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**Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of  
The Bragborough Hall Estate,  
Braunston and Welton, Northamptonshire**

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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE BRAGBOROUGH HALL ESTATE, BRAUNSTON AND WELTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Iain Soden BA MifA

## Summary

*Bragborough Hall and its estate originate in the newly-Inclosed landscape of the late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century. It is certainly in existence by 1810. The estate was laid out amongst the ridge and furrow earthworks of the former medieval open fields of Braunston and its dependent Falclyve DMV. Most of these earthworks have disappeared since 1947. Records show that there is evidence for buried archaeology beneath the fields at selected locations on the estate.*

## Introduction and background

Bragborough Hall is a classically-inspired great house, built in 1841, which lies north-east of the village of Braunston, Northamptonshire (NGR: SP 5600 6640; Fig 1). It is set amidst a farmed estate of approximately 641 acres (249 hectares) (Fig 1). The area is crossed by the medieval road from Coventry to Northampton and the later Grand Union Canal (1793), which meets the Oxford Canal at Braunston. A disused railway also traverses the parish, the former Daventry Railway of 1863 (to Southam), which was lost as a result of Dr Beeching's rail cuts in the 1960s. All three, road, rail and canal, cut through one portion of the Bragborough estate, which falls into three separate parts, two within Braunston Parish and a third within the adjacent Welton Parish to the east.

Braunston itself is probably the successor to a medieval township which once comprised three small villages or hamlets: Braunston, Braunstonbury and Falclyve (Hall 1995, 211). The latter two settlements today are deserted medieval villages (DMVs) and are now known only from earthworks in unploughed fields.

The parish was enclosed in 1775, which dealt with a three-field medieval field system comprising Brounson Side (around the DMV of Falclyve), Tipit or Tibbits Side (also known as East Side), which ran up to Fallon Wood, and Churchill Side. If Hall's understanding (1995) of the medieval topography is correct, Bragborough stretches across parts of all three of these former field systems.

No Inclosure Map has survived from 1775 to indicate the new fields, but on the ground the present fields, with only a few exceptions, have the regular, straight-hedged lines of Parliamentary Inclosures.

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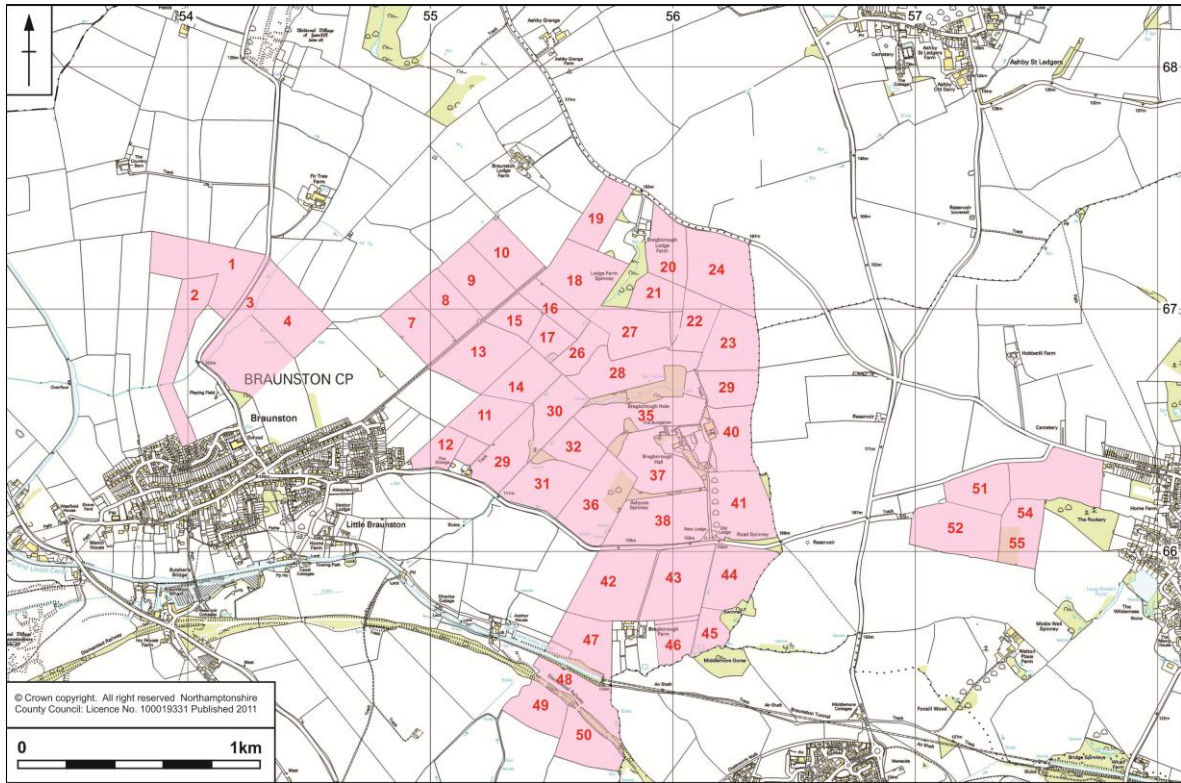


