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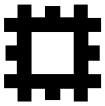

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CATLEY PRIORY,

WALCOTT, LINCOLNSHIRE

A Gilbertine House in the Witham Valley

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County:	Lincolnshire
District:	North Kesteven
Parish:	Walcott
NGR:	TF 118 555
NMR No:	TF 15 NW 6
SAM/ RSM No:	30001
SMR No:	60709
Date of survey:	February 2004
Surveyed by:	Abby Hunt and Moraig Brown
Report author:	Abby Hunt
Illustrations by:	Moraig Brown
Photography by:	Abby Hunt

Comments or queries regarding the content of the report should be made to the author(s) at the York Office:
37 Tanner Row, York YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901 ***Fax:*** 01904 601998

World Wide Web: http//www.english-heritage.org.uk

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1. Introduction

In March 2004, staff from the York and Cambridge offices of English Heritage undertook an archaeological investigation of the remains of Catley Priory in Lincolnshire. The field investigation was carried out as part of a wider English Heritage contribution to archaeological work in the Witham valley, the rationale for which is articulated in a recent publication (Catney and Start (eds) 2003). The aims of this investigation were thus to examine the priory remains as an entity, and also to consider them in a broader landscape context.

The remains of Catley Priory are located at the western edge of the Witham valley within Digby Fen, 1.5km west of the village of Walcott and 3.5km to the east of the village of Digby at NGR TF 118 555 (Figure 1). The site lies at approximately 7m above OD. The area

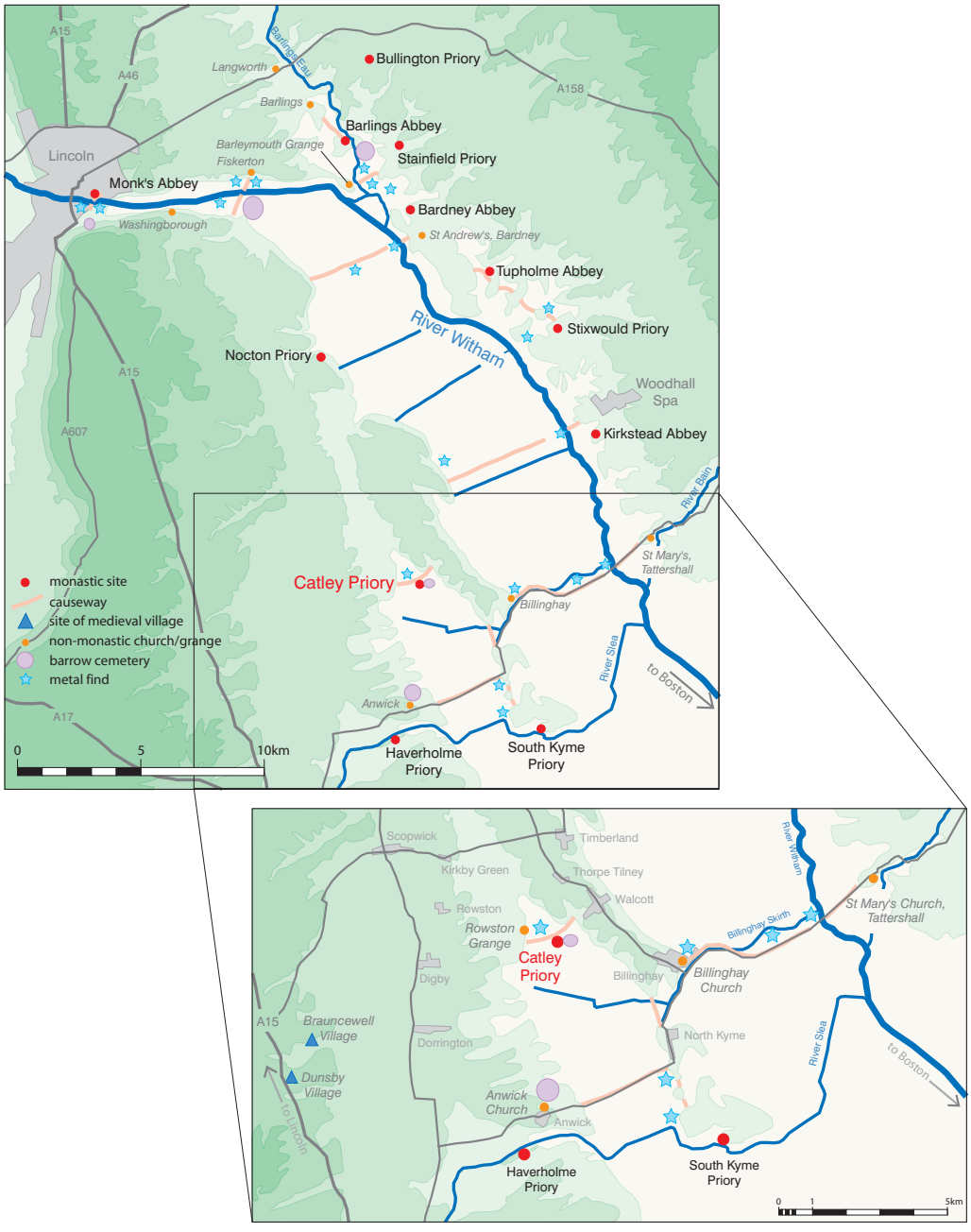

Figure 1 *Map showing monastic sites in the Witham Valley (above), with an enlargement of the area immediately surrounding Catley Priory (below)*

surveyed by English Heritage is located in a field, covering 3 hectares (*c*7.5 acres), adjacent to a group of houses on the Digby-Walcott road. The site is owned by Lincolnshire County Council and let to Mr K Maltby and son, at Allen's Farm in Digby Fen.

Vast expanses of the countryside surrounding Catley Priory have been subjected to prolonged intensive arable farming, significantly reducing the chances of any archaeological remains surviving. However, the field containing the bulk of the priory remains has escaped serious damage, thanks to the subterranean remains which have created an uneven, stony ground surface. The adjacent fields, although under pasture as recently as 1965, have since been repeatedly ploughed and as a result the earthwork remains of the north-eastern part of the priory precinct have been all but obliterated. There are no extant standing structures at Catley – the archaeological remains survive solely as earthworks, although in some areas, there are sections of stonework either partly exposed or very close to the surface.

The earthworks include a large rectilinear enclosure, the priory's inner precinct, which surrounds several smaller features. Many of these are the remains of buildings, which formed part of the central core of the priory. In addition there are a number of substantial ponds surviving on the site, most of which lie outwith the inner precinct of the priory. Traces of structures which may post-date the priory are also visible on the ground.

2. Geology, Topography and Modern Land Use

Although the source of the River Witham is in Leicestershire, most of its course (140 km in length) flows through Lincolnshire. It flows northwards from its source to Lincoln, where it turns east then south-east towards Boston, and from there to the sea (Figure 1). Between Lincoln and Boston, the flood plain varies between 1.5 and 6.5km wide. The river and its tributaries are all situated less than 10m above OD, and mostly below 5m. Today, the Witham flows closer to the northern edge of the flood plain, beyond which the land rises moderately onto higher ground.

Sustained geological deposition has resulted in the valley becoming filled with silts and peats, which cover features from a variety of periods, such as palaeochannels and a series of sand and gravel bars and islands (Catney & Start (eds) 2003, 4). Once out of Lincoln, the river continues through a broad bed of alluvium, which is generally flanked by areas of boulder clay and by river sand and gravel.

Digby Fen lies some 9km to the east of the river. The priory was established on an oval island of boulder clay, some 500m long, surrounded by a large expanse of peat, which in turn has Fen gravel to the north-east and Oxford Clay to the west (Geological Survey Of Great Britain 1973).

The remains of Catley Priory are located in three fields in an agricultural landscape. The field containing most of the earthworks currently provides rough grazing, while the field immediately to the south is improved pasture. Many of the other surrounding fields are ploughed.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a natural seltzer spring was discovered to the north-east of the priory remains. A small enterprise exploited the ‘Catley Abbey Seltzer spring’ which produced and bottled seltzer water for a short period in the early twentieth century.

3. Background History

The Gilbertine Order

Gilbert of Sempringham, the eponymous founder of the Gilbertine Order, was born around 1083. He is believed to have suffered some kind of physical deformity, rendering him unable to adopt an ordinary life, so he embarked on a more intellectual and spiritual path, travelling to France to study. In 1115, after he had returned to England, Gilbert's father gave him the vacant churches at Sempringham and West Torrington, in Lincolnshire, the revenues from which he donated almost entirely to the poor. Gilbert was appointed as a clerk in the household of the Bishop of Lincoln in 1122, where he remained for nine years, during which time he was ordained. In 1131, he returned to Sempringham from Lincoln, by which time he had inherited a large estate from his recently deceased father.

