

The Historic towns of Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey

YAXLEY

HUNTINGDONSHIRE

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List of Abbreviations Used in the Text

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
BGS	British Geological Survey
CCC	Cambridgeshire County Council
CUCAP	Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs format
ECB	Events in Cambridgeshire
GENUKI	Genealogy of the UK and Ireland
HECA	Historic Environment Characterisation Area
HER	Historic Environment Record
HRO	Huntingdon Record Office
LB	Listed Building
MCB	Monuments in Cambridgeshire
PCAS	Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquities Society
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
RCHM(E)	Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
SCB	Source number for a fieldwork report in Cambridgeshire
SM	Scheduled Monument
VCH	Victoria County History

SUMMARY

The parish of Yaxley, in the district of Huntingdonshire, lies within three Historic Landscape Character Areas. The western and northern parts are in the Northamptonshire Clayland Border (HECA 6), the south central part is in the Great Fen (HECA 7) and the eastern part is in the Peterborough Skirtland (HECA 5). The historic core lies wholly within the first of these three areas.

Very little is known of pre-medieval Yaxley, although finds of prehistoric flint and the remains of a Roman field-system at Manor Farm would point to activity within the present village.

In the Late Saxon period Yaxley was one of the earliest and most important possessions of Thorney Abbey. It later became the centre of administration of Norman Cross Hundred.

The original nucleus of the medieval settlement focused on the Church of St Peter and on the manorial moated site further to the north. At some stage the settlement shifted towards the port at the landward end of Yaxley Lode and developed into a small market town under the lordship of the Abbey. The settlement benefited from access to communication routes through the fen via the meres and the lodes, and on the upland via established roads. Tolls and duties levied on goods, fisheries on the meres and windmills were a further source of revenue for the Abbey and, indirectly, a source of prosperity for the settlement as a whole.

Despite the existence of a chartered market, Yaxley never attained any status as a borough, although the inhabitants appear to have enjoyed some degree of control in juridical matters.

The settlement was probably affected by general economic recession caused by climatic changes, wars abroad, disease and village risings during the 14th and early 15th century and, more specifically, by the suppression of the town market and the Dissolution of Thorney Abbey during the 16th century.

After the Dissolution the former manor of the Abbey remained under ownership the crown until the beginning of the 17th century when it was sold to the City of London. The manor was later acquired by the Proby Family, former lessors of a site of the manor known as 'Burystead' Manor during the reign of Elizabeth I. Its descent followed the Proby family until the beginning of the 20th century.

The parish of Yaxley was enclosed in 1767 by Act of Parliament.

During the post-medieval period the fen was progressively drained for land reclamation and the port became redundant.

By the beginning of the 19th century the medieval burgage-like plots fronting both sides of Main Street were densely built-up. Expansion continued at a steady pace, with further subdivision of the earlier land plots throughout the 19th and early part of the 20th century.

Modern development has been the result of population growth after the Second World War.

INTRODUCTION

This report is an archaeological and historical assessment of Yaxley (Fig 1) and forms part of the Cambridgeshire Extensive Urban Survey of 28 historic settlements in Cambridgeshire. This project, funded by English Heritage, forms part of a nationwide reassessment of the management of the urban archaeological resource. The original EUS project was carried out between 1999 and 2003, and involved work by Quinton Carroll, Bob Hatton, and Rebecca Casa-Hatton, all of Cambridgeshire County Council. It was refreshed and completed by Steven Morgan of Oxford Archaeology (East) in 2014.

A number of sources have been used to compile this report including the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record, the Database of Listed Buildings held by the County Planning Department, and various cartographic and documentary records, in particular the Victoria County History. The maps and tables were prepared using the computerised mapping system and database of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record.

This report presents the findings of the assessment and characterisation stage of the process. A further stage of works, carried out by CCC, provides a strategy outlining management guidance for the defined environment resource.

In addition to the written and illustrated reports, a computer-based digital mapping and database has been created using Exegesis Geographical Information System (GIS) and forms an important element of the project outputs. It is intended that elements of this report will be made available online.

The study area focuses geographically on the historic core of the village of Yaxley as defined on Fig 2, and chronologically from the Palaeolithic through to c.1900 AD. Where appropriate, these restrictions may be exceeded on occasion. The definition of the historic core is based on the extent of settlement in the village at the time of the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1885).

