

**WAITHE BECK, STANTON LE VALE, LINCOLNSHIRE**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK BASED ASSESSMENT**

NGR: TF 19097 394029

Report prepared for the Environment Agency

by

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### Contents

	Summary	1
1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	Location and description	2
2.1	Geology and topography	2
3.0	Planning background	2
4.0	Objectives and methods	3
5.0	Methodology	3
6.0	Archaeological and historical background	3
7.0	Archaeological potential	4
7.1	Cartographic evidence	5
7.2	The County Sites and Monuments Record	5
7.3	Aerial photographic evidence	6
7.4	Site visit	6
8.0	General considerations	7
9.0	Conclusions	7
10.0	Mitigation	7
11.0	Acknowledgments	8
12.0	Bibliography	8

### Illustrations

- Fig. 1:** Site location at scale 1:25 000  
**Fig. 2:** Ordnance map of 1887, traced in 1940  
**Fig. 3:** Skeleton plan of Binbrook and Orford, dated 1852  
**Fig. 4:** Extract from 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map  
**Fig. 5:** Aerial photograph (Ref CPE/UK/2042)  
**Fig. 6:** Aerial photograph (Ref NMR12172/086)  
**Fig. 7:** Aerial photograph (Ref NMR17813/28)

### Appendices

- Appendix 1**      Colour Plates



### *Summary*

- *An archaeological desk based assessment has been undertaken for the Environment Agency to assess the archaeological potential of a site on land in the parish of Stainton le Vale in Lincolnshire. Its purpose is to inform a process that will seek to address the interests of the Environment Agency, whilst ensuring that archaeological resources are not destroyed as a result of developing the area.*
- *The site itself, the Waith Beck, is situated within an archaeologically rich landscape: the area is noted for a series of cropmarks of prehistoric and later date, and for a number of prehistoric funerary monuments, specifically Bronze Age round barrows and a possible Neolithic hengiform monument. A Romano-British villa lies to the south of the site, and medieval settlement and priory remains exist to its east.*
- *The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low to moderate. It lies in the vicinity of several prehistoric cropmark enclosures, although none of these are recorded on this stretch of the Waith Beck.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

This desk-based study was commissioned by the Environment Agency. Its purpose is to assess the archaeological potential of a site prior to the introduction of naturalistic features. The study has been compiled without the use of intrusive fieldwork, and its purpose is to assess the potential impacts that may be posed by the proposed works on a 500m length of the Waithe Beck, situated in the parish of Stainton le Vale, Lincolnshire. The report will inform the client of any archaeological constraints which may be of relevance to any future works.

Amongst other sources, the report draws on the resources of the Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record, and research was conducted in accordance with the procedures set out in the Lincolnshire County Council publication *Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook: A Manual of Archaeological Practice* (LCC, 1998); national guidelines produced by the Institute of Field Archaeologists were also adhered to (IFA, 1999).

It was researched and prepared by Mark Allen of Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) (hereafter PCA), in October and November 2003.

## **2.0 Location and description**

Waithe Beck is situated less than 2km east of Stainton le Vale, and c.9.3km north-east of Market Rasen, in the administrative district of West Lindsey (fig. 1). The land that is the subject of this report comprises a straightened length of the Waithe Beck, approximately 512m in extent. This part of the Beck forms the parish boundary between Stainton le Vale and Binbrook, and the administrative boundary between West and East Lindsey. It is the boundary between an arable field to the north and Black Holt plantation to the south. The National Grid Reference for its centre is TF 19097 394029.

## **2.1 Geology and topography**

The proposed development zone is situated over the junction between two drift geological deposits: the western half comprises Head deposits and the eastern sector fluvio-glacial sand and gravel. Both deposits overly Upper Cretaceous Ferriby chalk (BGS 1990). The Beck lies at the base of a broadly east – west orientated valley, and the site mean altitude is approximately 65m OD.

## **3.0 Planning background**

The site is currently under consideration for a future landscaping project by the Environment Agency. However, prior to these works being undertaken, the commissioning body (acting on the advice of Lincolnshire County Council) requested the undertaking of an archaeological desk based assessment of the area. This assessment will provide information that will assist the definition of the archaeological potential of the site, without the use of intrusive fieldwork. The approach is consistent with the recommendations of *Archaeology and Planning: Planning Policy Guidance Note 16*, 1990, which advises early consultation with regard to archaeological matters.

#### **4.0 Objectives and methods**

The purpose of this report is to identify and assess archaeological remains that may be vulnerable to works associated with the proposed improvement scheme and, if necessary, to suggest methods by which the site may be evaluated in advance of any future development.