He decided to build a religious community, which, in the absence of men willing to serve God, was founded with seven women. The fledgling community was housed in specially-built accommodation adjacent to St Andrews Church, which they occupied for the next eight years. A grant of land for the building of a priory at Sempringham was received from Gilbert de Gant, the son of Baldwin of Flanders, in 1139. Consequently, Gilbert of Sempringham attended the Cistercian chapter at Citeaux in 1147 to ask the abbots to govern his nunneries. His request was refused because the abbots did not yet have experience of female orders. However, Pope Eugenius III, who was attending the chapter, gave Gilbert responsibility for the Order of Sempringham. St Bernard aided Gilbert greatly in the process of formally establishing the order and the two spent a lot of time together at Clairvaux.

In 1148 Gilbert returned to England and appointed canons to assist and serve as priests within the order. The Rule followed by the canons was basically the Rule of St Augustine but with additions from the customs of Premonstratensian canons. The nuns and sisters broadly followed the rule of St Benedict but with the addition of items adapted from the Order of Fontrevault and a Cluniac nunnery. The canons and lay brothers were not expected to attend the priory church, except for Mass, and were involved mainly with the administration of the order and dealing with the nuns' and lay sisters spiritual and temporal needs.

Gilbert died in 1189, by which date the order had spread successfully within England, numbering 13 foundations, of which 9 were double houses and 4 were for canons only, containing some 1300 nuns and 700 canons. It is recorded that in 1247 at Sempringham alone there were 200 women (Iredale 1992, 8-9). In 1202, not long after his death, Gilbert was canonised. The order continued to flourish with all but 3 of its foundations established by 1230 (Golding 1995, 260). None of them, however, were outside England, a unique feature amongst the religious orders of the Middle Ages. The English Crown held the Gilbertines in high regard and they were granted a number of favourable charters, including one which saw Henry II draw all the Gilbertine houses, canons and nuns under his protection (Iredale 1992, 5). This special treatment was undoubtedly closely linked with the 'Englishness' of the order, as revenue collected by the order would have been kept within the country and not

dispersed among the king's foreign enemies. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Gilbertines faced the same natural disasters, including plague and sheep murrain, as the other monastic orders, but they survived, albeit with depleted numbers. Signs of royal favour for the Gilbertines are evident even as late as 1536, when the order was initially exempt from the Dissolution of Monasteries. However, by 1538 even the Gilbertines had surrendered their property to the Crown. At this point, the order consisted of a mere 139 nuns, 15 lay sisters and 143 canons, spread between 25 Gilbertine houses (Iredale 1992, 29). Of these 25, only 4 houses were ranked among the great monasteries in the country, that is to say those valued over £200 (Dugdale 1830, 967).

History of Catley Priory

Catley Priory was founded at some time between 1148 and 1154, on land granted to the order by Peter de Billinghay. In addition to the 'island which is called Catley' (Stenton (ed) 1922, 72), the foundation grant to the priory included the site for a grange, the church at Billinghay with the chapel at Walcot and a substantial amount of land, both arable and pasture, in Digby, Dorrington, Scopwick, Rowston and Timberland (*see* Figure 1). This was a relatively generous endowment which should have set the priory up for a prosperous life, but Catley struggled and was always the poorest of the Gilbertine houses. This was due to several factors. Firstly, Peter de Billinghay had probably been too generous with his initial endowment: he was a minor knight of limited wealth, and his grant to the priory may have left his heirs in financial difficultly, leaving them unable to further endow the institution (Golding 1995, 209). Secondly, Catley is located in an area relatively dense with religious houses, where the competition for local patronage would have been fierce. Although various small grants of land were given to Catley over the following decades, these formed a patchwork of small holdings rather than a substantial consolidated holding likely to provide a lucrative income. Finally, Catley's isolated geographical situation in the fenlands was always unlikely to engender economic success (Golding 1995, 210).

A limitation was imposed on the number of inmates at Catley in the later twelfth century, capping the numbers at 35 canons and lay brothers and 60 nuns and lay sisters (Page (ed) 1906, 196). This measure may have been introduced to limit pressure on already over-stretched resources. An idea of the limited scale of the priory's resources can be gained from figures recorded in 1291 which show that the priory's income from temporalities was just under £35 (Iredale 1992, 139). The financial position of Catley did not improve significantly over the following century, and in fact records suggest that it worsened. In both 1338 and 1345 the priory had to appeal to Edward III to be excused payment of the tenth, so bad was their financial situation (Page (ed) 1906, 196), but these were not isolated cases and it occurred again over the course of the next century. It was such an issue that in 1445, all of the Gilbertine houses, with the exception of the wealthiest house at Watton, Yorkshire, were permanently exempt from payment of the tithe (Golding 1995, 446).

Throughout the medieval period, wool was a staple commodity for religious houses and it provided a significant income for the communities. Catley was no exception and the priory accumulated a reasonable acreage of pasturage for sheep, albeit in somewhat dispersed

locations. Pegolotti's list detailing the state of the wool trade in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries provides the figures for a number of English monastic houses trading with Italian wool merchants. It shows that Catley traded almost exclusively with Florentine merchants and that the priory's annual production was seven sacks of wool (Golding 1995, 419-425).

At the time of the Dissolution the net valuation of Catley and its lands was £38 18s 11d. At this date the estate included rectories at Billinghay and Digby, a grange at Scopwick (*see* Figure 1), and lands and tenements both locally and further afield (Page (ed) 1906, 197). At the time of its surrender in September 1538 there were only 8 inhabitants: the prioress (Margaret Gastwek), the prior (William Swift), 4 nuns and 2 canons. The final chapter of Catley's existence was completed on 24 December 1539 when Robert Carr, a merchant from Sleaford, bought the house and site of Catley, along with granges belonging to several other Gilbertine houses, for £400, and paid 'a rent of 11s 10d for Cattley [*sic*]' (Graham 1903, 206).

There are a number of 'grange' farm names within a 10 mile radius of Catley, such as Rowston Grange (TF 108 558) and Grange Farm, near Billinghay (TF 144 544). As mentioned above, land around Billinghay was granted along with the parcel of land for the foundation of the priory, so the latter may indicate the location of the original home grange of Catley. Aerial photograph transcription by English Heritage's Aerial Survey (York) section has revealed a complex set of soil-marks on the opposite side of the road to the modern site of Rowston Grange. The soil-marks comprise a large rectilinear enclosure with further features within it, possibly representing structures and subdivisions (Figure 6; CUCAP AQR 5-6 21-Jan-67; Y Boutwood, *pers comm*). There is a strong suggestion that these soil-marks may represent the original site of a grange farm, likely to have been associated with Catley Priory.

Post-monastic Catley

The period following the Dissolution of the Monasteries yields very little in the way of documentary evidence relating to the site of Catley Priory. A search of the on-line catalogues of the Public Record Office (PRO) revealed that there are some documents surviving which relate to Robert Carr and some of his descendants. Unfortunately none of the documents explicitly mention Catley in association with Robert Carr. However, a legal record of 1553-8 records a case regarding the 'Destruction of towns and churches', the defendant in which was Robert Carre and the plaintiffs included the inhabitants of 'Couldounsbe', which may possibly be Dunsby (PRO STAC 4/3/8). There are other references to Robert Carr of Sleaford in further sixteenth-century documents, but these appear to be related to the wine trade. In the 1630s two legal documents record a Sir Robert Carr, Bart., involved in cases regarding mills and the market in Sleaford (PRO E134/11Chas1/Mich41 and E134/12Chas1/East26). This would appear to be the same Robert Carr referred to in a document of 1653, described below, presumably a descendant of the Robert Carr who purchased Catley Priory and its lands in 1539.

One of the few references is in a document dating to 1653 which records the inheritance of Sir Robert Carre, Bart., held in the Lincolnshire Record Office (LRO) (ANDR 6). There is an entry which records that Digby, Catley, Walcot and other holdings, including Dunsby, Brauncewell and Rowston, were all 'to be enjoyed for life by Sir Robert'. Following this, the document records that a 'tenement or farm called Catley Abbey and the closes of land, meadow etc. enjoyed with it (61a[cres]) with 2 oxgangs of arable' were occupied by Parker, presumably Carr's tenant. The site was thus being utilised for agricultural purposes, perhaps with the majority of the land used for pasture, suggested by the specification of only 2 oxgangs of land being given over to arable in the document. An oxgang, or bovate, was a variable amount of land based on the area which could be ploughed by an ox in year; this could approximate to anything from around 8 to 20 acres (approximately 3 to 8 hectares) or more, depending on the soil type.