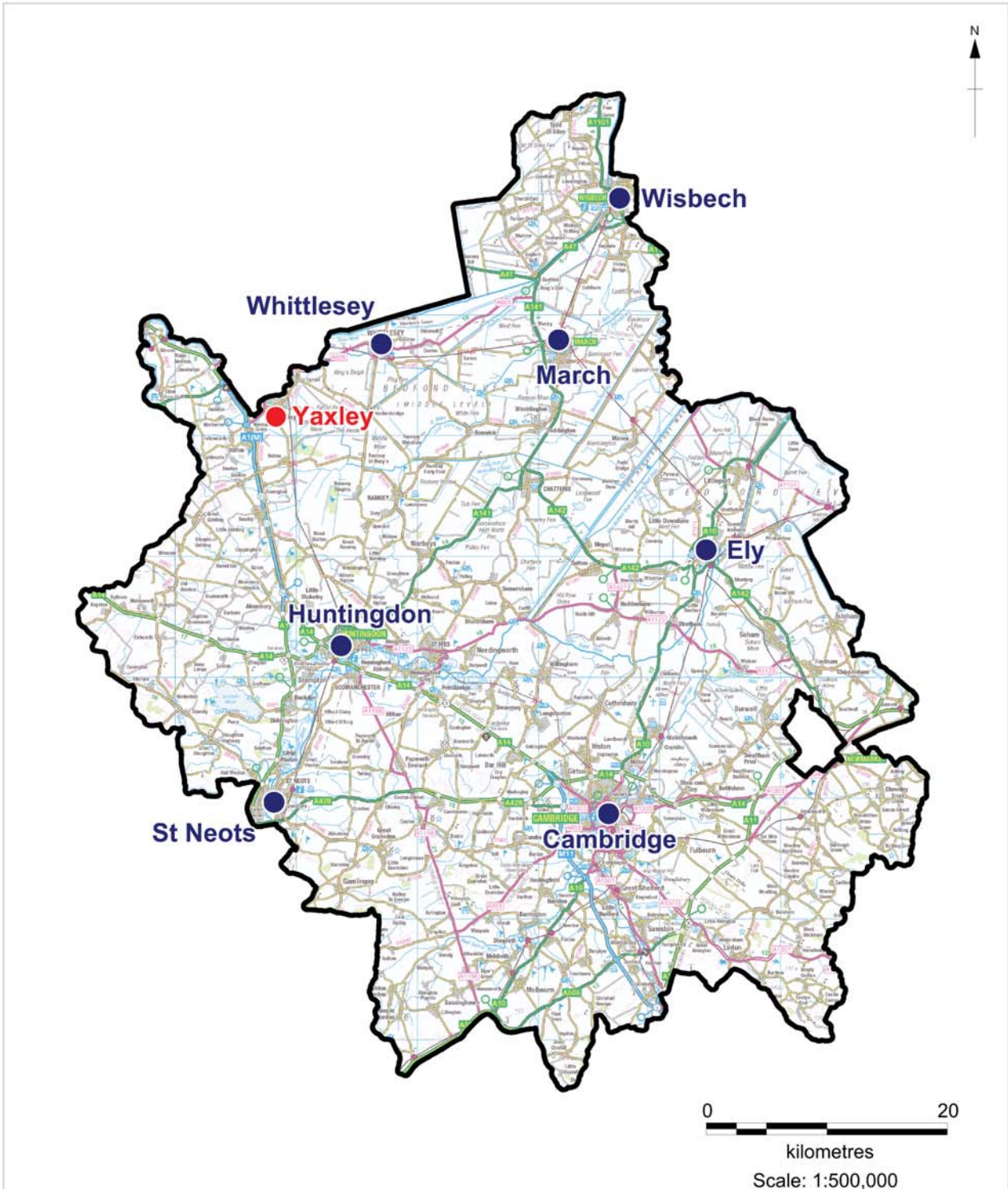


Fig 1 Location of Yaxley

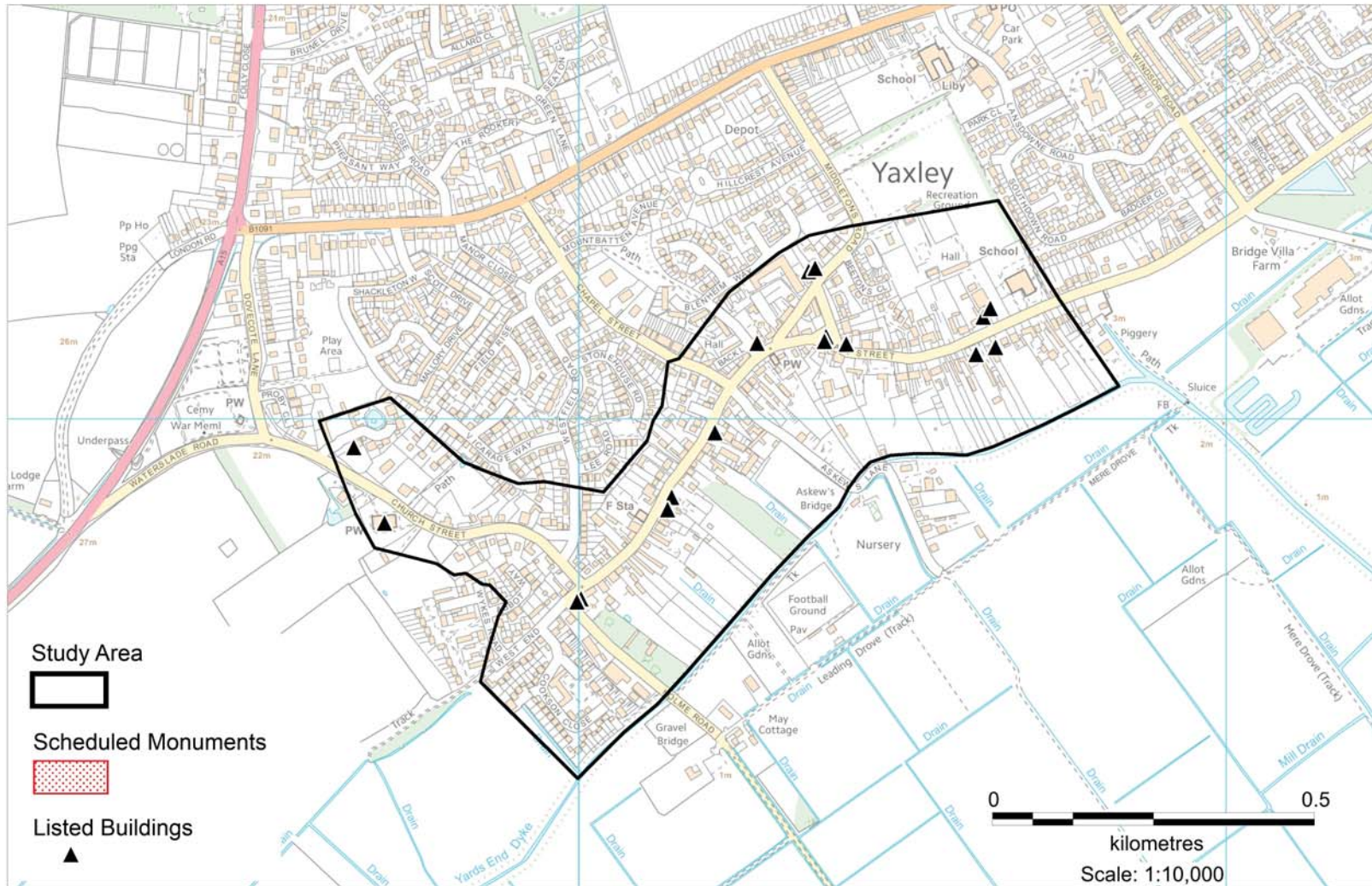


Fig 2 Map of Historic Core

LANDSCAPE

Location and Topography

The village of Yaxley lies approximately 6km south of Peterborough, and about 3km east of the A1(M). Presently, the parish as a whole covers an area of c. 1330ha. The nucleated settlement lies to the east of the A15 (London Road) and is crossed by the B1091 (Broad Way). To the west is the line of the North Eastern Railway. Conquest Lode marks the boundary between the parishes of Yaxley and Farcet although the two villages have grown along the B1091 in both directions so that they almost form a continuous linear settlement.

The village is located at a height of between 10m and 20m AOD. To the south the contour drops sharply to 0m AOD towards Yaxley Fen. The land is mostly arable.

In the Fenland Survey (Hall 1992) Yaxley is included in the region that comprises the fens of Yaxley and Farcet.

Geology

The geology of the region consists of bedrock of Oxford Clay underlying boulder clay on the uplands. The Oxford Clay has been extensively quarried by the London Brick Company. Yaxley Fen consists of deep peat without any marine clay. There was continuous growth of peat until drainage in the 17th century. Peat loss here has been considerable, at an average rate of 3.3cm yearly between 1947 and 1983 (Hall 1992, 19). Although several metres of peat have disappeared, the fen extends across much of the same area as it did before drainage.

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

Archaeological Evidence

A summary of archaeological data within the historic core of Yaxley is contained in the Cambridgeshire HER. Using the convention for the HER, there have been five Events within the historic core. Grey literature relating to the latter can be found at Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record. HER numbers in this study are preceded by ECB for an event or MCB for a monument. Every event has a fieldwork report and these are listed in the bibliography with their SCB number - the source number for the report. A list of all monuments and events for the historic core can be found in Appendix 1.

The distribution of entries is conditioned by the extent of archaeological work undertaken within and immediately outside the historic nucleus of the village. Many prehistoric finds are without provenance and generically located within the parish. The HER collection represents a variable source of information that has been influenced by fieldwork strategies, collection of finds, antiquarian observations, local and professional interests. The degree of accuracy of the entry is therefore variable.

Several pieces of work have taken place in the historic core. Most of this work seems to have been concentrated around the western part of the core and includes an assessment (ECB85), evaluation (ECB84) and subsequent excavations (ECB86) at Manor Farm carried out by the Fenland Archaeological Trust (French 1991), BUFAU (Hughes and Jones 1998) and the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (Regan 1998) respectively. Immediately to the east of Manor Farm, at Vicarage Way (ECB1116), an evaluation was undertaken by the Fenland Archaeological Trust (Fenland Archaeological Trust 1996). The only other work in the core was an evaluation in its north-eastern part, at Middleton Road, undertaken by Archaeological Solutions (Barlow and Thompson 2010).

Listed Buildings

Yaxley village contains one Grade I Listed Building (LBI), St Peter's Church, and 14 Grade II Listed Buildings (LBII), including Manor Farm.

The buildings are located along both sides of West End/Main Street and Middletons Road at whose junction lies the village Green. The church of St Peter and Manor Farm are located in Church Street.

Two of the buildings are classed as religious: the medieval Parish Church of St Peter and a 19th century Non-Conformist Chapel. There are four domestic buildings that date from the early 17th to the late 18th century. Four buildings are classed as domestic/commercial and date between the early 18th and early 19th century. In addition, there are two Public Houses dating to the 17th and early 18th century, respectively. Finally, civic buildings include the School, a milestone and the village pump, all of 19th century date.

Three of the domestic buildings on Main Street are Registered Buildings at Risk. The condition of preservation of the other buildings is generally good.

Of particular interest is the Church of St Peter (LB415307, HER01706). The original 13th century church had a cruciform plan of which the perimeter walls and the ends of the transept survive. The interior was altered between 1290 and 1300 by the addition of the north and south chapels to the chancel, and by the widening of the nave aisles. Around the middle of the 14th century the east wall of the chancel was

rebuilt or refaced. In the course of the second half of the 15th century the nave, the clerestorey and the south porch were reconstructed, and the west tower built. The church was restored in 1906-10 (RCHME 1926, 303b, 1).