Fig 1. The Bragborough Hall Estate (numbers relate to field names, below). Drawing by Amir Bassir, with acknowledgements to Northamptonshire Archaeology, Northamptonshire County Council.

## The origins and development of the Bragborough estate

It has for some time been thought that Bragborough Hall is not the first house on the site (as suggested in the listing description, above, and indeed, even cursory scrutiny of some of the hall's outbuildings suggests that some are older than 1841, the date of the current Hall).

It is therefore worth noting first of all that the 1841 architect's plans for Bragborough allude to an earlier core to the building, suggested as an L-shaped building in plan but with no other detail apparent (NRO: 1199). This plan can in fact be seen clearly in the county map by Bryant (1827) along with its outbuildings; this older house is clearly labelled there (Fig 2).



Fig 2. Detail from Bryant's Map of Northamptonshire 1827

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The same layout of buildings can also be seen on the small-scale (2" to the mile) map produced for the fledgling Ordnance Survey surveyors in 1810. Here the house is labelled as Micklemoor House, which should not be confused with the separate Micklemoor Farm (later known as Middlemoor Farm) south of Braunston Tunnel and now on the edge of Daventry. That farm is shown on the same map but not labelled. The farm is then correctly labelled on the 1827 map (at foot of Fig 2), by which time Bragborough has adopted its new name.



Fig 3. Detail from the 1810 Ordnance Survey surveyors map ('Micklemoor House')

Further evidence has been sought for this earlier house, principally through research into its owner from before at least 1841, Richard Howson Lamb. It is clear that in the years and decades leading up to 1841, Lamb was very active in Western Northamptonshire and his growth in prominence in Braunston was gradual and early on linked to Bragborough.

No reference has been found for Bragborough or the Lambs before the Inclosure of the fields of Braunston in 1775. For this reason and scrutiny of the estate and its fields, it is reasonable to conclude that the house did not exist in any form before this date, but that these were just open fields. It is effectively an Inclosure-date house and farm in an Inclosure landscape.

The county historian John Bridges, writing c1720 (published 1792) makes no mention of the name Bragborough in Braunston. However, his successor, Rev George Baker makes a list of the principal proprietors of Braunston in 1822, including "*Richard Howson Lamb of Bragborough esq (a genteel modern residence in this parish) about 150 acres*" (Baker 1822: Vol I, 267). It is telling that Baker describes the forerunner to Bragborough Hall as *genteel* and *modern*. This suggests a house of no great age at that time, but clearly a forerunner to the present Hall.

Lamb had established himself sufficiently by 1822 to be listed as living at Bragborough with the size of his farming estate ranked alongside others (his was among the smaller principal holdings at that

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time). He is mentioned in Pigot's Northamptonshire trade directories (under persons of note) as of Bragborough or Bragborough House from the 1830s and in 1841 as of Bragborough Hall the date at which the house was enlarged.

Lamb's first arrival in the village seems to have been in or soon before 1819. In that year he was described as being the Surveyor of Highways, a government official, when he was involved in the summons of a local farmer Edmond Edmunds for breaking highway law (NRO: D2045). For the next few years Lamb seems to have been involved with Edmunds whose land he seems to have been buying steadily, along with those of another local farmer, Burton. In documents relating to these purchases of 1825, references are still made only to the old pre-enclosure field of Brounson, together with Tippett fields, land referring to a prominent local farming family of that name who lived at Wolfampcote Hall in that adjacent parish as late as the 1820s but actually dating from before Inclosure (NRO: canal deposited map no 8) (NRO: ZA1313).

