and houses constructed both on the site of the building and within the grounds. Parts of their gardens which abut the church lie within the scheduled area. A 19th century ice house to the east of the church is now a grade II listed building.

The bottom half of a large bronze seal matrix was discovered by a metal detectorist working near the church 'a few years' prior to 1998. Research suggested it had belonged to Johanna de Cressy, member of the family of Cressy, lords of Hodsock (Marcombe 1998).

Component 2 ***Site of river crossing***

Prior to the 1760s the main road from Blyth to Oldcoates and the north-west must have crossed the river further east than the present bridge. The plan of 1758 shows the main road crossing the river and then a long ornamental canal. It is not known where the medieval crossing would have been but it is presumed to have been in this approximate area.

Component 3 ***River crossing***

There are several references to the *pontem de Blida* in the Cartulary. Timson (1973) states that this was 'probably the double bridge by which the *via regia* to the north crossed the two rivers' although since the river courses have almost certainly been altered, through drainage, landscaping and so on, there may not have been two separate streams here in the medieval period. According to Raine, the bridge was formerly known as Rood Bridge, having a small chapel there with a rood and a priest to receive the offerings of travellers (SMR 5548); however, he does not provide a source for this information. The map of 1758 shows a couple of buildings close to the bridge on either side of the road, while that of 1782 seems to imply that the road crossed the northernmost stream by ford only at that time, with a bridge crossing the southern stream. In the 19th century the northernmost crossing was bridged, although the ford remained on its western side. A weir is shown on the stream to the east of the bridge. A pumping house stood on the roadside to the south-east of the southern bridge. In the early 20th century there was a sheepwash on the eastern side of the bridges, between the two streams. Part of the present complex of bridges survives from the late 18th century and is grade II listed.

Component 4 ***Settlement at Nornay***

The Blyth Cartulary makes several references to Nornay and it is presumably settlement here that is referred to in lists of house rents as *ultra pontem*. In 1273, for example, rents were paid for four houses, five tofts and 1 curtilage (Timson 1973, 398). The list includes a tanner, whose land may have lain at the south-eastern end of Nornay, next to the water, and where several buildings, now demolished, are shown on the map of 1782. The earliest and greater part of the settlement may have been on the eastern side of the Bawtry road, where a strong boundary is visible on early maps running, parallel to the main road, between Common Lane and a small lane further south (now disappeared). This may have acted as a common back boundary to a single row settlement. A couple of plot boundaries on the western side of the road show a distinct curve and may have been taken in later from the open fields. Part of these boundaries still survive

Component 5 ***Possible early market place/settlement***

At least part of this area may have acted as the original market place outside the priory gates and at the junction of several roads, becoming increasingly built up with time. Raine (1860) considered that there was at least one early street or row of houses leading from the church gates towards the Angel Inn, while Timson (1973) thought it 'almost certain' that the present open space before the church gates was one of the areas of concentration of some of the houses and other properties referred to in the Cartulary. The cross of St Helen, described as being in the lane leading from the high road towards the church, may have stood in this area (Timson 1973). The main building still standing is thought to have been a rectory, built by William Mellish in *c.* 1800 close to the church. Other buildings to the north-west of this, shown on the plan of 1758, had been demolished by 1842. The open ground outside the church gates is shown as 'Market Place' on a map of Blyth dated 1817 and was known as Market Hill in the relatively recent past, suggesting that the last markets to be held at Blyth before their total decline may have been held here.

Component 6 ***Settlement in the Sheffield Road area***

Block of properties fronting what would have been the southern side of the old Sheffield Road before its diversion in the 1760s. The later course of the road now bisects the component. Raine (1860) seems to imply that the original road may have been called Finkle Street, which he described as leading towards the gates of Blyth Hall and which contained some 'inns of a better class', several shops and various small freeholds, with houses fit for 'respectable yeomen'. It is suggested that the south-eastern end of this block was originally bounded by the Worksop Road before it was diverted to the southern end of the green. Standing buildings include an early Friends meeting house near the north-eastern end of Sheffield Road, probably built around 1700, and with a burial ground and a couple of almshouses adjoining. The meeting house was closed in *c.* 1907 and sold in 1945, later being converted into cottages (Royal Commission 1986). The burial ground became part of the back garden (Salway 1977). The north-western half of the component was developed for housing in the late 20th century, having earlier included the kitchen gardens

of Blyth Hall, with a range of greenhouses. A hollow 'hot wall' with grates for charcoal fires at the base still survived in 1977 (Armor 1977).