An 1872 account of the site describes that in 1775 some wall foundations were taken up 'to build a cottage within its [the priory's] area' (Trollope 1872, 500). It is uncertain whether this refers to one of the surviving cottages at the northern end of the site, where there is re-used stonework in the fabric, or a structure which no longer stands.

A few years later, in 1877, a document detailing the particulars of the Digby estate was drawn up (LRO, FL Deeds 1041). This lists *c*42 acres (*c*17 hectares) of pasture called 'Catley' and also a 'Cottage, &c., Garden' in the parish of Walcot and *c*15 acres (*c*6 hectares) of pasture, also listed as 'Catley', in the parish of Digby. The document records that the tenant of this land, which amounted to just over 58 acres (*c*23.5 hectares), was Alfred Tomlinson. It is interesting to note that the parcel of pastureland associated with Catley was of similar size in 1653 and 1877, with the latter just 3 acres (1.2 hectares) smaller than the holding some 220 years previously. This would suggest some degree of continuity in the extent of the lands held, with only a small amount of pasture having been alienated between the mid-seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries. There is no mention of the arable land though, which suggests that this too had been alienated by the later date. The 1877 document also specifies a cottage associated with the land, which is not referred to in the seventeenth-century document. It seems most likely, given the evidence of the 1872 account (Trollope 1872) and the depiction on the Ordnance Survey (OS) map of the area surveyed in 1887-8 (discussed below; Ordnance Survey 1888 and 1889), that the cottage referred to is one of those which still stands today at the northern end of the site.

The earliest OS 1:2500 map of the area was published in 1887-8 by which date no priory buildings survived as standing structures, as it is labelled 'Catley Abbey (site of)' (Figure 2; Ordnance Survey 1888 and 1889). The field boundaries shown on this map match closely those on the ground today, with most of the priory site enclosed within a roughly triangular-shaped field. A ditch is shown following the western boundary of this field, curving to run parallel to the southern boundary before turning back on itself. A water-filled ditch is depicted forming the southern boundary. To the west, the adjacent field contained three mounds, aligned roughly north-south, which have been interpreted as medieval burial mounds, possibly with an earlier origin (NMR TF 15 NW 5, Authorities 1-2; *see* Section 5). Another group of

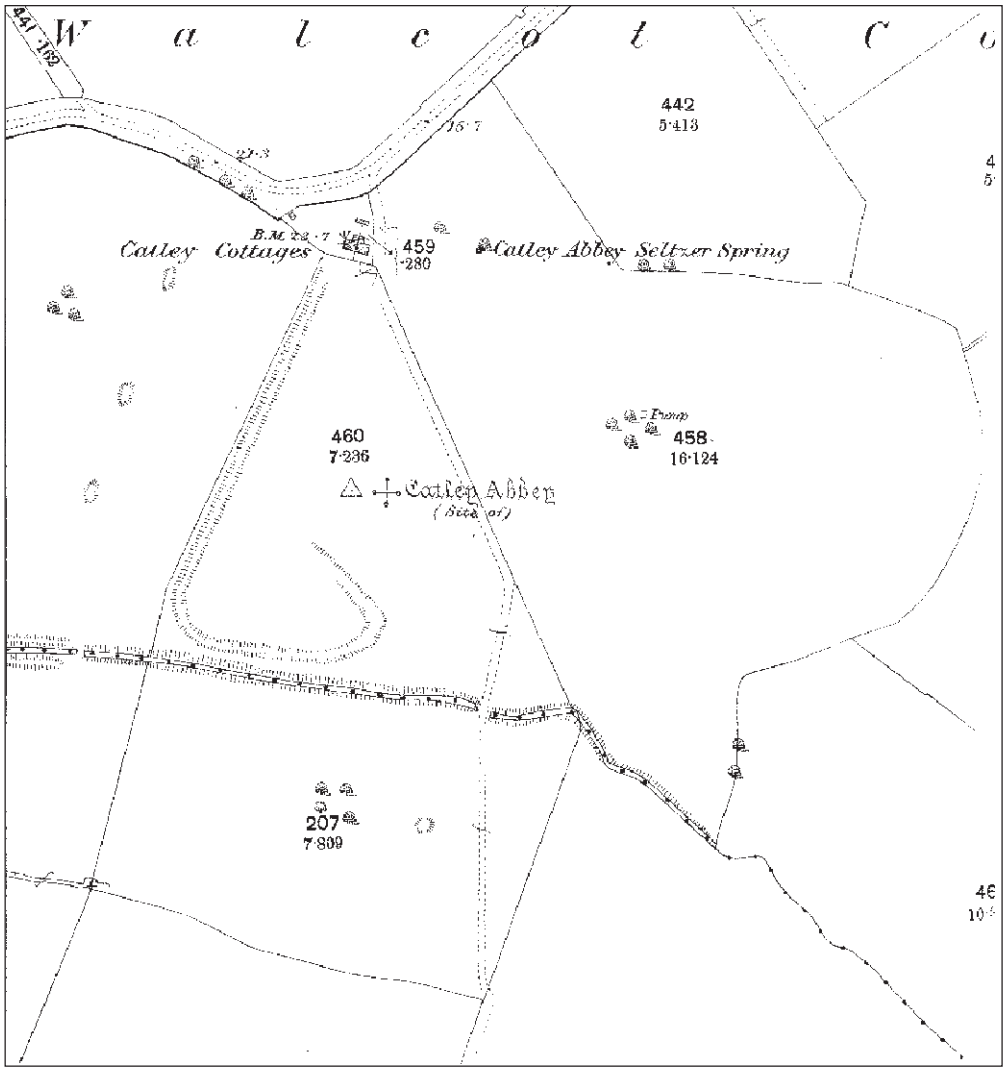

Figure 2 *Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 25-inch map, surveyed in 1888-9*

mounds, interpreted as prehistoric barrows, once existed to the east of the priory site (NMR TF 15 NW 15; Healey and Hurcombe 1989, 17-19). A further mound is shown on the 1888 map in the field to the south of the priory remains, possibly another prehistoric barrow (Ordnance Survey 1889). These prehistoric features are discussed below in Section 6. The distinctive curved boundary of the adjacent field to the east is clearly shown on this edition of the map. In the middle of this field is a small structure labelled as a 'Pump', which presumably relates to the seltzer spring.

The 1904 edition of the OS 1:2500 map (Ordnance Survey 1905a and b) differs little from the earlier version. The most significant change is that an area close to Catley Cottages had been enclosed and a building erected, labelled as 'Catley Abbey Seltzer Spring'. This suggests that the water pumping and bottling had become more formalised and was moved to permanent premises at some point between 1887 and 1904.

Even in the early 1950s the depiction of the site remained virtually unaltered (Ordnance Survey 1956). The absence of the most northerly of the group of three mounds depicted to the east of the priory on the 1905 map and the illustration of a structure to the east of the spring building are the only apparent differences between the two editions. However, a

much more detailed depiction of the priory remains, including both earthworks and probable wall-lines, is shown on the 1980 edition of the OS 1:2500 map, with the earthworks in the south-west corner of the field labelled as ‘fish ponds’ (Ordnance Survey 1980).

4. History of Research

Although many of Britain's monastic ruins attracted the attention of enthusiastic antiquarians, Catley seems to have gone largely uninvestigated, possibly as a result of its remote location. There are no records of any large-scale archaeological excavation at the site, although various remains and surface finds appear to have been collected sporadically over the last two or three centuries. There was some form of excavation in the later eighteenth century, referred to in the scheduling document as being in 1775 (DCMS 1998), presumably the activity connected with the building of a cottage at the site described by Trollope (*see* above). A reference is made to the occasional uncovering of the pavement (presumably part of the church floor), pillar bases and monumental slabs at Catley in an account of the site in a *Handbook for Lincolnshire* (Murray 1890, 92). An account from 1918 describes the digging up of several gravestones, human remains and some pieces of painted glass at the site in *c*1800. It notes several gravestones with inscribed crosses which had been found in the pavement of the church - a two-aisled building with carved stones and a cylindrical pillar indicative of a Norman date (Penny 1918, 124). These are presumably the same finds as were described in Murray's account of 1890.