As part of the 1825 purchases Lamb also acquired a farm from Edmunds. It is possible that Edmunds was experiencing financial difficulty in what was a problematic time for farming in England and Lamb was benefiting at every turn. Witnesses to these indentures included Rev John Lamb, of Westmorland, Gentleman (1759-1832). He was Rector of nearby Chipping Warden and Charwelton (Isham 1940, vol 8). He was almost certainly related and may have been Richard's father.

In 1830 Lamb was among some prominent Northamptonshire landowners who grouped together at Towcester to object to the proposed London to Birmingham Railway (NRO: Δ1478). The meeting at the White Horse Inn, Towcester was heated, drew up clear, concise objections, and was of remarkably similar vein to current protests to the HS2 line. The railway opened in 1838.

In 1835 Lamb bought out the interests of the Hall family in Braunston, augmenting his own holdings by a further 75 acres (NRO: YZ3299). For the first time some new post-enclosure field-names are mentioned, along with surveyed acreages, although some are no longer part of the estate.

The Lamb family's account book survives for the farms from 1843 to 1901, including a farm and lands they owned in Whitmore Park, Coventry. Although numerous bills of quantities are included for building works, they do not include Bragborough Hall by name, and which is not otherwise recognisable. Such works are likely to be related to the farm buildings which since 1901 were sold off and today are no longer part of the estate, Bragborough Farm and Bragborough Lodge Farm.

### Maps and plans

It is an unfortunate loss that neither Inclosure Map (1775) nor a tithe-map of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century have survived for Braunston. Early maps do survive, but of other parts of the parish (NRO: Map 4347 of 1800; Canal deposited plans no 8 of c1793 and no 25 of 1828). A small scale canal-related plan gives minimal information for one future Bragborough Hall tenancy in 1800 (NRO: Map 4347) and the depiction of the hall on Bryant's map of 1827 has been mentioned (Fig 2, above). Northamptonshire Record Office holds no First Edition map of the estate by the Ordnance Survey (OS). Thus their earliest Ordnance Survey map is the Second Edition OS of 1900 (NRO: Maps 25" OS 35.12 and 36.9). Unfortunately a parish Tithe Map of 1842, mentioned as late as 1981 as being in the Northamptonshire Record Office, has not been traced and is presumed lost.

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The 1810 Ordnance Survey surveyors map proves to be the earliest depiction of the early house and the landscape (Fig 3). Usually of no consequence as a usable map, the reliability of the depiction of Bragborough (or Micklemoor as then called) is confirmed by the 1827 county map by Bryant. It also shows the new field system only a generation after Inclosure, although it does not indicate the extent of the estate or name any fields.

Lamb's lands were affected by the construction in 1863 of a railway branch line from Daventry to Southam, to which (following his objections of 1830) no contemporary objection is on record (NRO: deposited plans no 93). This detailed route-plan also contains an early Ordnance Survey map depicting the entire route at small scale. A tiny but recognisably-labelled Bragborough Hall is shown.

The majority of the estate is best shown in the first surveyed depiction for its sale on the death of Richard Howson Lamb in 1879 (NRO: D1522). During his lifetime and since the mention by Baker in 1822, Lamb had increased the size of the estate considerably and at its sale it measured 460 acres, although its boundaries differed from those of today. It included three farms. There was only one field north of the Ashby Road (where now there are eleven and no land in Welton parish was owned by Bragborough). Similarly another block of land was sold as a separate lot which did not continue with the estate, the Nelson Inn by the canal with land to its north. Another lot to the south of the canal and railway was also lost at this point, perhaps because its now triple separation from Bragborough, by road, canal and railway, made it less attractive to the new Bragborough purchaser, Mr John Rowland Lovell Hazeldine and his wife Sarah Grace Bovey. The map on which the lots are drawn in style is clearly that of the prevailing Ordnance Survey.