Inside the church there are original 14th century paintings (HER01706b) that bear stylistic similarities to paintings found in churches at Castor, Etton, and Peakirk (near Peterborough). A gravestone of Nene Valley marble was probably carved in the 13th century (HER01706a).

Some 130m to the north-west of the church is Manor Farm (LB 415308, HER01028). The farmhouse was built in the early 17th century on an earlier medieval moated site referred to in historical sources as Burystead Manor. The post-medieval house was extensively modernized and by the time of the RCHME survey it was of a 'T'-shaped plan, with the cross-wing at the east (RCHME 1926, 307b-308a, 2). The west wing was pulled down in the early 1960s. Architectural fragments are contained in the west yard wall.

Conservation Area

The parish of Yaxley includes one Scheduled Ancient Monument, the Napoleonic Prisoners-of-War Camp at Norman Cross (SM268), which lies outside the scope of this report.

There are no other conservation or designation areas within the village.

Documentary Evidence

There is no survey of the documentary sources in Cambridgeshire. A listing of historical documents is provided by Rae and Saunders (1980). Original archive research is not undertaken as part of this study. For the present study reference is made to secondary sources. Unless otherwise cited, the following account is based upon the documentary study by W. Page 1974, Vol. III (VCH).

General outlines of the history of the county and accounts of individual parishes based on documentary sources can be found in the VCH of Huntingdonshire, 3 volumes and index volume. In addition, the RCHM(E) of Huntingdonshire provides accounts and descriptions of extant monuments.

There are also regional studies that concentrate on specific research topics, e.g. place-names (Mawer and Stenton 1969), drainage of the Fenland (Darby 1983), and history of medieval Cambridgeshire (Darby 1977; Kirby and Oosthuizen 2000).

Cartographic Evidence

Pre-enclosure cartographic evidence for the parish of Yaxley comprises a series of maps of Huntingdonshire Fen that were commissioned from the 17th century as part of the fen surveys undertaken in advance of drainage of the Bedford Level (Page 1974).

The parish was enclosed in 1767, but there is no surviving map. The first comprehensive and detailed map of the parish was produced in 1821 by T. Lovell, 'based on the old Enclosure and Ancient Maps of the allotments'. The Map was probably commissioned by the Proby who had been elevated to Barons Carysfort.

The Tithe Map of 1849 shows only the fen and Trundle Mere to the south of the village, including Yaxley Lode and Pig Water Dyke (Yards End Dyke) that marked the rear of the house plots on Main Street. The fen is also crossed by a series of droves leading to reclaimed plots of land, and by the North Eastern Railway line. Droving reached its peak between the 17th and mid 19th century, which correspond with the establishment of the turnpike system, and died out abruptly with the advent of the railway.

Later maps include editions of the Ordnance Survey from the end of the 19th century onwards.

By 1821 the village had expanded along Main Street, still retaining elements of the medieval plan, such as the Green (known as The Hill on the earlier editions of the OS), and the overall street layout of the historic village was characterised by *burgage*-like plots fronting Main Street.

The medieval street plan is that of a typical linear settlement with a single row of house plots on each side of Main Street. The original nucleus focused on the church and on the manorial site at Church Street, on the 20m contour, the highest point of the area. Subsequently, the village shrunk and shifted towards Yaxley Lode.

The site of the medieval port is unknown. It was possibly located at the landward end of the Lode itself where goods would have been unloaded. The medieval market was probably also located near the landward end of the Lode. It is interesting to note that on the Lovell's Map of 1821 the tract of Main Street between the Green and the Lode is wider, possibly suggesting that the road was originally widened to accommodate a market.

By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey Map at the end of the 19th century the plots within the village were subdivided into smaller plots. Progressive infilling of plots continued throughout the following century, together with northwards and westwards expansion radiating from the medieval nucleus. The village Green is still preserved today.

Aerial Photographic Evidence

Aerial photographs for Yaxley belong to the CUCAP collection. The HER has no overlays of plotted photographs. Aerial photographs pre-dating development along and off Church Street show areas of ridge and furrow around the medieval shrunken village (HER01427; 11336).

Other Surveys

Yaxley Fen has been included in the Fenland Survey (Hall 1992; Hall and Coles 1994). English Heritage began the funding of Wetland Archaeological Surveys in 1973 (Somerset Level Project). The Fenland Project started in 1976 covering the former wetlands in Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire Norfolk and Suffolk. The survey, however, has not been extended to the uplands.

The parish was included in the HECA survey.

PERIOD SYNOPSES AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Parish

There follows an overview of the archaeology of the parish of Yaxley followed by a detailed discussion of the archaeology of the historic core on a period by period basis.

Yaxley Fen consists of deep peat that produced no prehistoric sites during the Fenland Survey (Hall 1992, 19).

Besides a Palaeolithic hand axe from the village (HER01419), the HER does not record any finds dating to the early prehistoric period.

In the course of the Early Mesolithic the present fen basin was dry land drained by a series of rivers flowing out into a major outlet through the Wash. Throughout the Mesolithic period the water-table rose. As a consequence, early sites in the fen are likely to have been buried.

Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts from the parish (namely lithics) are also rare and often unprovenienced (HER01428, 02924). Bronze axes have been found in Yaxley Fen (Fox 1923, 64). During recent archaeological investigations near Manor Farm prehistoric flint was recovered from a pit and also found unstratified throughout the site (Begg 1993). Iron Age flints and a pit containing an Early Bronze Age Beaker sherd have recently been discovered on a site at 2 Park Close (ECB4010, Rees 2013). Another recent excavation in the village, at land of the Broadway (HER52131), uncovered an Iron Age roundhouse and ditches and structures dating to the Roman period (Phillips 2011).

The fen basin does not appear to have attracted occupation in Roman times, as the fen itself was too deep to support occupation. However, the high land was densely occupied and exploited.

Following a period of military activity in the region, civilian settlements began to expand along and off Ermine Street that acted as a catalyst for occupation. Availability of local raw material (clay and water), together with the presence of an established communication network would have prompted light industrial activity and trade. Furthermore, the fen nearby was a source of food and summer pasture for grazing. The local economy was predominantly based on agriculture and livestock management, including breeding of horses for use in the Fen (Ellis *et al.* 1998).

In contrast with the situation for the neighbouring Ortons (Peterborough) to the north, and Sawtry and Glatton to the south, there is very little evidence for occupation on the high ground at Yaxley. An evaluation conducted at Norman Cross in advance of the widening of the A1 produced evidence for occupation from the 2nd to the early 4th century in the form of a field system. There was no evidence for structures despite finds (pottery, stone and roofing slates) indicative of domestic occupation nearby (Ellis *et al.* 1998).

An Early Roman presence within the present village is attested by remains of a field system recorded to the north of Manor Farm where two small ditches produced sherds of 2nd century pottery (Hughes and Jones 1998). Residual sherds of Early Roman pottery were also found during investigations at Manor Farm (Regan 1998).

At Cow Bridge, to the south of the village, sherds of 2nd to 4th century pottery and kiln debris (HER01628/Hall 1992, YAX U1) would indicate long-term pottery production.

On the eastern side of Dovecote Lane a watching brief was conducted in 1999 in advance of the construction of an access road for the new housing estate (Challands 1999). During the watching brief evidence emerged for pits, postholes and ditches dating to the 12th-13th century. Compaction caused by 20th century brick rubble spreads had destroyed shallower features.

Historic Core Plan Form Components

The following is a list of components that have been identified for the historic core of Yaxley. Meaningful mapping of the historic core is not possible for any evidence pre-dating the Anglo-Saxon period. The boundaries of these components have therefore been defined by elements of the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval development of the town. Each is a region defined chronologically, so there are several areas where components overlap.

Figs 3-5 relate to these components. Further discussion of these periods and associated activity can be found in the synopses.