More recently, more investigative work has been undertaken. In the late 1970s, Catley Priory was examined as part of a wider project looking at medieval and post-medieval earthworks in south Lincolnshire (Healey and Roffe, nd). The manuscript relating to this study includes a brief summary of the history of the priory and a basic survey plan of the site, which is not particularly detailed. However, it does show areas of ploughed-out stone in the field to the east.

A more detailed survey of the earthworks, commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council, was carried out in 1996-7 by Mick Clark of Lindsey Archaeological Services. The survey plan is held in the Lincolnshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). At the same time, a geophysical survey, using a fluxgate gradiometer, was undertaken by the Landscape Research Centre Ltd (Landscape Research Centre Ltd 1997). This work focused on the areas outside the scheduled area, concentrating on the adjacent fields, notably to the west, where three mounds were depicted on an early OS map (Figure 2; Ordnance Survey 1888 and 1889). The report on the geophysical survey notes that virtually none of the features identified by the gradiometer are visible on aerial photographs of the site, and vice versa. One of the main geophysical anomalies was an L-shaped feature in the eastern field. This appears to be the corner of a building or building range.

In 2002, Archaeological Project Services, Lincolnshire, carried out a programme of fieldwalking in the eastern field. Further fieldwalking at Sempringham Priory was undertaken in early 2005, and the intention is to analyse and compare the results from both sites (Tom Lane, *pers comm*). However, preliminary plots from Catley showing the distribution of fieldwalking finds display some interesting trends. Unsurprisingly, the quantity of medieval finds far outstripped the prehistoric material. The prehistoric pottery was generally scattered sparsely

across the whole field, with two areas, one in the east and one in the north-west of the field, which showed a slightly higher concentration (*see* Figure 3). This may indicate the location of former barrows in these areas.

Medieval brick and tile was found scattered evenly across most of the eastern field, but the results showed a much higher concentration within the inner precinct boundary, the latter visible as a cropmark in this field. A rectangular area of land in the north-west corner of the field, adjacent to the precinct boundary, also showed a high density of brick and tile finds. In the southern part of the field, the fieldwalking also recovered a concentration of medieval pottery, again forming an approximately rectangular area adjacent to the field boundary (*see* Figure 3). Viewed on aerial photographs, this appears as a large, deep feature, which raises the possibility that it may be a pond, or even a dock. The finds of pottery and tile certainly seem to suggest that the medieval activity at the site extended beyond the precinct boundary, presumably with a number of ancillary structures lying outwith the precinct, but still in relatively close proximity. Some finds, mostly medieval brick and tile, were recorded within the area of the present survey, with the area identified as the spoil-heap from a nineteenth-century excavation (*see* Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3) producing the most prolific findspots.

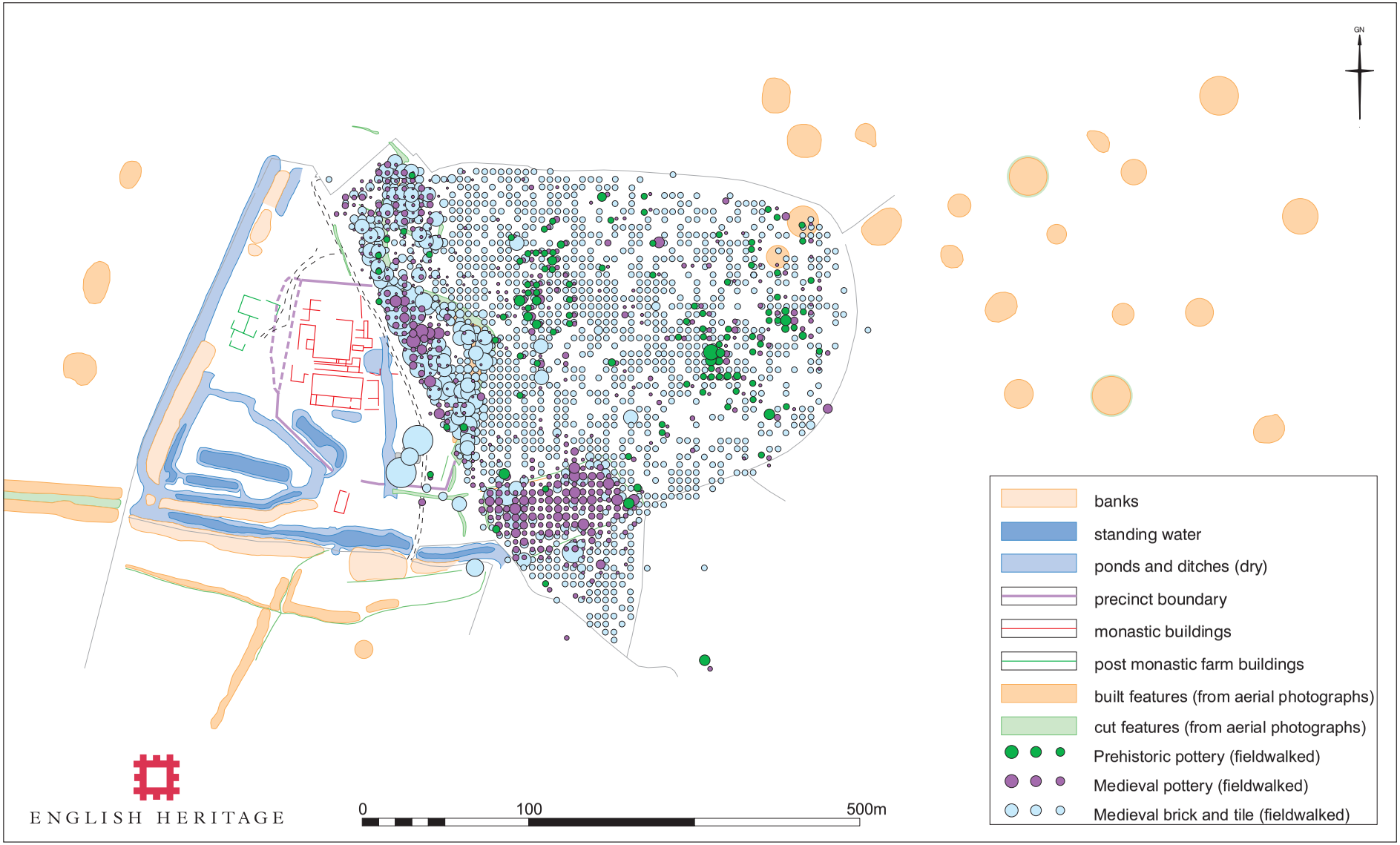

Figure 3 *Plan combining data from fieldwalking, field survey and aerial photographic transcription around Catley Priory. Fieldwalking data provided by Archaeological Project Services, Lincolnshire.*

5. Description and Analysis of the Field Remains

The English Heritage analytical field survey has recorded a complex landscape at Catley (Figure 4), the main components of which belong to the monastic and post-Dissolution periods. A lack of earthwork evidence of pre-monastic activity on the priory site is to be expected, given the relative intensity of land use from the medieval period onwards. However, recent interpretation and transcription of aerial photographic evidence by English Heritage's Aerial Survey team in York, as part of the Witham Valley stage of the National Mapping Programme, has provided information about features surviving in the fields surrounding Catley Priory, some of which may date to the prehistoric period (Figure 6). These will be considered in this section along with the earthwork remains recorded during the present field survey.

For ease of description and interpretation, the earthworks in the main field will be considered in groups, with significant features assigned a number, which relates to the annotated earthwork plan, reduced and reproduced as Figure 5.

5.1 Prehistoric features

5.1.1 Suggested long barrow

In the field to the west of the remains of Catley Priory is a feature which has been previously interpreted as a Neolithic long barrow and, in 1996, it was designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (RSM no. 27900). The feature was identified and mapped from aerial photography by the English Heritage Aerial Survey section, but doubt has been cast on the previous interpretation. The elongated mound, located at TF 1158 5557, is visible as a soil-mark and as a crop-mark on aerial photography from the 1950s and 1970s (Figure 6; NMR TF1155/3 CAP 8022/9 8-Jun-51; CUCAP RC8 BF25 2-May-76). The form of the feature is not typical of a long barrow of Neolithic date (D Jones, *pers* comm) and, in addition, there is a second very similar feature to the north-west, which was not noted in the original scheduling. The fact that these features appear to be aligned with the ridge and furrow ploughing in this field suggests that they are either contemporary with the ploughing, or post-date it. These features have been interpreted as 'earthen dumps' relating to medieval or later activity (NMR no. TF 15 NW 25).