The scheme will involve the excavation of a c.5m wide strip along the north bank of a section of the Waithe Beck (Brayshaw *pers. com*). This strip will be excavated to a depth of between 2m and 2.5m. The excavated material will then be spread onto the field adjacent to the excavations. These works could potentially disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

#### **5.0 Methodology**

Data for this report was, for the most part, obtained for a 1km radius, centred on the application area itself. This was drawn from the following sources:

- Records held by the County Sites and Monuments Record for Lincolnshire (LSMR)
- Records held at the Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO)
- Information supplied by the client
- Published and unpublished sources
- Aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record, Swindon
- A detailed inspection of the site

#### **6.0 Archaeological and historical background**

A review of the information held at the Lincolnshire SMR suggests that no formal archaeological excavations have been undertaken within the study area. Cropmark evidence however brackets the site within its archaeological landscape context, the landscape dating from the prehistoric period, with occupation continuing into subsequent periods (fig. 1).

A single isolated stray artefact is recorded within the study area; a Neolithic stone axe (find no. 1) approximately 100m to the north of the Beck.

The earliest cropmark evidence is for a scheduled hengiform monument (No. 2 on fig 1) of Late Neolithic date (SAM 27919), some 800m north-west of the west corner of the site, on the north bank of the Waithe Beck. At the same site are two bowl barrow cropmarks of Bronze Age date.

Further funerary monuments of Bronze Age date (round barrows) are known in the area. Adjacent to the above site, three ring ditches are recorded (No. 3), all with a

central feature (cropmark evidence). A further round barrow cropmark is noted closer to the site (No. 4), some 400m to the west.

Of perhaps more direct relevance to the site itself are a number of cropmark enclosures that are believed to be of later prehistoric date (No's. 5 – 10). Two of these (5 and 6) lie less than 100m to the south of the Beck that is the subject of this study. A further site, No. 7, is approximately 200m to the north. Two further cropmark enclosures are recorded to the east of the site (No's. 8 and 9).

A range of prehistoric enclosure remains comprising boundaries and linear features have also been recorded over a wide area approximately 400m to the south-west of the site (No. 10).

Adjacent to site No. 10 are the remains of an extensive Romano-British villa complex (No. 11), covering an area of approximately 3 hectares. Excavations at the site revealed a mosaic comprising geometric patterns with an unusually realistic blackbird also depicted. Further evidence of Romano-British activity within the study area, in the form of a scatter of pottery, is known almost 1km to the west of the site.

Two deserted medieval villages are recorded: Orford (No. 14) and a second site (No. 13) that is believed to be associated with Orford Nunnery (No. 15).

Site 13 comprises a series of regular crofts (revealed as cropmarks) aligned along a central street. Several small circular enclosures with causeways and a row of small square enclosures may of earlier date. The deserted medieval village of Orford (No. 14), a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 22605), lies to the north-east of the site. It is thought that the village may have been moved following the establishment of the Premonstratensian priory (No. 15) (Everson, et al. 1991). Little is known regarding the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century priory, which was an offshoot of Newsham Abbey in Lincolnshire (the first Premonstratensian Abbey in England, built in 1143), although when it was dissolved in 1539, there was a prioress and seven nuns (Everson, et al. 1991). Prominent earthworks represent both sites 14 and 15. Post-medieval earthworks at the Orford site include a house, formal garden, an 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century watermill and a farmyard (No. 18).

Orford is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as Erforde, perhaps meaning 'Ēra's ford' (Cameron 1998). At the time of the survey, Guy of Craon held land at Binbrook and Orford, including a mill (Morgan and Thorn 1986).

To the west of the site, towards the village of Stainton le Vale, an unquantified number of green glazed medieval pottery sherds have been found (No. 16). Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks are noted to the south-west of the site (No. 17).

## **6.0 Archaeological potential**

The following information derives from a variety of sources. Data from published and unpublished accounts has been synthesised, and the author inspected the site itself. The sub-sections below describe information that has been obtained from each source, and an assessment of the overall archaeological potential is then considered.

## 6.1 Cartographic evidence

The earliest map evidence for the site is a tracing of the enclosure award of 1765, which utilises the 6" ordnance map of 1887 (fig. 2). The map, which was traced in 1940, depicts the relevant section of the Beck as straight in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that it was canalised at an earlier date. The form of the surrounding field system has changed relatively little, with only one boundary removed to the north of the site (now a footpath).