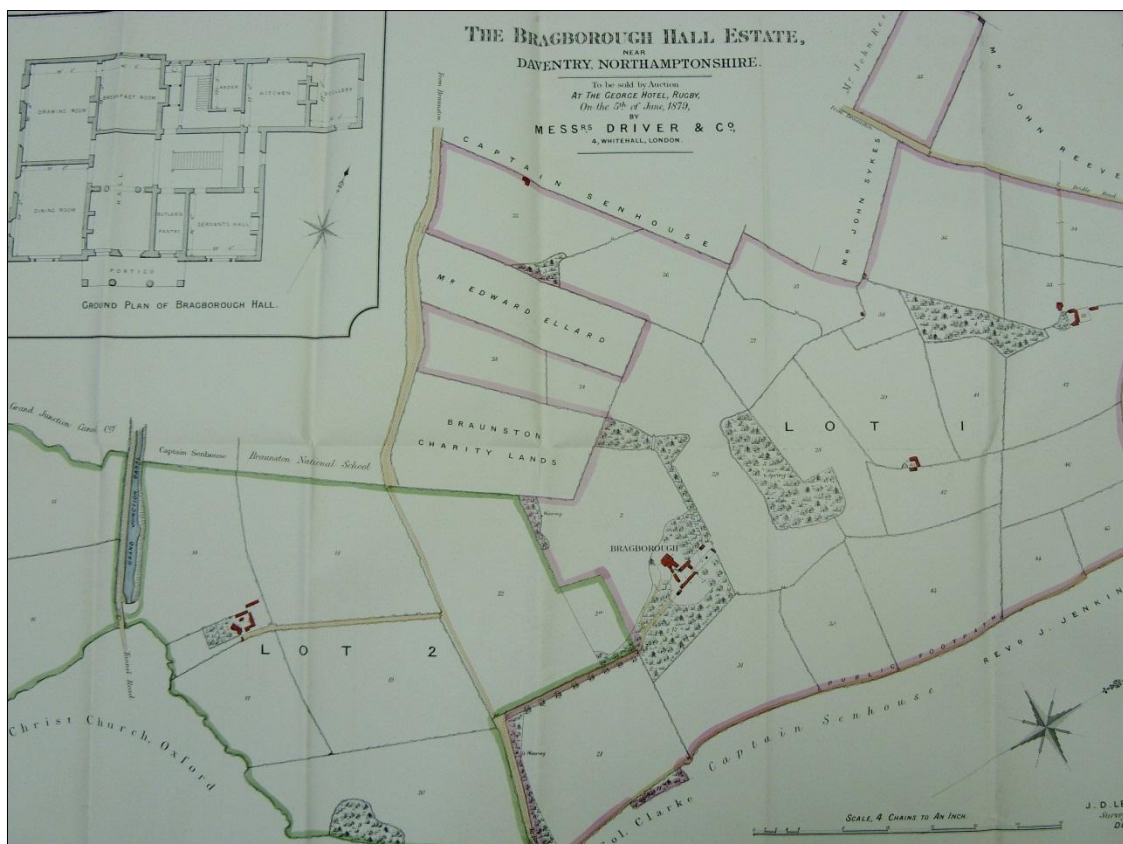


Fig 4. Detail from the 1879 Sale Map; North to the right

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Hazeldine lived and farmed at Bragborough for little more than a decade and his death in 1891 has left only continuing entries in the farm income and expenditure records (NRO:D2045). It is believed his wife continued as the owner of the estate although it was from then tenanted out.

The new occupier upon Hazeldine's death (he is buried in Braunston Churchyard) was Captain George William Hutton Riddell (b1836). He was married to Lady Evelyn, the second daughter of the Earl of Craven of Coombe Abbey in Warwickshire, some 20 miles away. Although of Scots parentage and born in Lincolnshire, he was already familiar with the area, having been educated locally at Rugby School.

As a tenant, the death of Riddell did not precipitate another sale. His wife continued to farm for Sarah Grace Bovey. Thus when she in turn died after the First World War, it led only to the sale of the house contents. The Cravens were burdened by death duties and the loss of the son and heir in the war. When Lady Evelyn died soon after, her family did not step in and the Bragborough house contents were sold in 1925. Estate ownership probably remained with Sarah Grace Bovey, who lived on until 1938. In 1932, as part of a National Survey, children of Braunston Parish School, mapped the field names of the parish including Bragborough.

Bragborough was requisitioned by the War Department during the Second World War and was given over to St Bartholomew's Hospital as a satellite site outside London. Here many hundreds of babies were born and the house was probably much altered internally for this new, brief institutional role.