5.1.2 Bronze Age barrow cemetery

A group of 21 mounds to the east of Catley Priory, on Walcott Commons, had previously been identified as a barrow cemetery. In the summer of 1978, a ditch was cut through the site enabling the recording of sub-surface archaeological features and remains. Three inhumations were identified, two of which were of juveniles, whilst there was also evidence of further, later burials. It is believed that this barrow group is primarily of Bronze Age date (Healey and Hurcombe 1989, 17-19). Up to 21 barrows in this group were identified on an aerial photograph of the area (CUCAP AZY67 2-May-76) as soil-marks or crop-marks (Figure 6; NMR no. TF 15 NW 15).

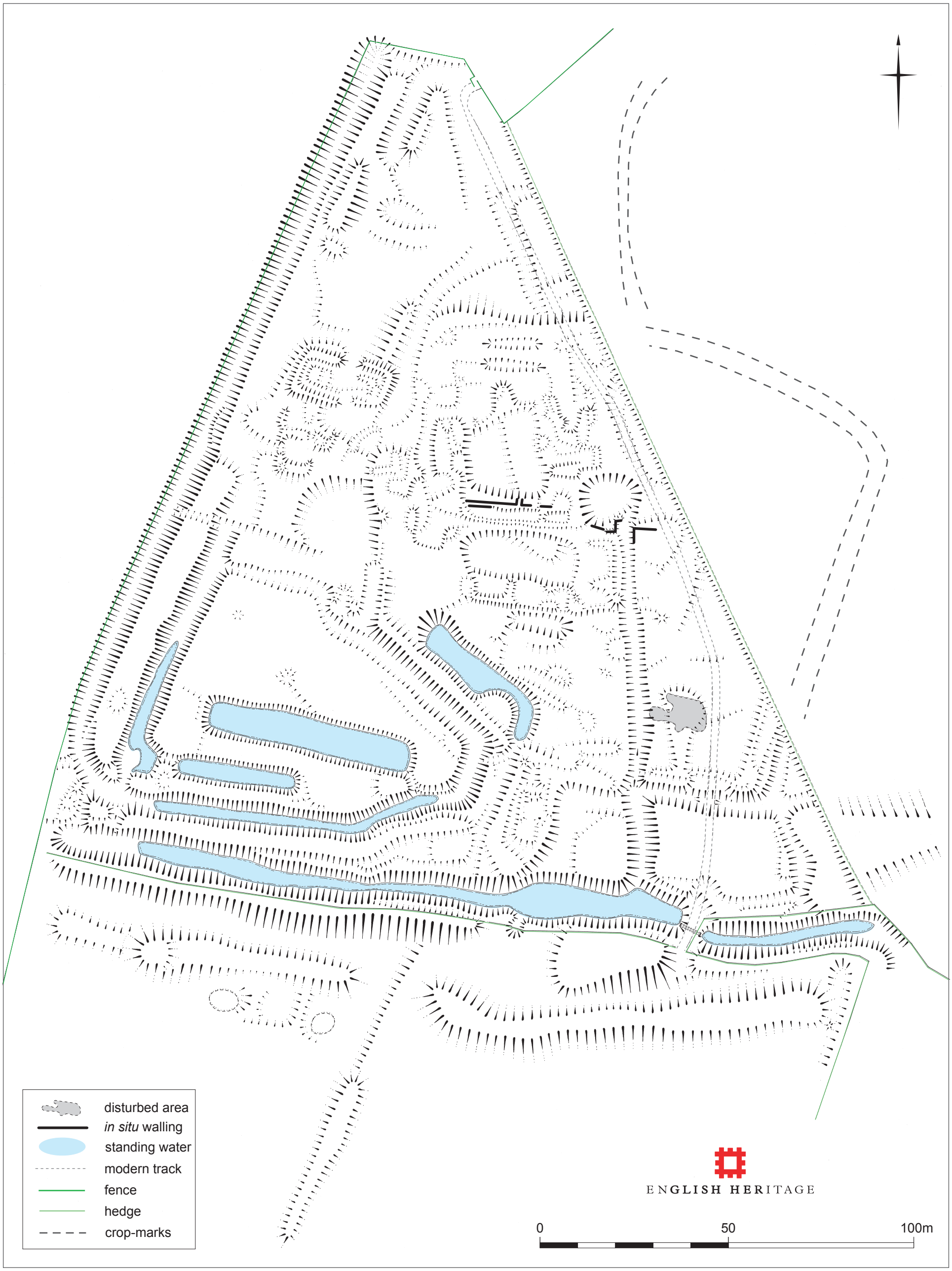

Figure 4 *English Heritage plan of the remains of Catley Priory, at 1:1000 scale*

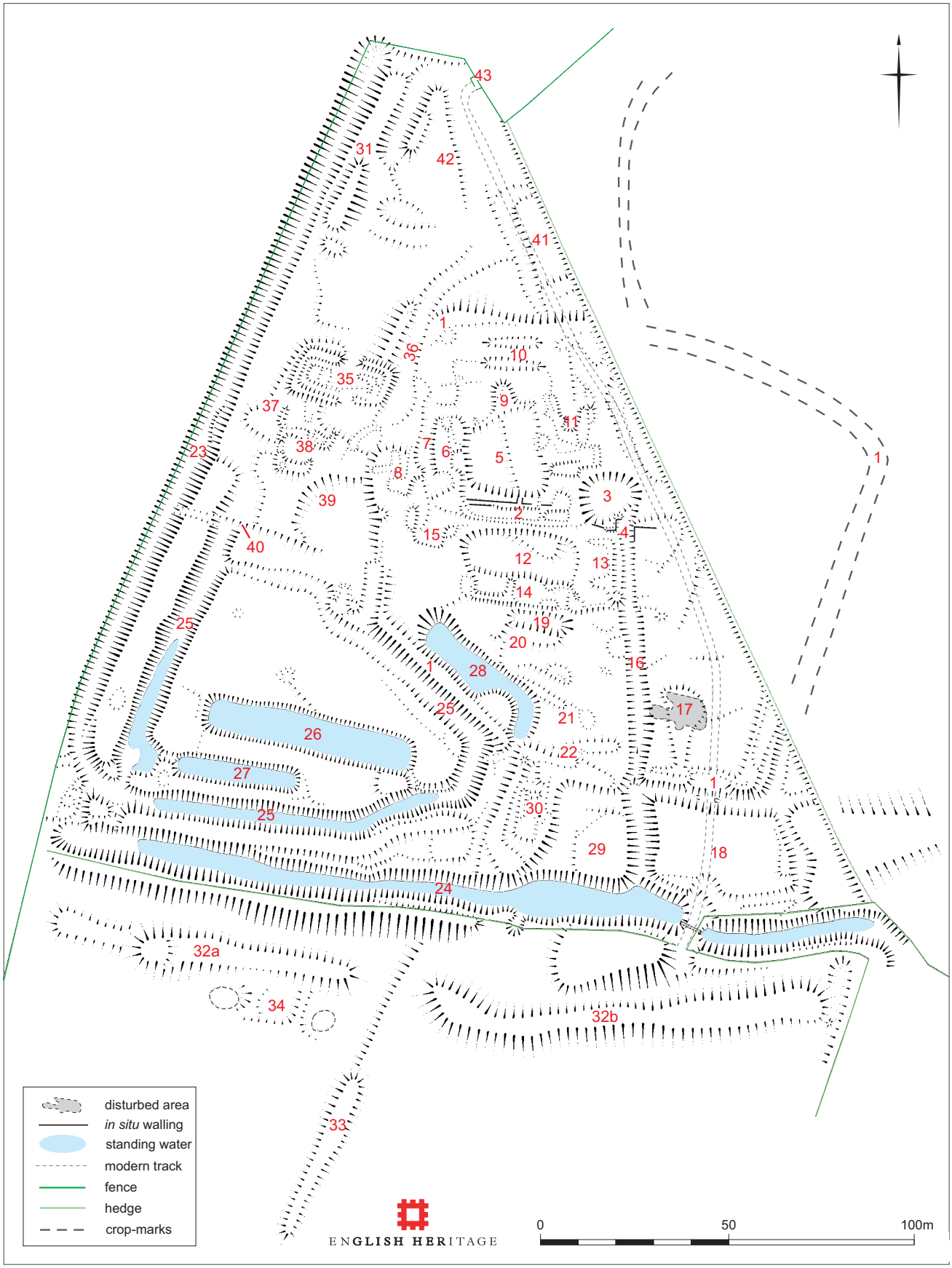

Figure 5 *English Heritage plan of the remains of Catley Priory, reduced and annotated (not to scale)*

Figure 6 *Plot of features transcribed from aerial photographs, also including the schematic depiction of surveyed field remains.*

5.1.3

A solitary mound in the field to the south of the priory site can be seen as an earthwork on aerial photographs from the 1950s, but on later photographs it has been levelled (CUCAP PH34 29-Mar-55). It was located towards the end of an east-west spread earthwork bank, described below (Section 5.2.6, feature 32b). From the aerial photograph evidence, it has been interpreted as a Bronze Age round barrow (NMR TF 15NW 28). It seems unlikely that it was part of the barrow cemetery to the east, as it stands at some distance from the main concentration of barrows, and may be part of another vanished group.