A 'skeleton' plan of Binbrook and Orford dated 1852 (fig. 3) again shows little change to the fields west, north and east of the site. The field to the immediate north was called the 'Beastings', possibly a reference to livestock. A short section of waterway extending northwards from the west end of the Waithe Beck is labelled 'New Cut', suggesting that alterations to the watercourse took place immediately prior to the production of the map.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (fig. 4) indicates that the eastern section of the Beck (ie east of the proposed development section) was un-canalised at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Section 6.3, Aerial photographic evidence, for further discussion).

## 6.2 The County Sites and Monuments Record

18 records of direct or indirect relevance (within 1km) to the proposed scheme are incorporated as part of the SMR (fig. 1 and table 1 below). The data from the SMR has been described in the general archaeological background above.

Site No.	SMR No.	NGR	Description
1	LI 51817	TF 18909410	Neolithic stone axe
2	LI 50261	TF 18119447	?LNeo - BA Possible hengiform monument and two bowl barrow cropmarks
3	LI 50474	TF 18159450	BA Ring ditches and enclosure cropmarks
4	LI 51813	TF 18439400	BA round barrow cropmark
5	LI 44592	TF 19109390	Prehistoric enclosure cropmark
6	LI 44590	TF 18889383	Prehistoric enclosure cropmark
7	LI 51814	TF 18859421	Prehistoric enclosure cropmark
8	LI 44594	TF 19699404	Prehistoric enclosure cropmark
9	LI 44593	TF 19739418	Prehistoric enclosure and ditch cropmarks
10	LI 44591	TF 18759345	Prehistoric enclosures, boundaries and other features recognised as cropmarks
11	LI 54193	TF 18509330	Roman villa comprising several buildings
12	LI 51789	TF 18109450	Roman pottery scatter
13	LI 54191	TF 19109470	Deserted medieval settlement or Roman and prehistoric enclosures
14	LI 50708	TF 19779464	Orford deserted medieval village
15	LI 50709	TF 19509450	Orford Priory
16	LI 51788	TF 18209440	Medieval pottery
17	LI 51527	TF 18609315	Medieval field system
18	LI 51815	TF 19549441	Post-medieval watermill, enclosure, mound and house platform

Table 1: Records held at the County Sites and Monuments record, held by Lincolnshire County Council Environmental Services

### 6.3 Aerial photographic evidence

Aerial photographs held by the National Monuments Record at Swindon were consulted, which resulted in the examination of one vertical and two oblique frames that depict the site.

- CPE/UK/2042. Frame No. 3195; taken 29<sup>th</sup> April 1947 (fig. 5). This vertical aerial photograph shows the site with Black Holt to the south. Due to the nature of the image, it was not possible to see the site in any detail, however it is clear that the stretch of the canalised Beck that lies east of the site was not in existence at the time the photograph was taken.
- NMR 12172/086. NGR Index No. TF1994/10; taken 6<sup>th</sup> September 1991 (fig. 6). The site lies towards the top left corner of the frame, with the priory earthworks clearly visible towards the centre. The Waithe Beck had now been fully straightened to the east of the site, cutting through the priory earthworks (this section was evidently straightened at some time between 1947 and 1991).
- NMR 17813/28. Index No. TF1994/27; taken 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003 (fig. 7). This, the most recent aerial photograph available, shows approximately half of the site at the top of the image (north is to the right of the frame). No cropmarks are visible in the vicinity of the site.

### 6.4 Site visit

The author visited the site on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2003.

To the south of the proposed development section is the Black Holt, an area of mature woodland that includes sycamore, oak, ash and alder. To the north, lies an open field, with a young brassica crop at the time of writing, sloping upwards to the north-west. The Beck itself is a steep-sided narrow channel, approximately 2 – 2.5m deep, running roughly east-north-east – west-south-west. There was some evidence of bank slumpage within the site boundaries (plate 2), with more prominent bank erosion of the Beck further to the east beyond the site. The channel lies at the lowest point (c.60 – 65m OD) of a broadly east-north-east – west-south-west running valley; the direction of flow is from west to east.

### 7.0 General considerations

In the light of information that has been assembled for this report, it is possible to present a generalised historical context for the proposed development site. Consideration will then be given to any impacts that may have taken place in recent times, which could have affected the quality and survival of the archaeological resource, if present.

The proposed development site lies amid an area rich in prehistoric activity. This includes elements of a ritual or funerary nature, with both a Neolithic hengiform monument and round barrows of later Neolithic to Bronze Age date situated to the west, and possible small farming settlements that straddle the Beck to the north and south of the site. It is possible that further prehistoric remains existed in this area, but are now lost to ploughing.