Component		Evidence / Description	Fig
No.	Name		
Anglo-Saxon			
YAX 1	Possible Manor	Historical Sherds of St Neots Ware and Stamford Ware on site of medieval manor	3
Medieval			
YAX 2	Manor	Ditches and banks	4
YAX 3	Church of St Peter	13th century church and churchyard	4
YAX 4	Settlement	Earthworks	4
YAX 5	Area in which hithe is possibly located	Historical Cartographic	4
Post-medieval			
YAX 6	Settlement	Cartographic	5

Table 1: Historic Core Plan Form Components

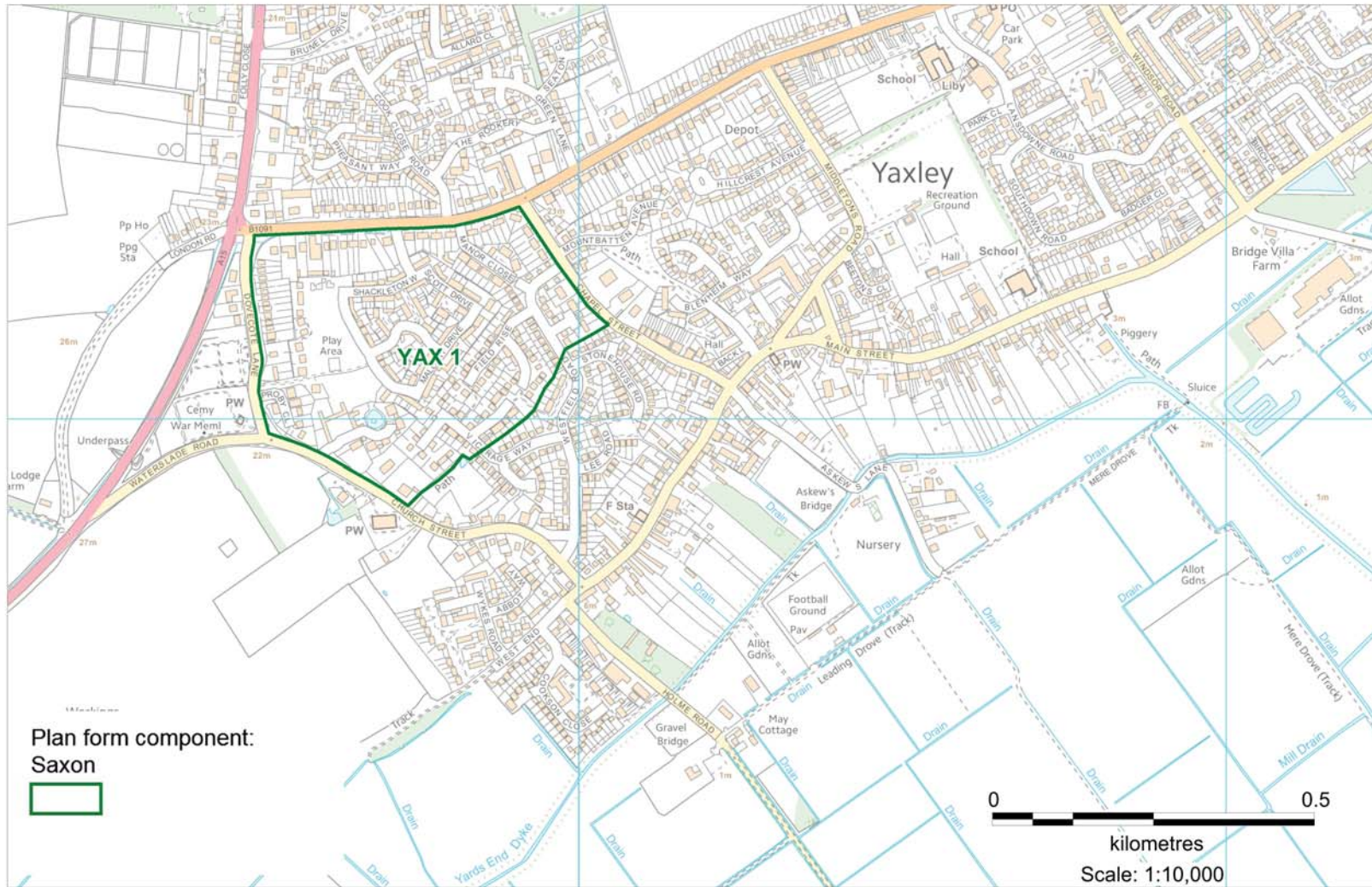


Fig 3 Anglo-Saxon Plan Form Components

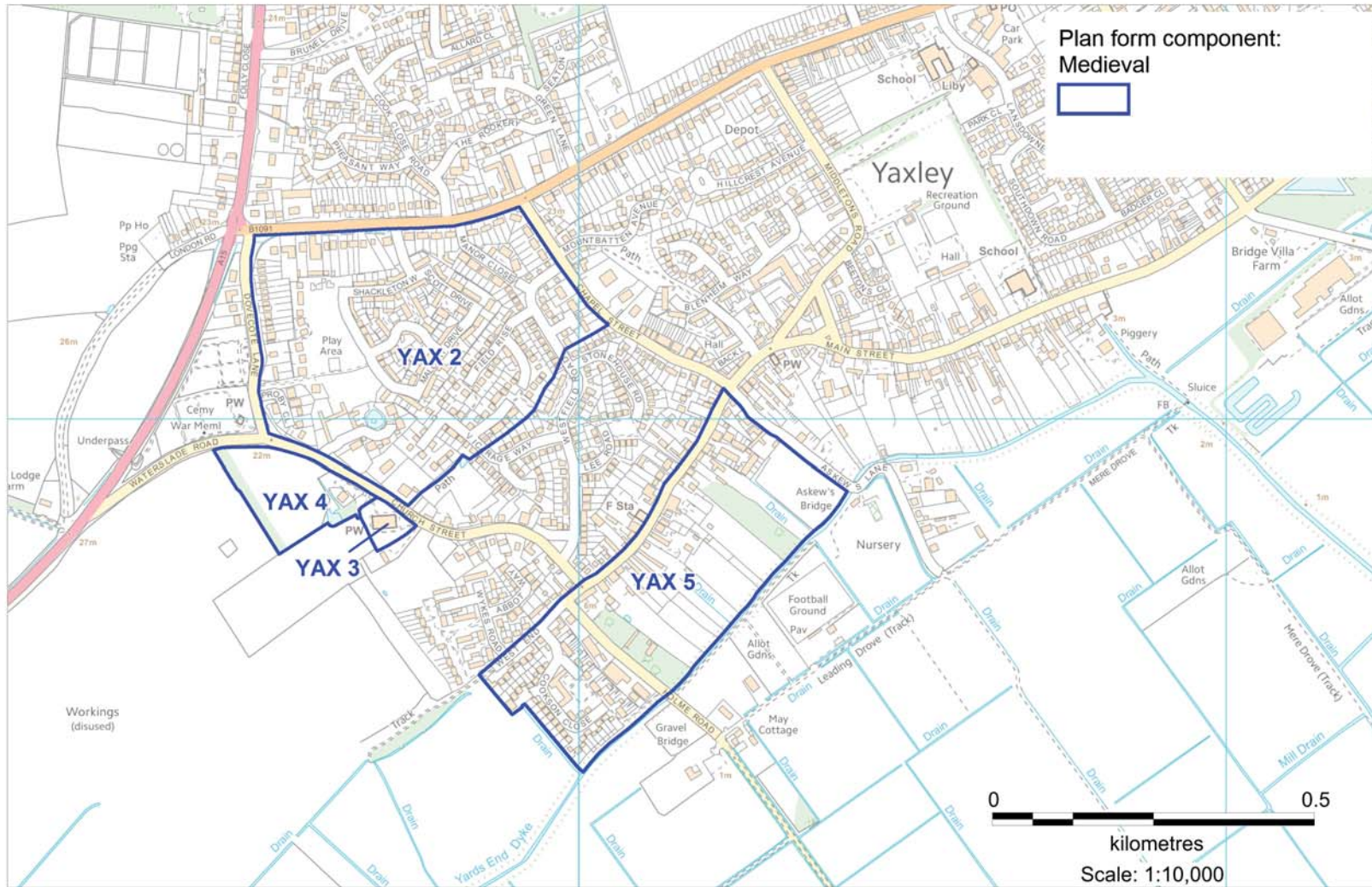


Fig 4 Medieval Plan Form Components

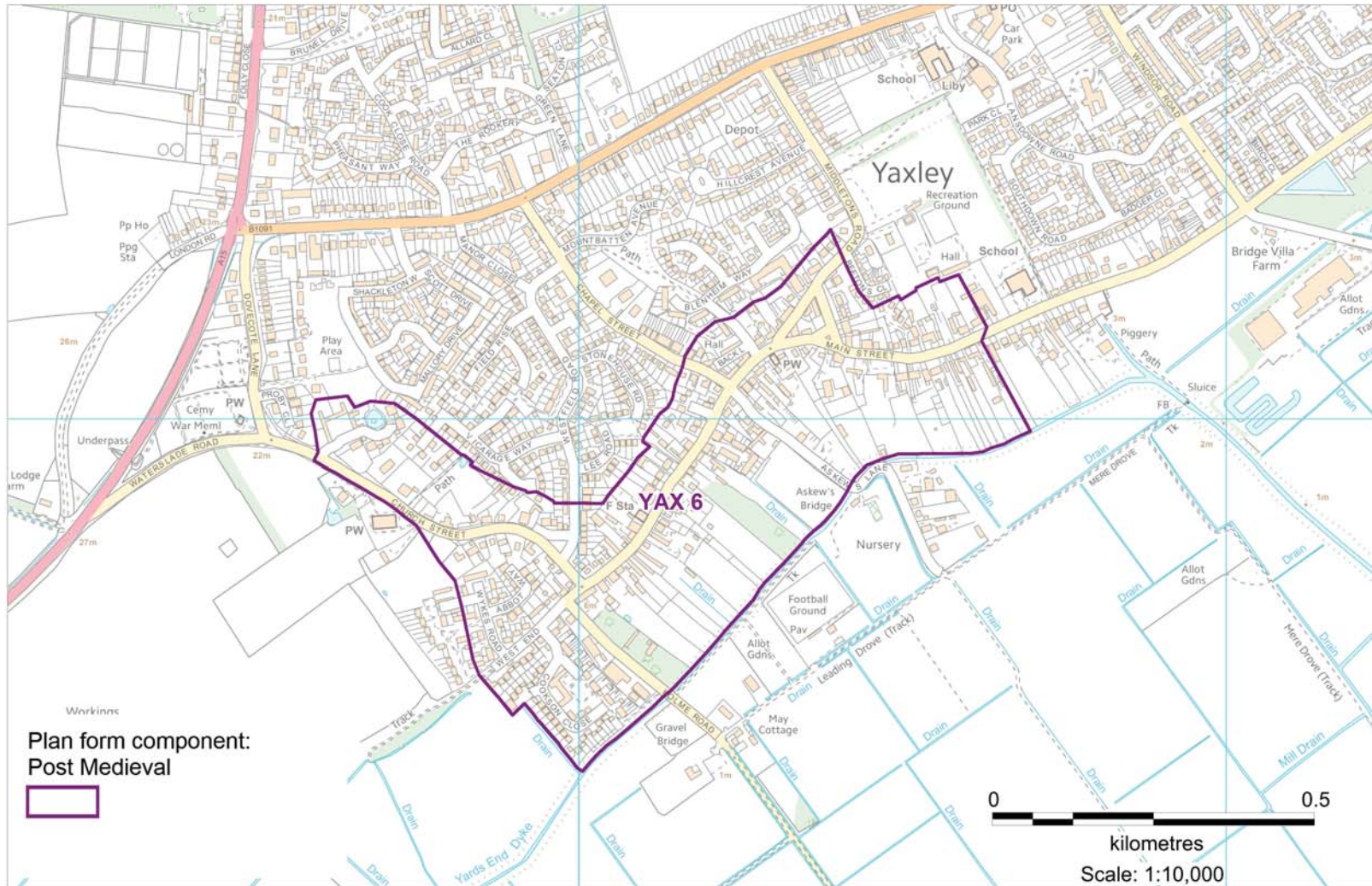


Fig 5 Post-Medieval Plan Form Components

Roman

An evaluation at Manor Farm (ECB84, Hughes and Jones 1998) uncovered a ditch which contained possibly residual Romano-British pottery. Subsequent excavations at the site (ECB86, Regan 1998) recovered further sherds of Roman pottery suggesting a general background of activity during this period.

Anglo-Saxon and Medieval

Manor (YAX 1 and YAX 2)

Yaxley is first recorded in c.955 as Geakeslea and laceslea, meaning 'cocks clearing' in the *Cartularium et Registrum Coenobii Thorneyensis* of 1300-1325. It is later known as *lacheslei* (Domesday Book, 1086), *Jakeslea* (12th century) and Yaxley (16th century) (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 201-2).

The manor of Yaxley, together with that of the neighbouring Farcet, represents one of the earliest endowments to the Benedictine Abbey of Thorney. According to King Edgar's charter to the Abbey, Bishop Ethelwood of Winchester had obtained houses in Yaxley from Wulfstan and houses in the 'other Yaxley' and Farcet from Aelfric Child. Together with that of the neighbouring Farcet, the manor was one of the earliest and most important endowments to the Benedictine Abbey of Thorney. King Edgar's charter to the Abbey refers to houses in Yaxley, implying that a settlement was already emerging.

By the time of Domesday (1086) the manor of the Abbot of Thorney was assessed for geld at 15 hides of land and there was land for twenty ploughs. The manor included in lordship three ploughs, thirty-eight villagers with eight ploughs, a church and a priest, meadows and underwood (Morris 1975). By the 13th century a considerable portion of the land was rented to various officials of the abbey, who all had sub-tenants.