After World War II Bragborough came into the hands of the McGowan family, who owned it until 2011. From another of their properties in North Wales are alleged to have come the Grade II-listed stone well-head in the gardens west of the hall. Various outlying utilitarian buildings at the hall's own home farm were erected for them between 1946 and 1949 (NRO: LG35/1/388, 436, 473 and 520). These still stand in a group to the north-east of the hall. Other buildings also stand in proximity to the hall, namely:

- Stables for riding horses: early 19<sup>th</sup> century, upper floor converted to a flat
- Barn: early 19<sup>th</sup> century, converted into a cottage
- Working horse stables
- Brick store
- Cottage: 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Two gate lodges: one 19<sup>th</sup> century but post-1879 (Old Lodge), the other of 1925-30 (New Lodge)

These are not further presented in this report on the wider landscape of the estate.

### **Aerial Photographs and earthworks**

Much of the estate is today given over to arable farming. However as late as 1947 there was a great deal of fallow land or land which was used for long-term grazing. Aerial Photographs taken by the RAF in 1947 show that much of this contained the earthwork remains of medieval ridge-and-furrow cultivation (NRO: APs 2350, 2352, 2354, 4276 and 4356). Although Braunston parish as a whole still contains a great deal, today five fields still contain upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks on the

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estate, such as NG5201 (Fig 5; modern name). Elsewhere ploughing has removed most of the earthwork traces (Thanks to Odette Phipps for pointing out traces I had not seen).



Fig 5. Field NG5201: Remains of ridge and furrow visible in bands of white/yellow wild flowers

Ridge and furrow earthworks were generally left fossilised in the landscape when it was turned over from arable regime to sheep-farming, generally in the sixteenth century. The earthworks can be used to plot the former medieval strips within the open fields when they are extensive and detailed enough. Subsequent Parliamentary enclosure superimposed a more recent field system upon this landscape and the earthworks were lost as the land was ploughed again.

By its very nature, ridge and furrow earthworks show that a location lay in the open fields of a nearby settlement, (whether in this case it is Braunston or Falclyve). Here it is a good indicator that Bragborough probably has no medieval precursor to Lamb's first house which goes with the recently inclosed landscape.

For pre-medieval archaeology, excavation has shown that ridge and furrow has generally been very destructive of any earlier buried archaeology. While buried features can and do survive beneath the heaped-up earth of the ridges, the repeated ploughing of the same furrows cuts evenly-spaced swathes into the subsoil below. Thus where there has existed earlier archaeology, it is often shown to be much denuded, surviving in only evenly-spaced strips.

Aerial photographs of 1947 show that at that date only Barby, Lennox, Top Ground, Magna, Grain Store, Gravel Pit and Drive, Canal Tunnel and Turkey (modern names) had no evidence of Ridge and furrow, plus most of Brickhill in Welton Parish. However, given the occurrence of ridge and furrow earthworks visible on those photographs in all of the other field parcels, it is likely that these too were once given over to this same cultivation regime. This means that the whole estate once had such earthworks ploughed into it.

### **Estate Field names and farming continuity:**

The absence of an Inclosure Map and a Tithe Map for a Parish can be problematic. However in this case estate sales and other documents provide a clear story of relative continuity of the estate.



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Most field names are known back to at least 1879 and in all probability back to their formalisation after the initial Inclosure in 1775. It is clear from the names in use in the 1820s 30s and 40s, that fields still related to their un-hedged pre-Inclosure medieval field systems and that new names were adopted slowly. Thus an indenture of 1825 might relate loosely to old systems long irrelevant since 1775. The descent of the historic field names, now split into 55 land parcels, is shown below.

None of these historic fieldnames are significant in indicating the presence of buried archaeology, but are typical post-inclosure names. Mainly they relate to topographical features, their gradient, current use or their acreage at the time. Others indicate their relative proximity to other parcels, while some indicate contemporary neighbours. Names such as 'banky furlong' may indicate particularly fine ridge and furrow at that time, now gone. Occasional duplicates may have caused some confusion, such as the Oxeys, a name which is known to go back to 1255 (but which plot is unknown) ("an ox-enclosure": Gover et al 1933, 275).