Component 7 ***Settlement along the eastern frontage of Bawtry Road and the north-western frontage of Retford Road***

The main frontage of early properties in this area would have been Bawtry Road, with plots probably more concentrated in the southern half. Timson (1973) suggests that medieval settlement could well have stretched from the present crossroads as far as the first bridge to the north, while the plan of 1758 shows several buildings closer to the bridge than exist today. One of the buildings near the Angel Inn is said to have been a workhouse in the past (Anon 1977).

Component 8 ***Market place/village green, old school building*** (SMR 4784, 4784a)

A cigar-shaped open area formed by the widening of the main road leading into Blyth from the south. The area is now a village green, but would have been used as the market place in the medieval period. The map of 1782 shows a number of encroachments onto the space in the form both of buildings and small enclosures. Almost all of these have disappeared, with the exception of a medieval stone building (SMR 4784) standing on a mound (SMR 4784a) at the southern end of the green. The building was in use as a parish school in the 19th century and traditionally is said to have been used as such from at least the late 17th century. The school was closed in 1940 (Bramley 1949) and in 1964 the building was converted into two flats. It was originally listed grade II* but was reassessed as grade II in 1984. The site used to be scheduled, but was descheduled in 1989.

The mound upon which the medieval building sits has been considered in the past to be a tumulus (for example, Stevenson 1901); however, more recent opinion is that the size of the mound (some 100m long by 30m wide, standing to a height of approximately 3m) and its topographical position suggest it to be natural rather than artificial, with the construction of the roads on either side having contributed to its size (SMR report). Raine (1860) reported that skeletons and stone coffins had been found there, although gave no details, while Stevenson (1901) noted 'This site ... is thick with interments, regarding which history is silent'. Confirmation of the presence of human skeletal material in the mound was made by the County Archaeologist, who examined fragments of human bone from the site in 1977 (M Bishop pers. comm.).

Raine (1860, 86) considered that the 'school-room' originally formed part of the buildings of the Hospital of St John the Evangelist (see also component 13) for the following reasons:

> '1. that human remains have been found in considerable abundance, with stone coffins, near it, thus apparently identifying it with the chapel of that institution; 2. that the door-way, in its architectural features, is precisely of the age of King John, when the hospital was founded'

It seems unlikely, however, that the hospital chapel would have been anywhere other than at the hospital itself. Stevenson (1901) thought that the site was that of the original village church and that on the transference of the parish church to the interior of the monastic church, the old church on the mound in the village was destroyed and the present building was erected, possibly as a chapel, before becoming a school in the 17th century.

One alternative identification of the building is that it was the Chapel of St James, referred to in the Cartulary and again in the *Blyth Town Book*, where the description of it being at the 'owtgate' implies a position at the edge of the settlement.

Component 9 ***Settlement along the north-western side of High Street***

Block of properties of varying size fronting what would once have been the market place, now the green. It is suggested that the Worksop Road may originally have run to the rear of many of these plots, before being diverted, so that it now bisects the component. The line of several of the long property boundaries

visible on early maps survives in this area, the curving shape suggesting the plots were taken in from the open fields. The component includes a Methodist chapel built in 1822, although no longer in use as such, having been replaced by a new chapel in 1902 just to the south. It also includes at its south-eastern end a building constructed as a girls' school in 1842, in use as such until 1955 and at its south-western corner a pinfold in the 19th century.

Component 10 ***Settlement along the south-western side of High Street***

Block of narrow plots running back to a common boundary which does not follow the same line as that of component 9 to the north. The component included a smithy in the 19th century but was completely redeveloped in the 20th century, accompanied by the widening of Worksop Road.

Component 11 ***Settlement along the north-eastern side of High Street***

Block of properties of varying size fronting what would once have been the market place, now the green, although there may have been some early settlement along the Retford Road frontage also. The line of several of the long property boundaries visible on early maps survives in this area, the curving shape suggesting the plots were taken in from the open fields.

Component 12 ***Settlement along the south-eastern side of High Street***

An area of irregular plots, some of the buildings on which appear to have remained relatively unchanged since at least the 19th century and possibly before.