Earthwork remains of a possible medieval moated site are visible near Manor Farm. Page (1974, 241) states that there were slight remains of a moat in front of the house. Remains of ditched banks (01028a), and ridge and furrow (HER01427, 11336) are visible in the field to the north of the farmhouse. These earthworks were probably part of a field system and manorial enclosure/sub-enclosures that have been largely obliterated by modern housing development (below).

Between Manor Farm and the church to the south there are earthwork remains of a shrunken medieval village (HER02738). The site comprises well-defined earthwork remains of ponds, a holloway and house platforms.

Archaeological work at Manor Farm first began in 1991 (ECB85) with a programme of evaluation trenches and a geophysical survey within the post-medieval property of Manor Farm, in advance of housing development. The investigations produced evidence for what was interpreted as a moat visible as earthwork remains in the field to the north of the Manor complex. They continue along the eastern side of the house and, possibly, along the southern side, parallel to and on the eastern side of Dovecote Lane (French 1991).

An excavation followed in 1998 (ECB86) that aimed to further investigate the moat circuit and to establish the presence or absence of structures in an area not available in 1991 (Regan 1998). During the course of these investigations it transpired that the "moat" was in fact a series of ponds and field boundary ditches dating to the 12th to

14th century. No positive evidence for structures was uncovered, and it was concluded that the medieval manor house might have been located further to the north, within the area defined by the visible double-ditched banks. Sherds of St Neots and Stamford Ware indicated activity at the site from in the Saxo-Norman period. The fields to the north, north-east and south-west of the farmyard contain substantial earthworks that are relatively well preserved. It is suggested that these areas, especially to the north of the farmyard, may be the area occupied at the close of the 16th century AD.