The occurrence of Brickhill in Welton parish may suggest that the field there has previously been exploited for its clays. The previous mention of pits (albeit mentioning shell and stone) is a further indication that these fields contain former quarries, although now filled in and made good.

Patches of woodland have fared better as longer-lived names in the landscape. Bragborough Hole, Ashpole Spinney and Swinnels have remained the same for at least a century. They remain recognisable features in the landscape. In the case of Bragborough Hole (Fig 6), the low-lying wooded valley means that it has not been useful for much else, and it is today an enclosed covert. The woodland probably dates to not long after 1827 (when it is not shown on the map of that year). The straight lines of distinctive Inclosure fields are obvious on the map. On the ground it is best seen in the arrow-straight track which leads north-east from Braunston village and which divides two field groups of the estate. Historically it was ironically called the Ashby Road, although it today turns into a bridleway alone (Fig 7).



Fig 6 Bragborough Hole, looking west



Fig 7. Ashby Road: an Inclosure track

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Field Names descent: West of Barby Lane

2012 name	1932	1879	1864	1835	1793
1. NG0917					Great Headland Furlong
2. NG0104					Brounson Butts
3. NG3599	No names found				

Field Names descent: East of Barby Lane and West of Ashby Road

2012 name	1932	1879	1850s-64	1835	1793
4. Brook	No names found				
5. Rainbow	Colley Leys				
6. Ashby	Mill Hill				
7. Ridgeway	Ridgeway				
8. Ring Rose	Ridgeway				
9. Burtons	Ridgeway				
10. Johnsons	Ridgeway	Tibbetts Field			

Field Names descent: East of Ashby Road and north of Welton Road

2012 name	1932	1879	1850s-64	1835	1793
11. Allotment	Allotments				
12. Strawberry	No names found				
13. Butlins	Big Ground			Great Ground	
14. Grange	Big Ground			Great Ground	
15. NG3797	The Meadows				RELICT RIDGE AND FURROW
16. NG5201	The Meadows				RELICT RIDGE AND FURROW
17. NG4987	The Meadows				RELICT RIDGE AND FURROW
18. Knowles	Knowles	Knowles		Knowles	
19. Barby		Field			
20. House	Dairy Field	Dairy Field			

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2012 name	1932	1879	1850s-64	1835	1793
21. Top Ground (west part)	Brindle	Brindle or Grindle			
22. Top Ground (middle part)	14 acres	Barn Ploughed Ground			
23. Top Ground (east part)	14 acres	Top ground			
24 Lennox (west)	Arable	Field			
25. Lennox (east)	Seeds	Field			
26. NG6183	Little Meadow				
27. Washpit	Banky Furlong	Barn ground			
28. Lower Rookery	Bragborough Hole	Top Oxy			
29. Turkey	Harris		Harris		Harris's Quartern
30. Hovel		Lower Oxy			
31. Glebe (west half)	The meadow	(Not then part of estate)			
32. Little Glebe (west half)	The meadow	(Not then part of estate)			
33. Glebe (east half)	Hancocks				
34. Little Glebe (east half)	Hancocks				
35. Upper Park	Rookery Hill	Rookery Hill			RELICT RIDGE AND FURROW
36. Hump Back	Big Ground	(Not then part of estate)			
37. Middle Park	Wallam Way Wallam Way	Wallam Way Wallam Way			The Walincourse RELICT RIDGE AND FURROW
38. Lower Park					The Wallincourse
39. Magna	Breeze Nob				
40. Grain Store		Field			
41. Drinking Ground	Drinking Ground	Drinking Ground			

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Field Names descent: South of Welton Road

2012 name	1932	1879	1850s-64	1835	1793
42. Gravel Pit	New Piece	Field			
43. Drive	Middle New Piece				
44. Seeds (north part)	Swinnell				
45. Seeds (south part)	Bottom Swinnell		Swinnell Plantation		
46. Eden	No names found				
47. Canal Tunnel	Mill Orchard	Cooper's Furlong			
48. Canal	Top Oxy	Washbrook or Top Oxy			
49. Far Railway		Luggers' Hill			
50. Near Railway	Bottom Oxy	Lower Oxy			

Field Names descent: detached lands in Welton Parish

2012 name	1932	1879	1850s-64	1835	1793
51. Brickhill (north part)	Shells Pits				
52. Brickhill (south part)	The Grove/Stone Pit Ground				
53. Brickhill (north east part)	Dairy Ground				
54. NG4517 (north part)	The Rookery				
55. NG4517 (south east part)	Pheasantry				

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## Archaeology in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record

A search has been made of the computerised map-based Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record. The record collates information on statutory designations such as Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings, but also sets out the results of both concerted and accidental discovery of archaeological remains, such as from aerial photographs taken during dry summers and casual finds in the fields. The record shows the following sites and assets are known or suspected to exist below the fields of the estate.