Component 13 ***Blyth Spital*** (SMR 5544)

This is thought to be the site of the medieval hospital of St John the Evangelist. A charter of *c.* 1226 gives its location as next to the road in the southern part of Blyth *in territorio de Hoddesak*. From the early 17th century the site was certainly in this area and may never have been anywhere else. Raine makes the assumption that it was moved to Blyth on the re-establishment of 1446, when there is a reference to the 'erection and new construction of a certain house or hospital in Blyth'; however, there is no mention of resiting. The chantry certificate rolls note that the hospital church was a quarter of a mile from the parish church of Blyth but that distance as estimated in the 1530s cannot necessarily be equated with a modern distance. Leases from the Cliftons in 1648, 1662 and 1692 reserved to the master and brethren of the hospital

> 'the house adjoining to the said house or hospital appointed and use to and for the harbour, habitation, and dwelling of the poor of the said house or hospital' (Raine 1860).

In 1810 this house was pulled down and replaced by a farm-house, while the adjoining hospital was demolished. The occupiers of Blyth Spital Farm in 1961 deduced from the deeds that the hospital stood in the field immediately north of the farm, on the site now occupied by a house (information from SMR).

Component 14 ***Blyth Mill*** (SMR 4903)

The existence of a medieval mill at Blyth is clear from the priory foundation charter, which included 'making the mill pond' among the services required of the villagers. There is a reference to a certain Roger *atte Mylne* in 1366 (Gover *et al* 1940) and an inquisition of 1379 refers to two mills (Raine 1860). Mill sites often continue in use on the same approximate spot for centuries and it is assumed, therefore, that this may be the site of one of the medieval mills. The current buildings have a complex architectural history and are partly of stone and partly of brick.

6.2 Post-medieval components

Eight components have been tentatively as belonging to the post-medieval period and are shown on figure 4. Their identification is based on documentary evidence and plan form analysis of historic maps.

Component 15 ***Possible encroachment at Nornay***

The map of 1782 shows one or two small buildings in the road in this area which were possibly still in existence in the 19th century. As the road here is a hollow way, cut down into the sandstone, these buildings would have been at a lower level than those along the eastern side of the road.

Components 16-18 ***Ornamental garden features, Blyth Hall***

The plan of Blyth Hall dated 1758 shows two long canals, one extending northwards from the hall, the other westwards (component 17). Although the northern canal did not extend beyond the River Roach, its line appears to have been continued by a line of trees (component 16). Shortly after this, possibly in 1764, the gardens were remodelled and the Ryton, or part of it, was formed into a long broad lake containing several small islands of plantations. The lake continued on the eastern side of the Bawtry Road to form the mill pond (component 18).

Component 19 ***Blyth New Bridge*** (SMR 4782, SAM 11)

Blyth New Bridge was built by William Mellish probably in the early 1760s, when he diverted the road away from Blyth Hall and remodelled the grounds (see component 1). The bridge is built of magnesian limestone, with three arches. It is a scheduled monument and is Grade I listed.

Component 20 ***Development along Spital Road***

Several buildings are shown in this area on the map of 1782. The component includes a listed building of 18th century date. Infill has occurred in the 20th century as part of more extensive development to the west.

Components 21 & 22 ***Development along Retford Road***

Buildings are shown in these areas along Retford Road on the map of 1782, both probably representing complexes of farm buildings. The easternmost of these, Mill Farmhouse, is a Grade II listed building of 18th century date.

6.3 19th century components

Six components have been identified for the 19th century and are shown on figure 5. Their identification is based on a comparison of historic maps of the early and late 19th century.

Components 23 & 24 ***Scattered development along Sheffield Road***

These isolated buildings include two lodges, presumably part of Blyth Hall grounds.

Components 25-27 ***Scattered development along Spital Road***

The Spital Almshouses were built here in the early 19th century on what had been part of the road in the 18th century, although they have since been demolished.

Component 28 ***Toll house***

A toll house was constructed here following the turnpiking of the road to Barnby Moor in 1826 - the bar is shown on the tithe map of 1842.

6.4 20th century development

Twentieth century development is represented by a single un-numbered component. It should be noted that the occasional earlier building, such as an isolated farm which was at a distance from the core of medieval and post-medieval settlement, and therefore not part of it, may occur within this component if it has been engulfed by modern housing development.