In 1998 an evaluation (ECB84) was conducted in advance of further housing development to the north of Manor Farm, in the area of visible earthwork remains (Hughes and Jones 1998). An aerial photographic assessment of the site confirmed the presence of medieval ridge and furrow associated with two major ditched double-banks running parallel to the present Dovecote Lane on the western side of the development area, and parallel to Manor Close on the eastern side. Sherds of 13th to 14th century pottery (Grimston, Bourne and Stamford wares) were retrieved from the ditch of the western bank. The two features may have represented the eastern and western side of an enclosure, the northern side of which was probably marked by Grove Lane (Broadway). Further ditched banks parallel and perpendicular to the western side of the main enclosure appeared to be part of a later enclosure post-dating the main one. These later features also corresponded with boundaries indicated on the Enclosure Map of 1821. In the southern part of the site the evaluation produced evidence for 10th to 14th century gullies and ditches on varying alignments immediately behind Manor Farm. These appeared to be associated with similar features from the 1998 excavation, which were interpreted as representing field boundaries of the manorial complex (Regan 1998). The southern area also contained depressions that were interpreted as feeders for the ponds recorded in 1998 (Regan), and remains of wall footings probably belonging to a dovecote known from cartographic evidence (OS Maps). Within the main enclosure there was no evidence for structures, despite earlier suggestions that the manor house might have been located to the north of the post-medieval Manor Farmhouse (Regan 1998).

An archaeological evaluation immediately to the east of Manor Farm revealed a series of ditches and pits dating to the medieval/post-medieval period (Begg 1993). The ditches appeared to have defined a field system associated with visible remains of a bank.

Church of St Peter (YAX 3)

The location of the original church mentioned in Domesday is uncertain, although it is likely that the medieval Church of St Peter (mid 13th century) was erected on the site of the Saxon predecessor. The church was held by the Abbey, which retained patronage until the Dissolution. At the beginning of the 15th century the vicarage was instituted and the rectory assigned to the Abbot. After the Dissolution, the rectory continued to be leased until it came into the possession of the Proby family around the middle of the 17th century. Since then it has passed with the manor. The vicarage remained under the patronage of the Crown (Lewis 1831).

Chapel and Hospital

At Yaxley a chapel (of unknown location) was confirmed to Thorney Abbey by Pope Gregory IX at the beginning of the 13th century. The town also had several guilds and a hospital on land of one of the tenants of the Abbey. The hospital could be identified with the almshouse for the poor, which in the 16th century paid rent and received a sum from the issues of the manor each year. The location of the hospital is unknown.

Settlement (YAX 4)

Following the Conquest, population growth increased pressure on the land which prompted woodland clearing and gave rise to a pattern of small dispersed settlements and hamlets on the uplands. In the south-western Fen region these became progressively nucleated.

The original medieval settlement of Yaxley focused on the church of St Peter and on the manor, where earthwork remains suggest the presence of a moat. The medieval manor house was probably located on the same site as the post-medieval and extant Manor Farm. To the south of Manor Farm there are earthwork remains of ponds, a holloway and house platforms that belong to the shrunken medieval village (HER02738).

The expansion of the 12th and 13th century was probably followed by a period of general economic recession caused by climatic changes, wars abroad, disease and village risings during the 14th and early 15th century. Yaxley did not escape from the general turmoil of the period. For instance, in 1390 some of the abbot's villains had formed leagues and had been refusing to pay rents and customs due to the abbey (Cal. Pat. R. 1388-92, p.217).

Medieval activity, although possibly not settlement, in the western part of the historic core is indicated by the results of an evaluation at 41 Middleton Lane (ECB3446). The ditches and pits uncovered on this site (Barlow and Thompson 2010) indicate possible drainage and quarrying activity in this general vicinity.

At a later stage the village shifted towards Yaxley Lode, and developed as a small market town.

Market and Fair

At Yaxley, Thorney Abbey held a weekly market by grant of William the Conqueror. Charters of confirmation were later obtained from Henry I and other kings. In the early part of the 13th century disputes arose between the abbot and the burgesses of Northampton over tolls and customs at Yaxley, as well as over the abbot's habit of taking the customs at Woodston to avoid tolls at Peterborough. In 1562 the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough tried to suppress the market at Yaxley on the ground that King Edgar's Charter to Peterborough Abbey granted a market at Peterborough and none other between Stamford and Peterborough. The market was kept for a short while and held weekly between the feast of Purification and Pentecost. It was later suppressed and then revived for a time while French soldiers were held prisoner at Norman Cross.

Despite the existence of a chartered market, Yaxley never attained any status as a borough, although the inhabitants appear to have enjoyed some degree of control. In 1305 Edward I made a grant of pavage to the 'bailiffs and good men of the town' for five years. A similar grant was made a few decades later.

In addition to the market, the Abbey held a yearly fair that had been granted by Henry III in 1227. After the Dissolution the fair passed with the Manor to Queen Elizabeth. By then, the tolls and stalls were let at farm. The practice continued until the tolls were granted to the Proby family and followed the descent of the manor. During the 19th century a cattle fair was held annually on Ascension Day (Lewis, S. 1831, Topographical Gazeteer of Huntingdonshire). At the beginning of the 20th century the fair was still held on Ascension Day each year.

Waterways

Yaxley was an inland port (YAX 5) of some importance throughout the medieval period and until the 17th century. Goods were off-loaded here and carted within a radius of at least 50km. Coal still reached central Northamptonshire by this route in 1628 (Hall and Harding 1985, 133). The hithe is no longer visible. It was probably located at the landward end of Yaxley Lode and was approached through March and the meres in Whittlesey and Ramsey. Yaxley Lode was the result of the canalisation of the Yaxley Brook which had two routes into Trundle Mere and is first mentioned in 1227 as Jackeslada (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 203). In the parish of Farcet further to the east is Conquest Lode that resulted from the canalisation of the River Nene into Whittlesea Mere. Yaxley Lode did not have the same course as at present. A linear deposit of marl to the south west of the present Lode may indicate an earlier course (Hall 1992, 22).

The economic importance of the meres throughout the medieval period was further enhanced by the fact that they were part of the transport network in the Fenland. The discovery of medieval limestone blocks with masons' marks from Whittlesey Mere in the parish of Holme suggest a lost cargo of building material (from Peterborough?) that failed to reach a designated monastic house or other important building (Hall 1992, 32).

During the 13th century floods brought about alterations in the network of watercourses of the Fenland. The Wisbech estuary became silted and part of the Nene and the west branch of the great Ouse began to flow from Outwell along Well Creek and via Wiggenhall to the sea at Lynn. By the 14th century the Well Ceek system had become part of a great waterway. An obstruction of the water of the Welstrem (from Littleport to Upwell and then Wisbech) at Welle in 1301 was met with strong opposition from merchants whose ship's and boat's passage was hindered 'from the town of Lenne (Lynn) to Yakesle (Yaxley), Holme and other places in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire' (Darby 1983, 31ff.).

Economy

Thirteenth century documents (Hundred Rolls ii, 1818, 460-2) refer to fisheries attached to the manor, at Trundle Mere and Dray Mere. The fisheries were let at farm in the 16th century. The documents also refer to a windmill that belonged to the Abbot. An extant post-medieval stone windmill located some 600m to the west of the church, outside the historic core, (HER01667/RCHME 1926, 308b, 17) may mark the location of the earlier mill.

Fields

Aerial photographic collections (RAF, CUCAP) show areas of medieval ridge and furrow on the high ground around near Manor Farm.

Although the aerial photographic record is generally biased towards features on dry and light soils and arable land, the distribution of cropmarks in the Yaxley area is consistent with the evidence for medieval occupation on the high ground and with the presence of the fen immediately to the south of the village.

Administration

Medieval Yaxley was the centre of administration of Norman Cross Hundred. The Hundred is recorded in the Domesday Book as Normannescross, from the Old English. A cross formerly stood on Ermine Street (later Great North Road and A1/A1M) where it intersected with the road from Yaxley to Folksworth. The cross-road may have originally been a wapentake or hundred meeting place (Meaney

1993, 82).

Post-Medieval

Manor

After the Dissolution of Thorney Abbey the manor remained with the Crown although it was often leased out. The manor was later granted to Princess Elizabeth by Edward VI in 1550. After Elizabeth's death it passed to James I and later to Charles I (then Prince of Wales). In 1628 Charles I granted the manor to the City of London, and the Hundred to Sir Robert Coton. By then the jurisdiction of Yaxley manor and Norman Cross Hundred had become confused, and litigation ensued. A few years later the City sold the manor to the Proby Family, former lessors of 'Burystead' Manor during the reign of Elizabeth I. The descent of the manor followed the Proby family until the beginning of the 20th century.