A Romano-British villa has been identified by excavation some 500m to the south-west of the site.

The site forms the parish boundary between Stainton le Vale and Binbrook (and also the District Boundary between East and West Lindsey). This stretch of the Waithe Beck appears to have been artificially straightened. Dating the canalisation of the watercourse is problematic however; from current map evidence it appears to have occurred prior to the production of the 1852 map (see fig. 3). Figure 2, which shows the Enclosure of the parish in 1765, cannot be used as evidence for an earlier date for this work as it is based on a later Ordnance map of 1887.

There is no record of Anglo-Saxon remains in the study area, however Orford deserted medieval village, Stainton le Vale and Binbrook are all mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, suggesting they are of Late Saxon origin. It has been suggested that a further DMV that lies to the north of the site (site No. 13) was moved to the present location of Orford DMV, to accommodate the Premonstratensian priory, built in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century.

## 9.0 Conclusions

It is concluded that the archaeological potential of the site is **low to moderate**. There is no direct evidence of any prehistoric or Romano-British activity within the immediate site environs, although sites of both periods have been recorded at various locations in the vicinity. The prehistoric enclosure cropmarks that lie closest to the site all appear to fall between the 65m and 80m OD contour lines, with the site itself lying below the 65m contour.

The alignment of the Beck adjacent to the Black Holt woodland indicates that it has been canalised. It has not been possible to say when this occurred except that it was prior to the production of a map of 1852. Aerial photographic evidence has shown that canalisation of the Beck to the east of the site occurred at some time between 1947 and 1991.

The site forms the district boundary between East and West Lindsey, between the parishes of Stainton le Vale and Binbrook. It is not clear when this stretch of the Beck was straightened, although this would appear likely.

## 10.0 Mitigation

In the opinion of the author, the primary objective of any subsequent phase of work, should this be deemed necessary by the curating body, must be to establish whether or not archaeological deposits lie within the area of works. Therefore, a programme of archaeological observation and recording during the actual groundworks may be appropriate.

## 11.0 Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are expressed to the commissioning body, the Environment Agency, especially Nick Kite for his assistance throughout the project. Thanks are also due to the Project Manager, Steve Brayshaw, and also the staff at Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record and the Lincolnshire Archives Office.

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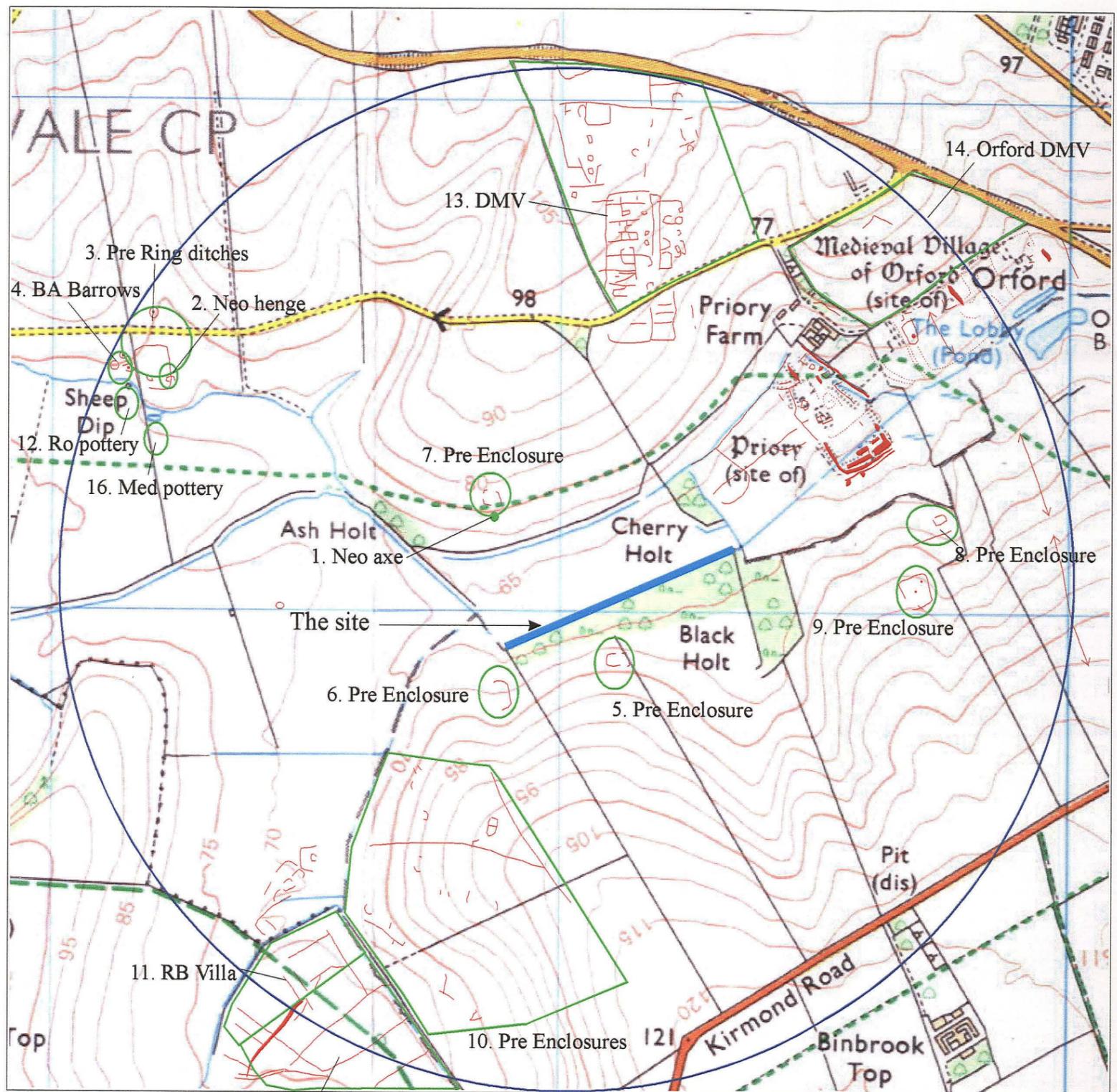
**Appendix 1: Colour Plates**