5.1.4

A group of three mounds, located in the field to the west of the priory remains, may have its origin in the prehistoric period. However, these mounds have been more closely identified with the medieval period and are therefore discussed at the end of the following section.

5.2 Priory earthworks

5.2.1 The Inner Precinct boundary

The focus of any medieval religious house was the inner precinct; the spiritual heart of the foundation which would have housed all the important buildings. This was almost invariably defined by some form of physical boundary, either a bank or a wall. The surviving evidence shows that Catley was no exception. A sub-rectangular feature (1), enclosing an area of roughly 1.2ha, can be traced for part of its length as an earthwork bank and also as a crop-mark. The feature has been cut through by the modern boundary defining the eastern edge of the main field, while that part beyond the boundary in the eastern field has been comprehensively ploughed and can now only be seen as a crop-mark on aerial photographs. In June 2004, following a period of dry weather, parched grass was visible on the ground along its line. Within the main field parts of the northern and southern edges of the precinct boundary survive as earthwork banks or scarps but the western edge is intermittent (Figure 7). This seems to be as a result of later activity, which has disturbed its course.

Figure 7 *Photograph of the southern part of the inner precinct boundary (1), surviving as a substantial earthwork bank*

5.2.2 Church and cloisters

Within the inner precinct are the remains of the claustral buildings. Although some of these earthworks have been heavily degraded, others are quite prominent and it is still possible to discern the general layout. This consists of a church flanked by cloisters to the north and the south. This layout, although somewhat unusual in a general monastic context, is fairly typical of double houses; enabling the nuns and the canons to continue their lives completely separately, meeting only for Mass in the shared church.

Church

It seems likely that the remains of the priory church are at (2) and are mainly earthworks, but in several places the stonework is only just below the surface or breaks through. The clearest parts of the structure are the long nave walls: the northern wall can be traced for almost 25m, most of it visible as stonework; the southern wall exists primarily as a narrow bank, which can be traced in excess of 25m, turning at its western end to create a short cross-wall at the western end of the church. Close to the eastern end of the building, a short bank indicates the position of a cross-wall, beyond which there is evidence for another compartment.

Beyond the eastern end of the church is a well-defined sub-rectangular depression (3). It is not clear how this relates to the remains of the church, although it is possible that the choir extended this far and that the depression is evidence of its robbing. The documentary sources record digging at the site in the late nineteenth century, which apparently revealed part of the church (*see* Section 4), so this depression may represent the position of such an excavation. It has obliterated any remains which may have indicated a relationship between the church and any building which once stood in this location. The fact that the depression seems to impinge upon the south-eastern corner of the northern cloister suggests that it was created after the cloister had fallen out of use.

At the southern edge of (3) there are three short, rubbly sections of wall footings (4). Although not particularly extensive, they indicate the existence of one, if not two buildings. One structure is on the western side of a ditch (16) which extends away to the south (discussed below): its remains consist of a straight section of wall and a ‘z’-shaped section. This building may originally have been positioned so that the bulk of it was located in the area which is now the main part of the depression (3). Alternatively, it may have been sited across the end of the ditch, possibly to utilise water. The other section of walling demonstrates the existence of a building on the other side of the ditch, which was sited on a platform that can still be traced as an earthwork. Despite their proximity, it is unlikely that these remains and the feature at (3) are related to the church. Rather, they were probably related to the ditch, which is thought to have been the priory’s great drain (*see* Section 5.2.4).

Northern Cloister

The northern cloister (5) appears to have been the larger of the two. A scarp defines the sub-square hollow area of the cloister-garth. The southern and western sides are better preserved; based on these remains it is likely that the cloister would have measured approximately

20m square. To the north of the northern range of claustral buildings, which is itself not particularly well-defined, are traces of further structures, also likely to be associated with the cloisters.

A platform on the western side of the cloister stretches almost its whole length and defines an area where buildings would have stood (6). One of these survives as a sub-rectangular hollow abutting the western side of the cloister. An 'L'-shaped bank partially adjacent to the northern end of this hollow appears to be the remains of walling, belonging to a second building. At the end of the platform, and the northern end of the 'L'-shaped bank, a semi-circular hollow may represent a later attempt to extract stone from the end of the wall. The western edge of the platform forms one side of a length of hollow-way (7), which would have allowed access around the edge of the claustral range. On the western side of the hollow way is a pair of 'L'-shaped banks (8), at least one of which may represent the partial remains size of the eastern element. The stub-walls between them form a gap which may represent the location of an internal doorway between the two. The western end of the range is occupied by another large rectangular compartment, approximately 10m by 7m, which has an end-wall shared with a structure to the east.

There are no features surviving immediately to the west of this cloister. However, to the north-west of the cloister is a rectangular depression (15), defined on three sides by a slight earthwork, possibly the site of another building.

5.2.3 Other features within the Inner Precinct

The great drain

Towards the east of the main field is a long ditch which, particularly at its southern end, survives as a strong earthwork (16). It is almost 100m long and is on a north-south alignment. The northern end opens into the sub-rectangular depression (3) (discussed above, Section 5.2.2). There are slight earthworks crossing the ditch at various positions, perhaps indicating blocking and silting. However, it is likely that this occurred after the feature had gone out of use. At its southern end, the ditch joins the southern boundary ditch. The 25m stretch north of this confluence is particularly well defined and at the confluence the bottom is some 2m below the top of the bank. At the time of the present survey, there was no water in the ditch and no evidence that it had held water in recent times.

A central feature of many monastic water systems was the great drain. Generally, this would have carried away the waste water from buildings such as the kitchen, infirmary and reredorter. This ditch (16) is the only likely candidate for the great drain. Supporting this hypothesis is its alignment with the cloisters, running alongside the rear of the eastern range of the southern cloister. However, it could be argued that the strong definition of the ditch suggests a more recent date. The explanation for this could be that it originally housed a stone-lined conduit, which was dug out in order to salvage the stone, thus leaving a well-defined ditch, in effect a substantial robber-trench. It would not have been unusual to have further structures adjacent to the great drain but in this case there is no such evidence.

The sub-rectangular depression at the head of the ditch (3) may be associated with the drain, possibly the former location of a structure such as a conduit house. There is clear evidence of structural remains on the southern edge of this depression (4), some of which may have straddled the ditch. If a conduit house was located here, it would have enabled the supply of water via a system of pipes or conduits, to be taken to the northern cloister. However the possibility of there having been a spring within the depression, situated at the highest point of the 'island' of Catley, which has subsequently dried up, cannot be ruled out. If this were the case, then there are interesting implications regarding the siting of the church in relation to a spring (discussed below, Section 6).

South-eastern corner

The area between the great drain and the eastern field boundary is divided by a well-defined bank and ditch, which is part of the inner precinct boundary (1). The east-west part is particularly large and has a smaller bank along the top, perhaps the line of a wall marking the boundary. Towards the middle, the large bank is lower in height, corresponding with a slight rise in the bottom of the ditch: this is aligned with a modern track and may have been created relatively recently. The area of land to the north of the inner precinct boundary contains several earthworks that do not appear to form any coherent pattern.

Adjacent to the back-scarp of the precinct boundary (1) is an elongated tear-shaped platform (17). At the bulbous end of this feature, there is an area of earth disturbed by extensive rabbit burrowing, which contains a high proportion of artefacts, all apparently deposited as refuse. Amongst them are oyster shells, mussels, pieces of cut animal bone, lumps of roof tile and fragments of pottery. A brief examination of a selection of pottery fragments revealed that they were likely to be from the later medieval period (T Pearson, *pers comm*). This material is may have come from the priory's midden, if it was situated here. It is a possible location, as it is a reasonable distance away from the core buildings of the priory but close enough to allow relatively easy disposal of rubbish. During a campaign of fieldwalking in the adjacent field to the east, finds of medieval brick and tile were recorded in this area (*see* Section 4). The high proportion of medieval building rubble in the area of the midden suggests that it may have been formed when medieval buildings were cleared from the site, possibly dating it to the period of the Dissolution or later. Alternatively, it may be associated with the post-medieval occupation of the site, which focused on the farmstead to the west of the abbey site (*see* Section 5.3.1), or it could be re-deposited material, most likely from an excavation at the eastern end of the church in the nineteenth century.