An evaluation at Vicarage Way (ECB1116) uncovered a ditch which contained sherds of pottery dating to the 18th to 19th centuries. It is likely that this ditch relates to the manorial field-system (Fenland Archaeological Trust 1996).

Settlement (YAX 6)

The parish of Yaxley was enclosed in 1767 by Act of Parliament, the award being enrolled in the Recovery Rolls in 1769. By the beginning of the 19th century Yaxley village had expanded along both sides of Main Street. The post-medieval village retained elements of the medieval plan, such as the Green and the overall street layout of the historic village, characterised by burgage-like plots fronting Main Street. Expansion was probably prompted by drainage of the fen.

Market

During the 16th century, the suppression of the market following contentions with the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough and the Dissolution of Thorney Abbey are likely to have further affected the local economy.

The market was revived for a short time during the Napoleonic War while Dutch and French soldiers were held prisoners at Norman Cross during the period between 1797-1814.

Economy

During the post-medieval period the fen was progressively drained for land reclamation. As a result, the port probably became redundant and went out of use. The increasing pace of Fens drainage in the 17th and 18th centuries and the arrival of the railway in the 19th century promoted the role of Yaxley as a centre for the marketing and processing of agricultural produce. At the turn of the 19th century, clover, wheat, barley beans and peas were the chief crops on the high lands, and wheat, oats, potatoes and mangel-wurzel in the fen (Kelly's Directory of Huntingdonshire, 1903).

At the beginning of the 19th century, production and processing of sedges and reeds still afforded employment to a considerable portion of the inhabitants (Lewis 1831). Extraction of Oxford Clay for brick making and freight transport by road from the earlier part of the twentieth century further boosted the local economy.

Administration

From 1837 Yaxley was in the Peterborough Registration District of Northamptonshire. Subsequently it was transferred to the Stilton Sub-District of Huntingdonshire and

later transferred back to the Peterborough District.

Population

Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire witnessed a substantial growth in the size of the population up to the middle of the 19th century. This was followed by a slight decline as surplus agricultural population moved to local areas of industrial expansion, namely London. For most of the first half of the 20th century the population history for Yaxley, as with that of many parishes in Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, continued the pattern of the second half of the 19th century. After the Second World War, the population started to grow steadily (Jones 2000a; Jones 2000b). Since the 1970s the size of the population has doubled, partly as the result of Peterborough overspill and the influx of London commuters.

The size of the population during the 19th and 20th century is summarised below. The following figures include both urban and rural population and are based on census information for the parish (1841-1891) held in the HRO and integrated with figures provided by the GENUKI web-site:

Year	Population
1801	986
1851	1445
1901	1590
1951	2764
1971	3943
1991	7044

Table 2: Population figures for Yaxley

DEPOSIT MODELLING AND SURVIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

In this section an attempt has been made to predict the existence and survival of archaeological remains in the historic core of Yaxley. The assessment takes the form of a prediction model based on probability and not certainty. It is meant as a guide only and should not be used to produce 'constraint maps'.

Prehistoric

To date, there is scant record of early prehistoric activity in the parish, although ploughing and drainage works from the post-medieval period have prompted the recovery of stray artefacts in the fen basin of neighbouring parishes and in Whittlesey Mere. As the fen basin formed in the course of the Mesolithic period, earlier sites may be buried underneath the fen peat. Very few prehistoric finds are known from the fen-edge and from the high ground. Absence of finds from the village may be partly due to medieval and later remains obliterating earlier features and deposits. It is interesting to note that worked flint was recovered during the excavation of the medieval site at Manor Farm (Begg 1993).

There are no known Iron Age sites at Yaxley, although their distribution in neighbouring parishes, as at Sawtry, suggests that during the Iron Age occupation may have occurred on the higher ground.

Based on the available evidence, it is not possible to predict the existence of prehistoric sites within and immediately around Yaxley. Areas that escaped destruction caused by medieval land use and modern development could potentially produce prehistoric remains.

Mapping suggests that the prehistoric period may be under-represented, as the location of these remains is least well known and finds least well preserved, with particular reference to ceramic artefacts.

Absence of archaeological investigations other than fieldwalking in Yaxley Fen (Fenland Survey) has prevented an assessment of the state of preservation of potential pre-medieval remains. As a result, prehistoric finds from the village and immediate surroundings are poorly represented. As with most built-up areas, absence of evidence is more likely to be due to obliteration caused by later, namely medieval and post-medieval, remains. As a whole the rate of survival for the prehistoric period can only be described as unknown.

Roman

In comparison with the situation for other parishes in the region, evidence for Roman activity at Yaxley is surprisingly sparse, with particular reference to the high land. It cannot be discounted that remains may exist outside the built-up area or in pockets within the village, as suggested by excavations at Manor Farm that have produced possible evidence for a Roman ditch. Although settlement sites are expected to lie closer to Ermine Street (A1M) to the west of Yaxley, there is potential for Roman finds almost anywhere within and immediately around the village.

Anglo-Saxon

Saxon remains from the study area are unknown, despite references to a manor of Thorney Abbey in 10th century sources and listing of a church in the Domesday Book. The recovery of sherds of St Neots and Stamford Ware from the site of Manor Farm hints at the potential for survival of the Saxon remains of this manor. The presence of a possible Hundred Meeting Place at Norman Cross may have prompted the development of the Saxo-Norman settlement at Yaxley. The location of the *wapentake* site is unknown.

Medieval

Notwithstanding the impact caused by development from the post-medieval period, and the introduction of modern farming techniques, evidence of medieval Yaxley survives as extant earthworks (a moated site, house platform, holloways and ponds visible on the ground) and cropmarks (i.e. ridge and furrow visible on aerial photographs) associated with the medieval settlement of Yaxley.

Investigations at Manor Farm during the 1990s (above) have offered the opportunity to study earthworks associated with a manorial moated site. Although evidence for structures remains elusive, the site offers great potential. Trial trenching and test-pitting to the north of Manor Farm (Hughes and Jones 1998) targeted areas of known earthworks, leaving large gaps between the trenches. Therefore, medieval structures may have gone undetected. Alternatively, the medieval manor house could have been partially obliterated by the construction of the later Manor Farm House.

There has been no systematic survey of the earthwork remains of the shrunken medieval village adjacent to St Peter's Church. The date, extent and degree of preservation of the remains are unknown. Pre-1990 PPG 16 development is likely to have obliterated potential remains on the eastern side of Church Street. Further to the east there are ponds depicted on Lovell's Map of 1821 that might have been part of the medieval settlement.

There is potential for the survival of remains of Yaxley port at the landward end of Yaxley Lode, as well as for the survival of docking and loading areas at the rear of the properties along the present Yards End Dyke.

Within the village, medieval remains are visible as cropmarks and earthworks, some of which have been investigated during the 1990s. Excavations on the eastern side of Dovecote Lane (Challands 1999) showed that major earthworks and deep features had survived, whereas shallow features had been obliterated by compaction caused by 20th century brick rubble dumped to consolidate an access track to the farm.

Remains of the shrunken village along Church Street are likely to have been partly obliterated by post-medieval and modern development. Their rate of survival is expected to be variable. Other remains within the core of the historic village have probably been severely impacted, with the best rate of survival being confined to potential finds in the back plots of properties flanking Main Street.

The earthworks at Yaxley are presently unscheduled. Immediately outside the built-up area there is potential for the survival of field-systems.

Post-medieval

Yaxley is well documented through extant buildings and cartographic evidence. In particular, post-medieval development is reflected by the present layout of Yaxley where 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings survive in a fairly good state of preservation. Most of them are listed (LBII) and have statutory protection. Although very few elements of the medieval plan survive, the post-medieval street layout is consistent with that of a medieval linear settlement.

The condition of the extant Listed Buildings is generally good, although three properties on Main Street are Registered Buildings at Risk.

Immediately outside the built-up area there is potential for the survival of field-systems.

Although presently unknown, light industrial activity (e.g. tanning, pottery production, etc.) may have been conducted along the present Yards End Dyke at the rear of the properties flanking Main Street.