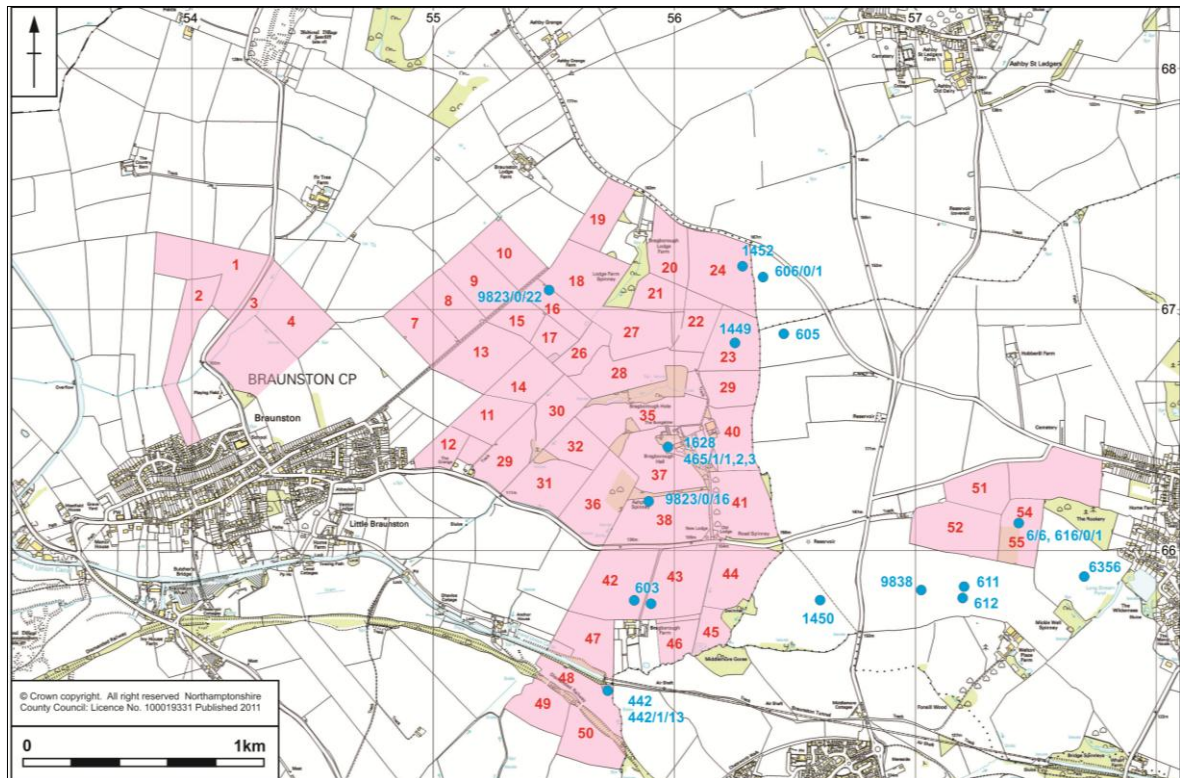


Fig 8. Historic Environment data superimposed on the Ordnance Survey base. Amir Bassir, with acknowledgements to Northamptonshire Archaeology, Northamptonshire County Council

The following is a summary of the records pertinent to the various parcels of the Bragborough Hall estate, mapped above. The following either exist within the estate or are so close as to be relevant to a nearby field parcel. My thanks to Charlotte Walker of Northamptonshire Archaeology for sifting the estate-related data from the wider record:

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HER No	NGR: SP	Details of results
1628	5600 6650	Bragborough Hall Park. "Bragborough Hall 1856"; view of house across parkland with grazing animals by George Clarke
442/1	7250 5383	Route of the Grand Junction Canal. Built in the 1790s
606/0/1	564 671	Possible medieval building. 14th century pottery and tile were found on Bragborough Hill
465/1/3	5602 6640	Well Head c 18m west of Bragborough Hall. Listed Building Grade II (no 5/66) ( <b>Individually listed</b> )
465/1/1	5601 6643	Bragborough Hall. Country house c 1841 for R H Lamb, incorporating earlier work. The plans dated 1841 are in the Northampton Record Office and are signed by the builder William Thomson. Listed Building Grade II (5/64)
465/1/2	5606 6643	The Old Lodge on East side of Drive to Bragborough Hall. Gate lodge c 1841. Listed Building Grade II (5/65) ( <b>The New Lodge is thus not individually listed</b> )
1449	5618 6677	Possible prehistoric enclosure. Double ditched enclosure with associated activity. Aerial photographic evidence
605	5641 6683	Possible prehistoric enclosure and other activity. Aerial photographic evidence
1452	5627 6716	Possible prehistoric enclosures and other activity. Aerial photographic evidence
9823/0/16	5595 6635	Area of survival of ridge and furrow in Middle Park and Upper Park
9823/0/22	5573 6713	Area of survival of ridge and furrow in The Meadows (now 3 fields)
603	5588 6581	Possible Bronze Age Funerary Activity/Prehistoric Settlement.
1450	5660 6585	Uncertain activity, probably prehistoric
442/1/13	5571 6547	West entrance to Braunston Tunnel. Listed building Grade II (No 5/80)
616	5744 6609	Undated industrial activity. Earthwork mounds shown on First Edition Ordnance Survey map, thought to be the result of surface quarrying
612	572 659	Unstratified Roman pottery. A few sherds of greyware were found in 1969
611	572 659	Probable early Saxon burial site. In 1778 two skeletons were found with two small bronze brooches of the square headed pattern and beads of glass and amber. Between the two was a small urn of pottery, not large enough to hold a cremation burial, plus coins of Constantine and Flavia perforated for use as pendants. Other burials were probably destroyed without record.
9838/0/1	5705 6585	Possible enclosures and ditches, undated. Aerial photographic evidence

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HER No	NGR: SP	Details of results
618/1	5790 6650	Possible Medieval/Post Medieval Rabbit Warren. Field-name-Coney Gray
9837/0/6	5774 6647	Area of survival of ridge and furrow
6856	5779 6569	Welton Place landscape park. House no longer stands

Table listing the Historic Environment Record Data mapped on or close to the Bragborough Estate

### Conclusions

The Bragborough Hall Estate has its origins around a slightly older, less grand farmhouse, but is entirely a creation of the Post-Inclosure landscape of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was first mapped in 1810. Some survival of original or near-original Inclosure fieldnames has been demonstrated from historic documents. However many newer fieldnames are currently in use, which do not relate to their predecessors.

The estate has grown steadily from its first stated size of 150 acres in 1822. However, an estate-sale in 1879 and the requisitioning of the hall during the Second World War have provided in the one instance a wealth of landscape data, and in the other a break in continuity. The loss of the dependent farms after 1901, even though much of their land remained with Bragborough Hall, has robbed the estate of a documentary record after that date which might have thrown further light on the estate.

There remains potential for future research in the nineteenth-century estate within the farm account books which cover the period 1843-1901, which have both landscape data and farm-buildings related material, including construction work. However, they do not appear to relate to the Hall itself.

Braunston parish as a whole still contains a large amount of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation earthworks, and the Bragborough estate retained a similar preponderance of these earthworks until at least 1947. Since then, however, all but a few fields have lost these earthworks in a return to an intensive arable regime.

The Northamptonshire Historic Environment record shows that a few archaeological sites do underlie the fields of the estate in a few areas and others lie nearby beyond the edge of the estate. They are uncharacterised by fieldwork. Most appear to be Prehistoric in form, based upon other examples better known. However, their exact date, depth of burial, extent and state of preservation are not known. There is also a focus of Roman archaeology to the south-east of the estate, recorded during the construction of the adjacent Middlemore estate in Daventry's more recent expansion. This may extend into the extreme south-east of the estate.

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1828 Deposited (canal) Plan 25 (NRO)

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