6.5 Discussion

The origins of the settlement are unclear at present. Domesday Book indicates the presence of a hamlet at Blyth, but the relationship of this hamlet to the priory is not known. Some writers (for example Timson 1973) have taken the words of the priory's foundation charter as evidence of an existing church which was then replaced by de Busli, although there is no other evidence for this at present. The Old English place-name Nornay indicates an early hamlet on the north side of the river also, although Nornay is not mentioned as such in Domesday Book. It also suggests that there was something of some importance on the south side of the water in relation to which it was being named.

The establishment of the priory would have had a dramatic effect on the settlement, on its size, status and layout. Exactly why Blyth was chosen for the site of the priory is not known. Raine (1860) stated that one of the main reasons was the presence of the river. Any monastic site needed to be well supplied with water, for drinking, washing, drainage, building works and fishponds among other things. Perhaps even more pertinent is the fact that its site took advantage of two important roads, the main road north from Nottingham and the Great North Road which ran through Newark from the south. Other roads can be seen to converge at Blyth. This may have been the case before the establishment of the priory, with roads coming together at a crossing point on the Ryton and Roche rivers. If it were not the case, a network of roads would soon have developed once the weekly markets to which the monks were granted the rights, began to be held.

It is suggested that the first markets would have been held just to the south of the priory precinct, in the area of the major road junction (component 5). Such open triangular or irregular market places frequently occur in settlements with great abbeys founded before and just after the conquest (Aston & Bond 1976) and it would have been a natural focal point, close to the priory gates where several roads met. Settlement would have clustered around this junction, and probably extended some way along the roads (components 6, 7 and possibly the northern parts of 9 and 11). At some point, however, a second market place developed (component 8), perhaps as the earlier market area became increasingly encroached upon and congested. There is no evidence that this later market place was planned, however. Rather its cigar-shaped plan suggests organic development, the swelling of a pre-existing street to accommodate the market. Evidence for its being secondary to the original core of the town can be found in the curving shape of some of the plots, suggesting that they had been laid out over arable strips, with buildings constructed at the 'market' end. The Retford and Worksop roads may originally have functioned as back lanes for these new plots, although at some point the Worksop road appears to have been deliberately diverted to enter the new market area further to the south, along the line of its present route. There is some evidence in the form of a short lane and a boundary shown on early maps that there was a similar connection between the southern end of the market and the Retford road also, which would produce a remarkably symmetrical plan. Components 10 and 12 may represent later expansion southwards down High Street, perhaps in response to the diversion of the Worksop road.

Unwin (1981) used Domesday Book, the Lay Subsidies and the Hearth Tax to examine the changing importance of townships which possessed markets between the 11th and the 17th centuries, noting that for some settlements the grant of a market led to a rise in relative importance in the settlement hierarchy. Blyth was one such settlement, with the change in importance being quite dramatic. It rose from a taxation

ranking of 195 in 1086 to be as high as 7th in 1334. Other evidence also suggests that Blyth was a small but flourishing urban centre. The range of occupations has already been noted in section 5.4.9, many of which indicate a community 'as much urban as rural in character', while it would have benefited from its relative proximity to a tournament field in the 12th and early 13th centuries. Disputes over trading dues in the late 13th and 14th centuries indicate the volume and importance of the trade and traffic along the roads and rivers within the area of the priory's control, and of the increasing activity of merchants from cities such as Lincoln and York. Cartulary accounts also refer to buildings, lanes and peripheral settlements which cannot now be located, such as a *vicus* called *Albaylane*, a *vicus qui uocatur Wppyngas* and the *venella de Wayneschard* (Timson 1973).

This flourishing semi-urban centre appears to have continued successfully into the early post-medieval period. This is suggested by the *Blyth Town Book* with its records of a mayor, two chamberlains and 12 aldermen being appointed annually to carry out the business of the town between 1521 and 1535. Its markets seem to have survived the loss of the priory and continued through the 16th and 17th centuries, unlike many medieval market which failed to survive beyond the 14th century. Blyth was almost certainly assisted in this by its position on the main road north through the western part of Nottinghamshire. However, some decline in the status of the settlement may be indicated by the fact that Blyth's taxation ranking had fallen from 7th to 22nd by 1674 (Unwin 1981). There is also some evidence for population decline in the 17th century. As a result, very little expansion of the settlement beyond its medieval extent has been identified, probably being limited mainly to a few peripheral sites along the main roads (components 20-22) and to development on what had probably become the green by the 18th century (component 8).