Pl. 1: View of Waithe Beck taken from west edge of site, looking north-east. Note trees at east edge of picture (Black Holt woodland).



Pl. 2: View of Waithe Beck taken towards middle of site, looking south-west. Black Holt woodland lies beyond the Beck. Note erosion of southern bank edge of the Beck.



17. Med field system

Figure 1: Site location at scale 1:10,000. Site shown as a blue line, and study area represented by 1km blue circle. Cropmarks shown in red and SMR entries in green.

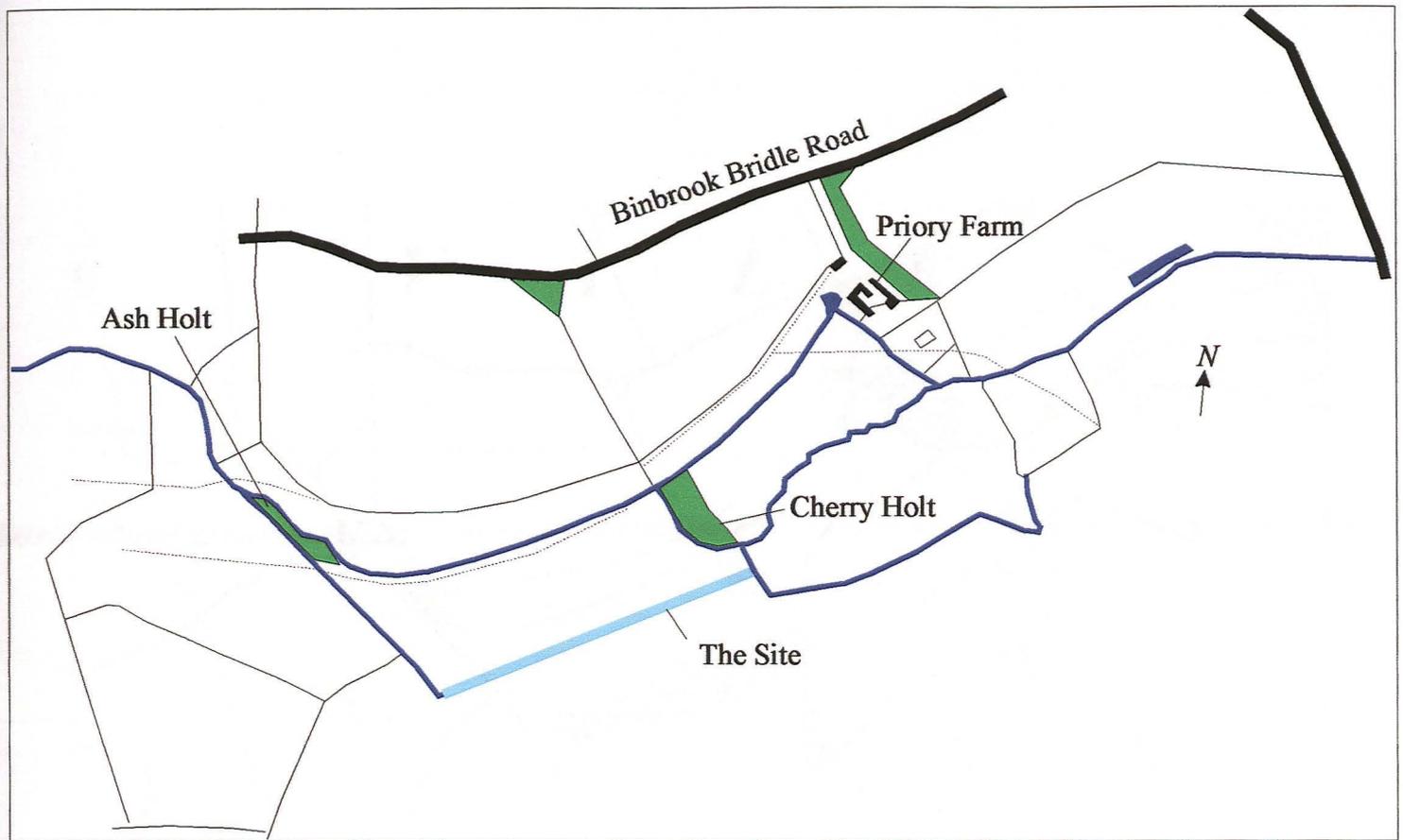