Other potential post-medieval remains (e.g. former property boundaries, industrial remains) are expected to have survived in plots at the rear of properties flanking Main Street.

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MAPS CONSULTED

BGS Ramsey Sheet 172, England and Wales 1:50 000 (Provisional Series)

APPENDIX 1: HER DATA IN HISTORIC CORE

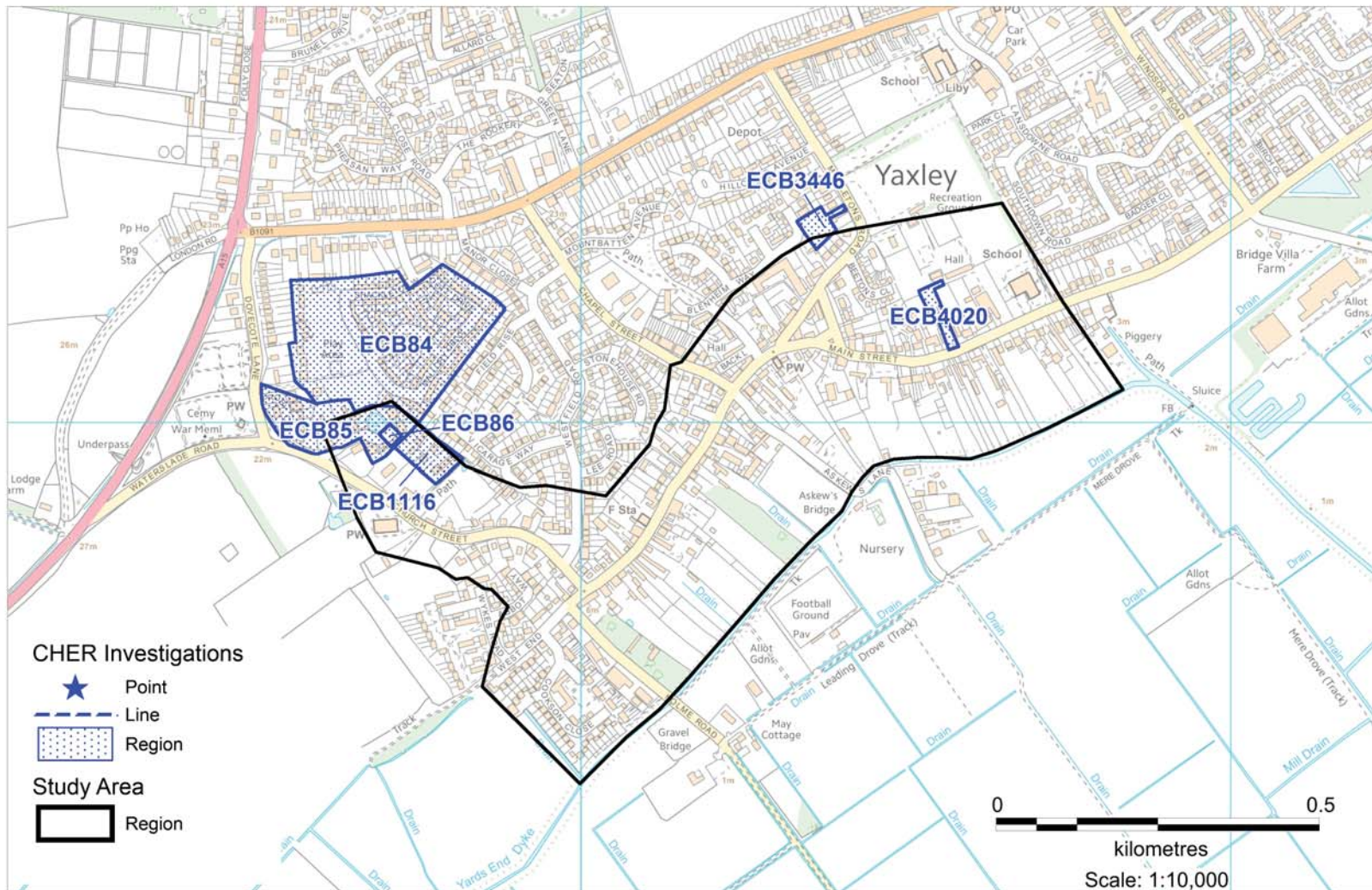
Date	From	To	
Palaeolithic	500000BC	10000BC	Prehistoric
Early Mesolithic	10000BC	7000BC	
Mesolithic	10000BC	4000BC	
Early Neolithic	4000BC	3000BC	
Neolithic	4000BC	2200BC	
Bronze Age	2500BC	700BC	
Late Bronze Age	1000BC	700BC	
Iron Age	800BC	43AD	
Roman	43AD	410AD	
Early Anglo-Saxon	410AD	650AD	
Middle Anglo-Saxon	650AD	900AD	
Late Anglo-Saxon	900AD	1066AD	
Anglo-Saxon	410AD	1066AD	
Medieval	1066AD	1540AD	
Post Medieval	1540AD	1900AD	
Modern	1900AD	present	

Table 3: Date Ranges

HER no.	Name	Organisation /Source	Summary
ECB84	Evaluation of land to the N of Manor Farm, Yaxley	BUFAU Hughes, G. and Jones, L. 1998. Land to the north of Manor Farm, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire: an archaeological evaluation. BUFAU Report project 508/2 (SCB16978)	This work included an earthwork survey followed by test pitting and trial trenching. A small group of possible C2nd AD Romano-British pottery was recovered from a ditch-type feature in the southern part of the study area, and a single sherd of abraded Samian ware was recovered from the central part of the area. Although these may be residual, they do suggest background Roman activity in the area. The results suggest the earthworks were associated with a medieval and/or post-medieval field system. Several of the features in the southern part of the site produced small quantities of medieval pottery.
ECB85	Assessment at Manor Farm, Yaxley, 1991	Fenland Archaeological Trust French, C.A.I. 1991. Manor Farm, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire: the archaeological assessment. Fenland Archaeological Trust Report (SCB16979)	Earthwork survey and trial trenching found a wooden stake arrangement across the moat, suggesting parts of the moat were partitioned and used for fish ponds. The pasture fields to the N, NE and SW of the farmyard contain substantial earthworks that are relatively well preserved. It is suggested that these areas, especially to the N of the farmyard, may be the area occupied by the 6 acre home close of the C16th AD. No evidence of the Romano-British period was found.
ECB86	Excavations at Manor Farm, Yaxley, 1998	Cambridge Archaeological Unit Regan, R. 1998. Archaeological excavations at Manor Farm, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report 265 (SCB16980)	The cut features observed were part of an extensive series of ponds, perhaps for fish, apparently supplied by a ditch system still visible in the fields to the north of the farmyard complex. Pottery and one possible earlier feature attested to a Roman presence in the area. Several ditches were revealed dating to the twelfth to fourteenth century. A building survey suggested that the standing buildings, including the present house, were all rather later than had been presumed. The house and barns contained reused earlier elements, but generally dated to the C18-19th. Records were also made of several C19 and C20th farmyard features.
ECB1116	Phase 2 evaluation at Vicarage Way, Yaxley, 1996	Fenland Archaeological Trust Fenland Archaeological Trust (no named author) 1996. Archaeological Evaluation. Vicarage Way, Yaxley, Cambridgeshire. Fenland Archaeological Trust Report (SCB17413)	Few archaeological features or finds were discovered, with the exception of 18th-19th century pottery from a ditch, probably part of the manorial field systems discovered during the 1993 evaluation.

ECB3446	Evaluation at 41 Middleton Road, Yaxley, 2010	Archaeological Solutions Barlow, G. and Thompson, P. 2010. 41 Middletons Road, Yaxley. Archaeological Evaluation. Archaeological Solutions Report 3642 (SCB21761)	Three ditches, two pits and a possible tree throw were identified to the north of the site, and were interpreted as being of medieval origin. A post medieval cobbled surface was identified in the southern trench.
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Table 4: Event Data



HER Events in the Historic Core