With the decline of its market and in the absence of local mineral resources which could be exploited, together with its location away from the main canal and rail networks, Blyth remained unaffected by the growth experienced by some 19th century towns. Any expansion in population which occurred during this time was probably easily accommodated by infill of street frontages and by building to the rear of existing properties, at right angles to the road, where necessary. A few new buildings were constructed on the periphery of the village; these were exceptional, including as they did a couple of lodges, an almshouse and a tollhouse. Only in the 20th century has there been significant expansion, occurring along the roads to the south, with the A1 by-passing Blyth to the east. There has also been demolition of properties within the village, with rebuilding for housing accompanied by new access roads, most dramatically in the case of Blyth Hall.

7. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISSUES

7.1 Research questions

Nothing is known at present of pre-conquest settlement at Blyth and at Nornay, nor of the course of the rivers in earlier periods. By the time of the earliest maps the course of one, if not both rivers had been extensively modified.

A great number of questions arise regarding medieval Blyth, both with regard to specific buildings and activities and with regard to the overall layout and extent of the settlement at that time. The exact plan of the priory, its outbuildings and the extent of the precinct is unknown, as is the extent of the medieval cemetery and the relationship of the monastic cemetery with that of the parish. If the present green does indeed represent a later market place, at what date did this develop and why? Documentary references to chapels include the chapel of St James and the chapel of St Michael, as well as the hospital of St Edmund, a guild and the 'beldynge of the Chapell', the last two being referred to in the *Blyth Town Book*. Can these sites be identified and do any relate to the building on the green, traditionally called the hospital of St John the Evangelist? Particularly interesting is the fact that skeletons have been recovered from the mound upon which this building stands. What was this burial ground and for how long was it in use? A further possible site to be identified is that noted by Leland a little before he entered the town 'yn a woodes sides

token of an auncient building' (SMR 5545). He would have been approaching Blyth from the north, coming as he was from Rossington.

The locations of the mills referred to in the documents are not known with certainty. These include a 13th century windmill and possibly two watermills. According to the *Victoria County History*, there is a general lack of documentary evidence for the textile industry in Nottinghamshire in the medieval period. Identification of the site of the medieval fulling mill would be of importance, therefore, as would evidence of the dyer at Blyth recorded in the Cartulary.

It would clearly be valuable for future research on Blyth if the *Blyth Town Book* was to be transcribed and indexed.

Blyth appears to have had some urban characteristics, at least in the 16th century if not before, but did not go on to develop into a town. Can the reasons for this be identified and can the drop in population of some 46% during the 17th century be substantiated? When exactly did the market fail and why, having apparently survived into the 18th century? Did the buildings on the green shown on the map of 1782 have their origins in the market, as temporary stalls being rebuilt as permanent structures, or were they later encroachments onto a space no longer in use for markets?

The possibility of research into the pleasure grounds of Blyth Hall is suggested by the plan of 1758, if this has not already been carried out. Who designed the ornamental gardens shown on that plan and how do they compare with other gardens of the period?

7.2 Archaeological potential

7.2.1 Existing protection

Scheduled monuments

Certain nationally important archaeological sites and monuments enjoy special protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments under the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act* 1979. This protection ensures that the case for preservation is fully considered should there be any proposals for development or other work which might damage the monument. Any such proposals are subject to Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent, administered directly by the Secretary of State. They include not only demolition, damage or removal, but also restorative works. There would normally be a presumption in favour of the physical preservation of the monument.

Conservation areas

The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act* 1990 required all Local Planning Authorities to determine which parts of their areas were of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas, in order to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area. It is also their duty to review them from time to time, and to determine whether any further parts of their areas should also be designated as conservation areas.

Blyth Conservation Area was designated on May 1 1968. It includes the church of St Mary and St Martin at its northern end and extends southwards to include properties along both sides of High Street.

Listed buildings

A listed building is one recognised by the government as being of special architectural or historic interest, as specified by the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act* 1990. Listing is made at three levels of importance, Grade II, Grade II* and the most important, Grade I, and listed building consent is required, in addition to normal planning consent, before any alterations, extensions or demolitions can be made to a listed structure which might affect its character.