Figure 2: Tracing from 6" ordnance map dated 1887 to illustrate Inclosure award Stainton-in-the-Hole (now Stainton le Vale) dated 24th June 1765. Drawn by County Surveyor, Feb 1940. Site shown as light blue line, green areas depict woodland, and dark blue represents watercourses/open water. Scale 6" to one mile. (Lincolnshire Archives Reference: 174).

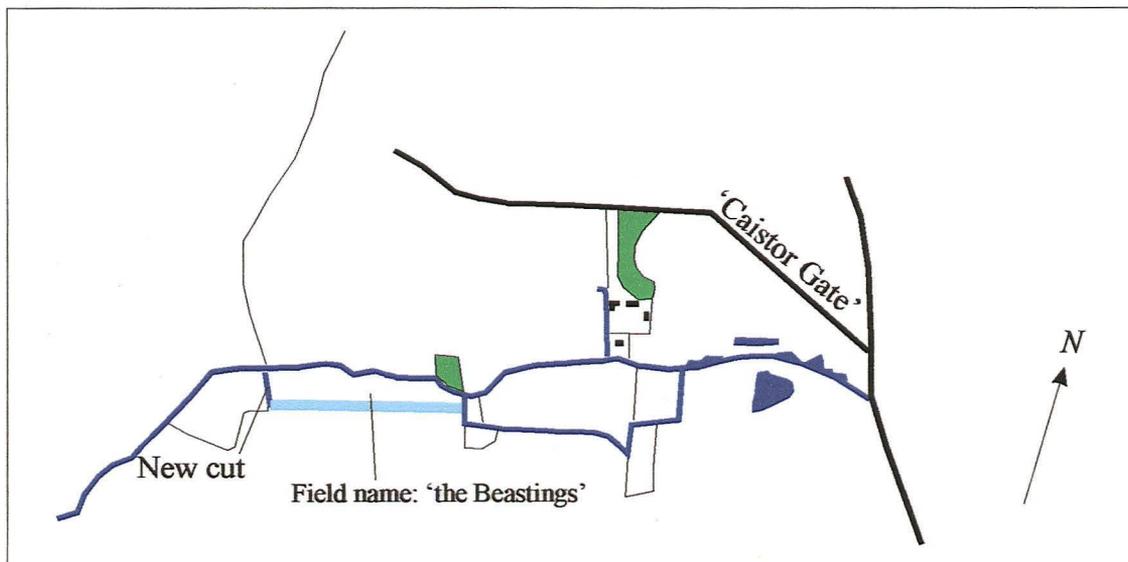


Figure 3: Skeleton plan of Binbrook and Orford, scale 24 chains to 1", Lincoln 1852. Site shown as light blue line, green areas depict woodland, and dark blue represents watercourses/open water. (Lincolnshire Archives Reference: Binbrook Parish Council 13)