Between the inner precinct boundary (1) and the southern boundary ditch, in the south-east corner of the field, is a rectangular, ditched enclosure (18). The only features within the enclosure are a back scarp to the ditch on the eastern side and the faint remains of a ditch parallel to, and slightly to the north of, the southern boundary ditch. This may have been the original feature which defined the southern edge of the enclosure, possibly offering some form of drainage. The modern track cuts through the middle of this enclosure and on the southern side has pushed out the original face of the scarp. A small section of earthen causeway crossing the southern boundary ditch, which carries the modern track across it,

appears to be a recent feature associated with the track. However, it may have been an earlier feature which has been re-used.

The area south of the southern cloister

This triangular area lies between the great drain (16), a pond within the inner precinct (28) and the southern cloister (12). It contains a number of earthworks which include a narrow depression (19), probably a pond, some 15m long, parallel to the south range of buildings of the southern cloister. The date of this pond is difficult to ascertain, but it seems most logical to assign it to the monastic period in the absence of any firm dating evidence. Curving around from the south-eastern corner of the pond is a faint scarp, which defines a broad, low bank along part of the pond's southern edge (20). There would have been several ancillary structures within the inner precinct, separate from the cloisters and it is possible that there was a detached structure here. To the east of these features, adjacent to the great drain, is a slight semi-circular platform, perhaps another small structure.

Further to the south and close to a pond within the inner precinct, is the probable site of another building (21). Its southern side is a low bank that terminates in a slight oval mound at its south eastern end. The opposite side is a slight south-facing scarp with a sub-rectangular platform at its south-eastern end, 3m to the north and parallel to it.

At the southern end of the area are the remains of two faint banks, which are on slightly different alignments (22). The more substantial bank, at a right angle to the southern corner of a pond within the inner precinct, is on the line of the inner precinct boundary. The bank does not extend right up to the great drain, but stops half way. The second bank extends from the northern edge of the stronger feature at a slight angle; it extends almost all the way to the great drain. These banks are roughly on the alignment of the inner precinct boundary and it may be that they have been altered and moved as changes have been made to the main boundary at this point.

5.2.4 Ponds and Watercourses

The majority of medieval monasteries had complex systems of water management in order to supply water for sanitation, cooking and, in many cases, to fill fishponds. Of all the surviving features at Catley, it is these ponds and watercourses, which are the most immediately striking and, generally, the best preserved earthworks. Some survive to a depth of 1.5m and, in the winter and early summer months, still hold water (*see* Figure 11).

The western and southern perimeter of the main field is marked by a fence inside and along the edge of which are two substantial ditches (23 and 24; Figure 8), up to 1.5m in depth. The western boundary ditch (23), virtually dry at the time of the present survey, has a rounded terminal at its northern end, while to the south it curves slightly south-east, apparently feeding into another watercourse (25). The southern boundary ditch (24) was originally part of a watercourse called the Queen's Dyke (Landscape Research Centre Ltd 1997, 2). This is shown on the First Edition County Series map flowing from some distance to the west of the main field along its southern edge and then beyond the field in a south-easterly direction

Figure 8 *The boundary ditch (right) at the southern end of the main field (22), with the southern part of the D-shaped channel (23) running parallel (left)*

(this last part of the dyke survives as an earthwork). The dyke is not named on the map, and appears to have been an intermittent feature by this date, but c1km to the east of the priory site, it is labelled as 'Old Dam' and some distance to the north of it is a much more substantial watercourse called the 'New Cut' (Ordnance Survey 1888 and 1889). Aerial photographs show that the stretch of dyke to the west of the site had been ploughed out by 1951 (NMR: TF1158/4 CAP8022/10 8-Jun-51). Its course has, however, been fossilised as the line of the parish boundary.

Figure 9 *View to the west along the southern boundary ditch*

Within the area of the present survey, the southern boundary ditch (24) begins to broaden to the east, approximately halfway along (Figure 9). This broader section is some 45m long and adjacent to its northern edge are some relatively well-defined earthworks. These comprise, on the east, a sub-square area with a smaller rectilinear platform (29) occupying its south-eastern corner, defined by a depression around the northern and western sides. The platform may have supported a structure or it could have been used as a loading area. To the west of the platform is a more complex group of earthworks (30), bordered on the west and the north by a bank, which appear to represent the remains of at least one rectilinear structure. There is a possibility that (29) and (30) together formed a wharf or dock serving the priory, to and from which goods were delivered, perhaps using shallow, flat-bottomed boats to navigate the watercourses which cross the fenland landscape.

The watercourse and ponds in the south-west corner of the main field

All other watercourses and ponds are concentrated in the south-western quarter of the main field. Surrounding two ponds is an irregular 'D'-shaped channel, made up of a series of six straight interlinked arms at different angles, forming what may have been a discrete enclosure (25). The western arm of this channel, parallel to the western boundary ditch (23), has a broadening at the southern end, with a narrow gap through an earthen bank to allow water to pass through and join the rest of the feature flowing to the east (Figure 10). A small channel has been cut between this broader area and the western end of the smaller, southern pond (27; discussed below), allowing the transfer of water between the two features. The southern and eastern arms of the channel are still fairly well defined, but the rest of the feature is somewhat degraded, particularly the northernmost arm. The point at which the water entered the 'D'-shaped channel was probably at the northern end of the western arm, as this extends further to the north here and appears to be linked to the western boundary ditch by a further shallow channel.

Figure 10 *Photograph looking east at the south-west corner of the D-shaped channel (23). The dip to the right of the tree is where the western and southern arms of the channel meet.*

In the middle of the area enclosed by (25) is a large rectangular pond (26), which is *c* 1m deep. It has a regular outline and is well-defined, suggesting a re-cut in modern times; it still holds water throughout the year (Figure 11). From its south-western corner, a narrow cut, some 0.6m deep, connects it to the surrounding channel (25). To the south, a smaller, rectangular pond (27) adopts a parallel alignment. A narrow cut at its western end links to the surrounding channel. The rest of the area enclosed by the channel (25) is relatively flat and contains some slight scarps, possibly related to the cutting or re-cutting of the ponds and the periodic clearing out of the channel.

A third well-preserved pond (28) lies within the inner precinct. It is likely that this was originally rectangular in plan but a semi-circular platform now extends into the pond from its south-western edge. This has turned the eastern end of the pond into a curved, hook-like channel, at the southern end of which is a depression containing traces of stonework – possibly a sluice allowing water into or out of the pond. The platform which protrudes into the pond has the appearance of being a later addition; it is a substantial, uneroded earthwork which may have been formed from dumped material.

5.2.5 North of the Inner Precinct

At the northern end of the main field are further earthwork remains generally of unknown date. Possible monastic earthworks comprise a stretch of ditch and a section of bank (31), both running parallel to the western boundary ditch. The ditch may have been a feature related to water management, possibly functioning as an overflow from the boundary ditch. It may have been truncated by later activity, such as the construction of cottages to the north and possibly also to the south, by the insertion of a farmstead following the Dissolution (*see* Section 5.3.1 & 6). In this case, the bank and ditch may be a continuation of the bank and channel (25) that survive further south, disrupted by the building of the later complex. If this is the case, then the priory would originally have been bounded by a substantial pair of parallel ditches on the west.

It is also possible that the bank and ditch forming (31) may be the remains of features associated with a formal entrance to the priory precinct. Access to the priory precinct

Figure 11 *Large rectangular pond (24) surrounded by the D-shaped channel (23). This photograph was taken in February 2004 and demonstrates that the pond still holds water.*

during the Middle Ages is likely to have been from the north, as it still is today. The causeway which crosses the fen to the island of Catley from the north-west is likely to be the original approach to the priory. It is likely, then, that the gatehouse of the priory was on this side. There are no traces of such a structure remaining on the ground today: its stone may have been used in other buildings in nearby villages, or in the construction of the present cottages. It is possible that the bank (31) may be a remnant of the entrance to the priory, in effect the end of the causeway, and the course of a road leading from the gatehouse towards the inner precinct. The entrance through the inner precinct boundary is not clear from the surviving earthworks; it may be that any gaps in the boundary bank have been obliterated by later activity.