There are 39 listed buildings in that part of Blyth under consideration in this report. Of these, two are Grade I, namely the Priory Church of St Mary and St Martin and Blyth New Bridge. The remainder are Grade II, and all can be broken down according to their earliest structural phase as follows:

Earliest structural phase	**C16 or earlier**	**C17**	**C18**	**C19**	**C20**
Number of structures	4	5	18	11	1

Planning Policy Guidance 15 allows the creation and maintenance of a list of buildings of local historic/architectural interest, although this does not confer a statutory obligation. In Blyth and Nornay there are currently seven buildings considered to be of local interest, all of which are thought to have their origins in the 18th century.

7.2.2 Above ground remains

Much of Blyth's historic street pattern is still clearly visible today, with the convergence of several roads at the junction near the church and with the outline of the market place preserved as a village green. Along these main roads, some of the plots still retain their long linear boundaries running back from the frontage, with a curve still visible to some of those along the north-eastern side of High Street. The mound at the southern end of the green is an important early above ground feature, surmounted by a medieval building.

The standing buildings themselves are largely built of brick with clay pantile roofs. However, a few are constructed of coursed rubble, and stone is also used for some walls. Raine (1860, 50) suggested that much of the stone he saw, including that in the wall separating the churchyard from the eastern and northern sides of the church, had originated from the demolition of the priory:

> 'Everywhere in the village I see stones in the walls of houses and gardens, which by their very shape and mode of dressing tell in no ambiguous terms whence they have come, and to the wise say something more'.

Early buildings would all have been timber-framed - the vicarage in 1562 was described as ‘built of wood and covered with straw’ (Raine 1860, 62), and some timber framing survives in at least four buildings. Two of these provided samples for dendrochronology, producing dates of the late 16th century. It is almost certain that, were internal surveys to be carried out on a house to house basis, more examples of timber framing would come to light that are currently concealed behind later facades (G Beaumont pers. comm.). It may also be of benefit to reassess the 'St John's hospital' building without any preconceptions as to its date and origin, in other words not using Raine's assumptions as a guide. It was originally listed grade II* but became grade II in 1984. The site was once also scheduled but was descheduled in 1989. Any grade II listed building which has been descheduled is normally regraded to II* or grade I; however in this case, although the question was raised in the early 1990s, no decision on regrading appears to have been made.

There is a good spread of buildings from different periods at Blyth, mostly domestic, consisting of cottages and farmhouses, together with a number of inns and a couple of earlier schools and chapels, now put to other uses. There is little in the way of industrial buildings, however, apart from the old corn mill along Retford Road.

The priory church and the churchyard are also an important part of the above ground features at Blyth, both visually and in terms of the information they hold. The fabric of the church can provide information relating to the different phases of its construction, as shown in 1983, when the east end of the north aisle was recorded prior to its being faced with brick. At the same time, the removal of unstable plasterwork in the first bay of the nave revealed traces of pre-dissolution decoration (Drage 1983). The tombs and headstones in the graveyard can provide details about Blyth's past population as well as evidence from their decorative style of changes in fashion or custom.

7.2.3 Below ground remains

With only a very limited amount of archaeological work having been carried out at Blyth it is difficult to assess the degree of survival of any below ground remains.

Although the main street pattern has remained relatively unchanged, activities such as road surfacing, widening and the insertion of services are likely to have caused damage to archaeological deposits. For example, watching briefs carried out during mains reconditioning and renewal along the roadside in various places noted the disturbance of the ground by service pipes and drains. In no cases were archaeological features noted, modern road metalling and hardcore immediately overlaying undisturbed sandstone or subsoil at a depth of between 0.15m and 0.50m, depending on the site (Abbott 1993, Priest 1994).

Land along the eastern side of Bawtry Road and around the bridge has remained undeveloped through the 19th and 20th centuries and it is possible, therefore, that archaeological deposits may survive in this area. Similarly the ground in front of the church gates and the village green have both remained undeveloped, although both may have had services run across them. Both are suggested to have been former market areas which subsequently had some buildings constructed on them, evidence for which may survive below ground. The market area would be expected to be one of the most intensively occupied areas of the town. Plots around the margins could contain extensive sequences of residential and/or commercial buildings along their frontages, with outhouses, workshops and rubbish pits to the rear.