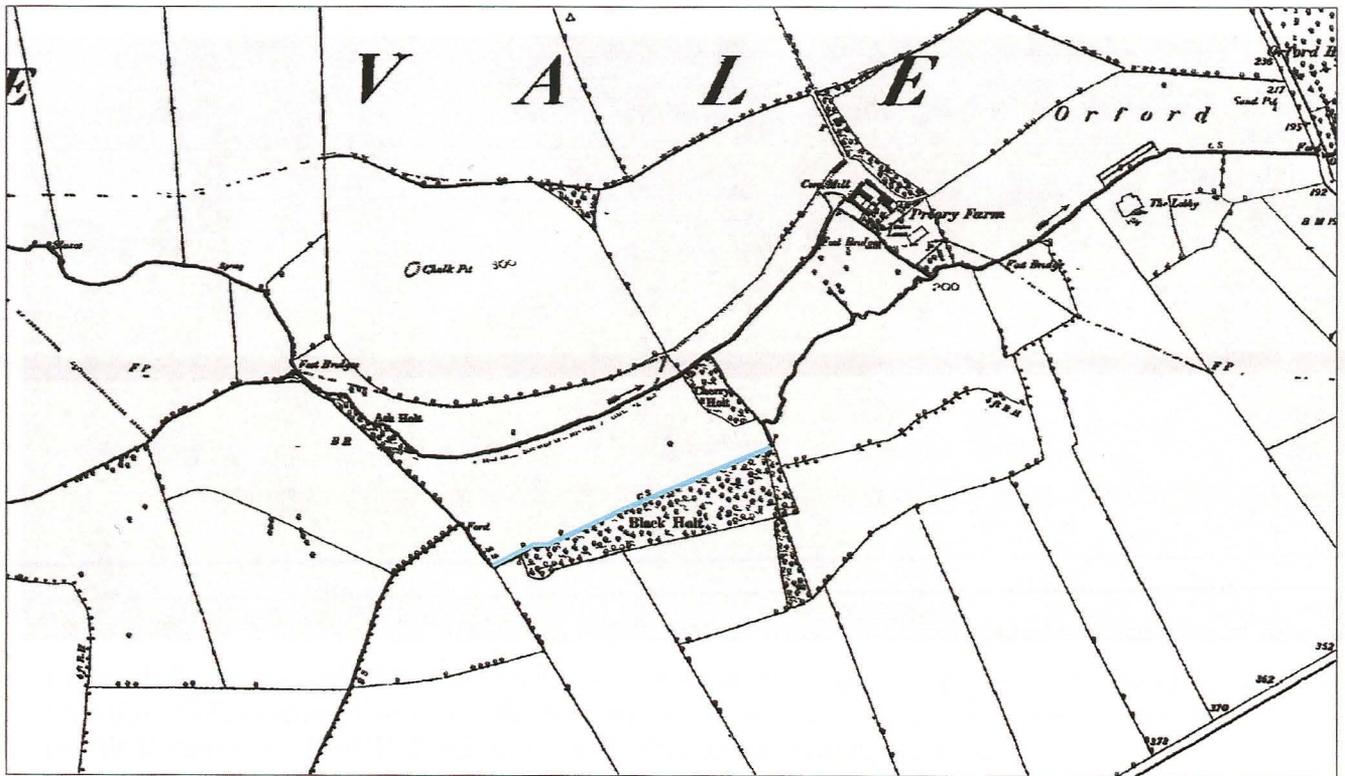


Figure 4: Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1891, with site shown as a blue line. Scale unknown

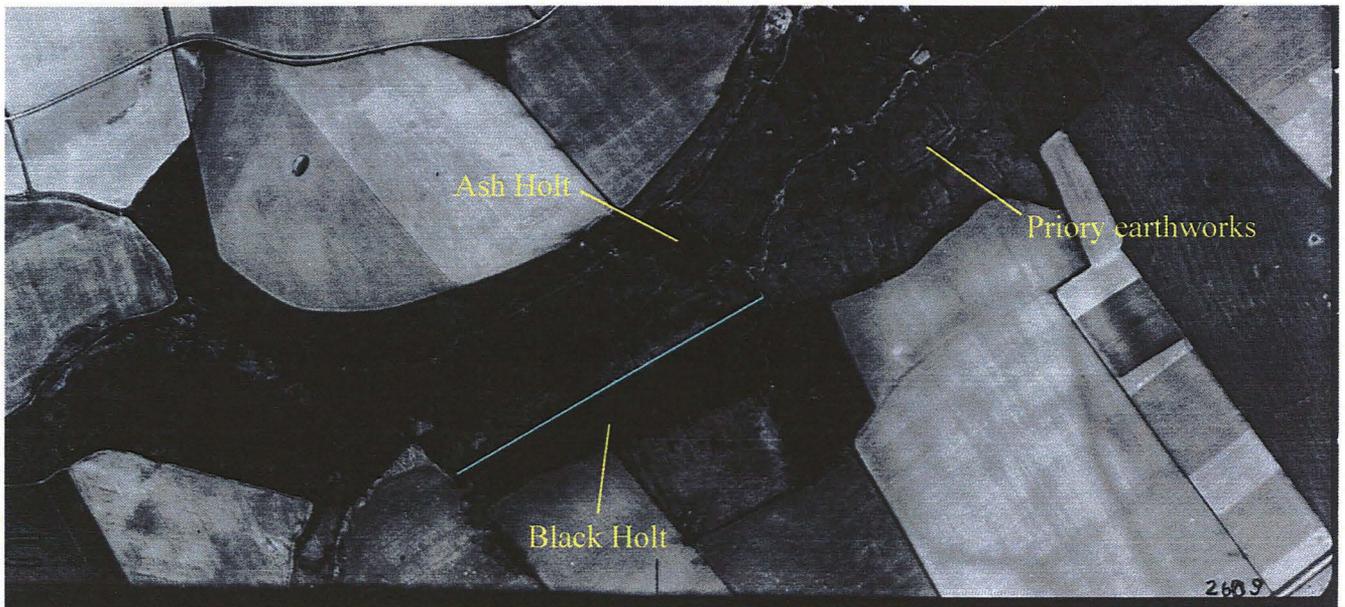


Figure 5: Vertical aerial photograph with north towards the top of the picture. The site is shown as a blue line. Note canalised portion of Beck to the east of the site shown in blue not in existence. (NMR Reference: CPE/UK/2042, frame no. 3195. Taken 29th April, 1947)



Figure 6: Oblique aerial photograph with north towards the top right corner of the picture. Site is shown as a blue line. Note Waithe Beck has been straightened to the east of the site, (dotted blue line) truncating the priory earthworks. (NMR Reference: NMR 12172/086, NGR Index no. TF1994/10. Taken 6th September 1991)

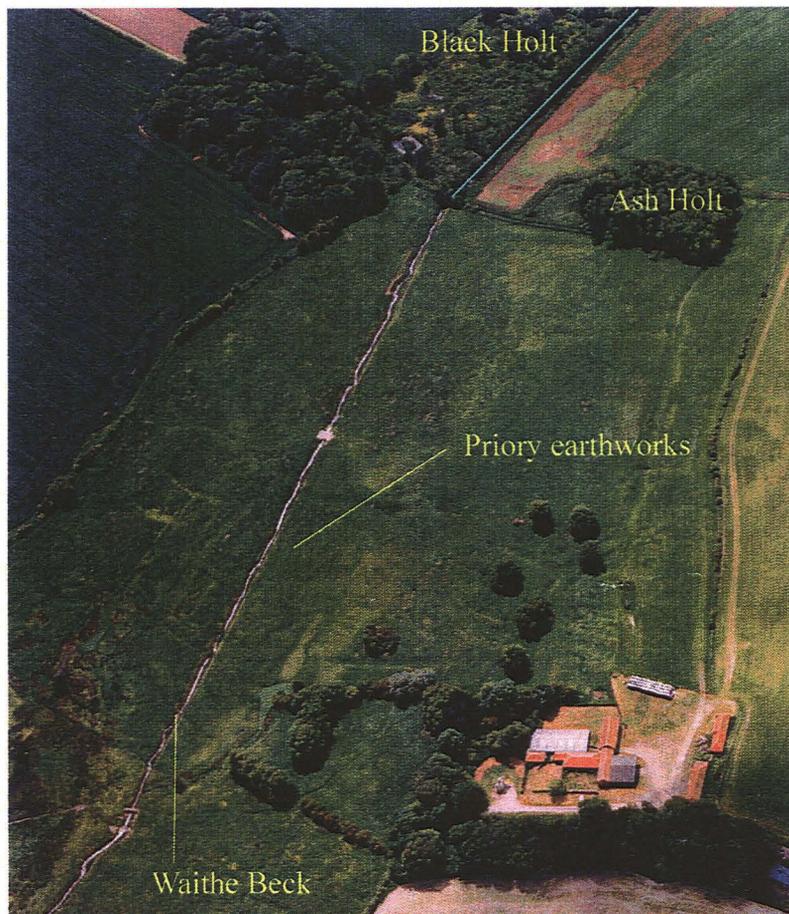


Figure 7: Oblique aerial photograph with north towards the right edge of the picture.  
Site is shown as a blue line.  
(NMR Reference: NMR 17813/28. NGR Index No. TF1994/27. Taken 5th June 2003)