The churchyard is an important area of archaeological potential, preserving not only a section of the past population of Blyth but also possible evidence of structures which once stood within its present bounds. These include an L-shaped building shown on the plan of 1758 as abutting the western end of the church. The original vicarage probably stood close to the church and is reported by Raine (1860, 63) as having been destroyed by fire in *c.* 1650; however, the site of this building may have been destroyed during the construction of the housing estate around the church.

Many remains of the priory buildings have been similarly destroyed following the demolition of Blyth Hall. However, some evidence of these survives above ground in the scheduled area to the north of the church, and it is possible that below ground remains could exist to the east despite the extensive garden landscaping which took place in the 18th and 19th centuries. Raine recorded the finding of part of the apse foundations there in 1860, while excavations carried out by Fairweather in 1926 uncovered further wall foundations. At that time he used a probe and considered that more could still exist at the north-east end of the large apse. More recently Drage (1983) uncovered the foundations of the east wall of the north aisle beneath garden soil at a depth of 70cm, as well as a further wall extending eastwards beyond the limit of the trench.

Skeletal remains have been recovered in the past from the area to the east of the church, in the gardens of what is now Centry Garth and also from the mound on the green. Both sites therefore offer the potential for the recovery of further remains. In addition, there was a Friends' burial ground in the village, the site of which is now in a private garden.

Beyond the core of the town, the possible site of the hospital may have been destroyed during the construction of a house in the second half of the 20th century, although some evidence for it may still remain, since its exact location and extent is not known. The site of the mill has remained relatively undeveloped, although some work is currently (October 2001) being carried out on the buildings there.

The area around the two rivers, the Roche and the Ryton, offers considerable archaeological potential for evidence of early river crossings, features such as monastic fishponds, for industrial remains and for environmental work. The potential of the former is shown by excavations which were carried out in 1970 near the Old Bridge, a little to the west of the area under consideration in this report. Large pieces of worked oak were found in silt, probably representing the remains of a late medieval bridge, while stones

suggested a ford alongside the bridge (SMR 5542). As far as industrial remains are concerned, there is the possibility of finding evidence of a number of waterside industries, including fulling, corn-grinding, tanning and dying, all of which are known to have been carried out at Blyth, while the survival of oak in the silt mentioned above indicates the potential for organic remains. What is not known is the extent to which 18th century modifications to the rivers, particularly for ornamental water features, may have destroyed archaeological deposits. However, these features are themselves of archaeological interest and may survive in places.

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1922 OS 6", sheet 5 SE

KEY

- Prehistoric
- Roman

4928

4930

4785

4933

4924

EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 1

Prehistoric and Roman periods

Nottinghamshire
County Council

Trent Bridge House, Fox Road
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ
Tel: 0115 982 3823

EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 2

Blyth in 1835

(from Sanderson's 'Map of the Country 20 miles around Mansfield')

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EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 3
Medieval Components

Nottinghamshire County Council

Trent Bridge House, Fox Road
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ
Tel: 0115 982 3823

KEY

Medieval component

Area excluded from EUS

N

15

16

17

18

19

18

21

22

20

KEY

Medieval component

Post-medieval component

Area excluded from EUS

EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 4

Post-medieval Components

Nottinghamshire County Council

Trent Bridge House, Fox Road
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ
Tel: 0115 982 3823

N

KEY

- Medieval component
- Post-medieval component
- 19th century component
- Area excluded from EUS

23

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EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 5

19th Century Components

Nottinghamshire County Council

Trent Bridge House, Fox Road
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ
Tel: 0115 982 3823

N

EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 6

20th Century Development

Nottinghamshire County Council

Trent Bridge House, Fox Road
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ
Tel: 0115 982 3823

KEY

- Medieval component
- Post-medieval component
- 19th century component
- 20th century component
- Area excluded from EUS

N

EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BLYTH

Figure 7

Conservation Area, Scheduled Areas and Listed Buildings

Nottinghamshire County Council

Trent Bridge House, Fox Road
West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BJ
Tel: 0115 982 3823

KEY

- Medieval
- 16th century
- 17th century
- 18th century
- 19th century
- 20th century
- Conservation Area
- Scheduled Area