5.2.6 The Outer Precinct

In terms of earthwork remains, there is little to suggest the original course of the priory's outer precinct boundary. However the unusual outline of the field immediately to the west may represent part of its course (Figure 12). The eastern half of this field boundary follows a curving course, which sits somewhat incongruously in a landscape of regular, straight fences and hedges. Given the shape of this boundary, it is undoubtedly of some antiquity. The boundary is presently defined by a drain, which follows the curve of the field, before turning sharply to the south and joining the dyke which flows away from the south-eastern corner of the main field. This short north-south stretch of the drain may be a modern diversion and it is possible that the original route of the ditch continued on the curving course, which would have brought it around towards the south-eastern corner of the main field. At this point the line of the outer precinct boundary seems to have been picked up by the southern boundary ditch (24), with its associated bank. If there was originally an earthwork bank associated with the boundary and watercourse around the field to the east, then this would have created a continuous boundary with the southern boundary ditch. However, there is now no surviving evidence of such a feature.

Figure 12 *Aerial photograph of Catley Priory and the surrounding fields. Of particular interest is the curving boundary of the field adjacent to the west of the site. NMR 12606/02 TF1155/16 5-Sep-94. © English Heritage NMR.*

The field to the south of the main field is currently under pasture and, although probably ploughed in recent times, does not appear to have been as intensively cultivated as most of the other surrounding fields. The principal earthwork remains in this field comprise two long banks on an east-west alignment (32a & b); they have been reduced in height and spread by ploughing. These are separated by a scarp running roughly north-east to south-west, which becomes a bank further to the south (33). It is possible that these features are the remains of earlier ploughing in this field representing the headlands (32a & b), and previous land division (33). Just to the south of (32a) is a group of sub-circular depressions (34), possibly the remains of ponds, although their degraded nature makes it impossible to offer a more detailed interpretation.

5.2.7 The 'burial ground'

Often the abbots and more important members of a monastic community were buried in the chapter house, the monastery church or the chapels therein. However, the ordinary members of the community would have been buried in a burial ground, often located a short distance from the main buildings of the monastery, but within the precinct. In the same field as the supposed Neolithic long barrow, to the west of Catley Priory (see above, Section 5.1), are three mounds, depicted as earthworks on the First Edition OS map of the site (Ordnance Survey 1889). These have previously been interpreted as dating to the medieval period, on the basis of nineteenth-century excavation evidence of an urn and a coffin, possibly representing the remains of the priory burial ground (NMR no. TF 15 NW 5, Authority 2). Recent work by English Heritage's Aerial Survey section has identified these mounds surviving as earthworks in amongst traces of ridge and furrow ploughing, on an aerial photograph from the 1930s (TF1155/10 CCC5242/8053). The relationship between the mounds and the ploughing is not clear from the photograph. If the mounds are of medieval date, the fact that they sit outwith the priory's inner and outer precinct would strongly suggest that they were not the site of the monastic burial ground. However, the possibility remains that the ridge and furrow respects the mounds, which would indicate that they are earlier features, possibly contemporary with other Bronze Age barrows in the area (*see* Section 5.1), which have subsequently been re-used for burials in the medieval period (NMR no. TF 15 NW 5, Authority 4-5). At the time of the present field survey no surviving earthworks were observed in the field to the west of the priory, which is confirmed by a recent aerial photograph, upon which the features appear only as crop-marks and soil-marks with no height (Y Boutwood, *pers comm;* TF1155/18 NMR17888/08 22-Jul-03).

5.3 Post-monastic features

5.3.1 Post-monastic farmstead

Among the best preserved remains on the site is a rectangular building (35), aligned east-west, adjacent to the western side of the inner precinct. To the south is at least one further structure and possibly a yard. These buildings are situated on a platform (37), which was presumably created to provide a level ground surface. There is also evidence that a wider area surrounding the buildings was deliberately flattened.

The principal feature (35) comprises the earthwork remains of a structure from which the building material has been substantially robbed out, leaving a trench along the former wall lines, with upcast spoil forming banks up to 0.5m high in places on the inside and outside. Given the dimensions of the trench, the building measured in the region of 20m long by 8m wide. There are gaps located roughly in the middle of the long sides of both banks and trench; the southern gap is not particularly well-defined and is somewhat off-centre. The scale of the trench suggests that the building was substantially constructed.

Adjacent to the eastern end of the building is a hollow-way (36), which approaches from the north-east and would have given access to the middle of the group of buildings in this area and to the southern side of the largest building (35). It is quite shallow, which would suggest that it has not seen particularly heavy use, although had it been metalled, there would have been less erosion and wear. The western side, just to the north of building (35), is edged by a stretch of broad, low bank. Although probably contemporary with the buildings, there is a possibility that the hollow way may post-date them, possibly acting as the route along which robbed materials were conveyed.

A flat area to the south of building (35) is possibly a yard and beyond it are traces of another building in the form of a pair of banks (38) with fragments of stonework close to the surface. These seem to be defining the western end of a rectangular structure, but in the absence of more substantial remains, it is difficult to hypothesise its former extent. It is possible that together (35) and (38) comprise a farmstead complex which post-dated the priory.

South of (38) are further earthworks. A curved scarp defines a hollow (39) of uncertain function; the scarp is fairly gentle and probably not a former pond. To the east it abuts part of the priory's inner precinct boundary. The southern end abuts, or is cut by, an east-west scarp (40), running at right angles to the western boundary ditch and parallel to the top section of the 'D'-shaped channel (25). The eastern part of this feature is a small scarp which continues west as a ditch across the bank to the western boundary ditch. The most likely explanation for this feature is that it was inserted in order to define a boundary, possibly associated with buildings (35) and (38).

5.3.2 Other post-monastic features

In the northern part of the main field, some 40m from the modern gateway (43), is a rectangular platform (41), with a hollow-way along its western edge, aligned with the eastern boundary of the modern field. This hollow-way shares a similar alignment to that of the modern track, so it is probably a predecessor. The platform is also likely to be post-medieval, as it is aligned with the field boundary, which post-dates the priory. It probably supported a field-barn or similar farm building.

To the west of the modern gateway (43) are further remains. A faint scarp alongside the fence at the northern edge of the field is associated with the boundary of the cottages. On virtually the same alignment as the modern track through the field is a faint scarp (42), which originates opposite the modern gateway (43). As the principal access to the field is

currently through this gate, it seems likely that access over time has had a scouring effect, creating a slight depression around, and to the south-east of, the gateway. Wear in this area may also be connected to accessing the structure adjacent to the eastern field boundary (41), as discussed above.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

The barrow cemetery and its implications

As the preceding sections have demonstrated, the surviving earthworks at Catley relate to both the medieval priory and post-medieval activity. However, there is evidence for an extensive Bronze Age barrow cemetery in the surrounding fields, now visible only as cropmarks on aerial photographs. A large part of the cemetery is located to the east of the priory, though it is possible that other prehistoric features lie under the priory remains. The barrow cemetery would have been close to a route or causeway approaching the 'island' upon which Catley is situated. While the exact date of this causeway, and others in the Witham valley, is not certain, the weight of evidence, in terms of finds and associated sites, points towards a prehistoric date. At least seven causeways crossing the Witham valley have a barrow cemetery at one or both ends; sampling of peat deposits overlying the barrows at Catley has produced dates from around the sixth or seventh centuries BC (Stocker and Everson 2003, 274-280).

The deposits partially overlying the barrows indicate that since the Bronze Age the water levels in this area have risen, leading to the peat deposition. The peat cover has since been reduced by ploughing, and possibly also by some natural shrinkage, thus partly exposing the barrows. Given that the Bronze Age water level was somewhat lower than the present level, the island would have been more extensive, offering a larger dry area with a greater relative elevation, an attractive prospect for the barrow builders.

Aerial photographs record most of the barrows to the east of the priory site. The origin of the three mounds west of the priory is uncertain, and may be prehistoric, medieval or both. At present the evidence is inconclusive.

The period between the construction of the barrows and the foundation of the priory in the twelfth century has left no surviving earthworks. However, it is almost certain that the barrows would have survived as earthworks into the medieval period, particularly those in the centre of the island, which were not covered by peat deposits. Less intensive ploughing regimes may have preserved those in the centre of the island somewhat. The true extent of the barrow cemetery and prehistoric activity remains unclear. For this reason, the inter-relationships, if any, between the medieval and prehistoric phases of activity are difficult to define. It seems inescapable that the mounds in the vicinity of the monastic house are discrete monuments, or groups of monuments, then the priory appears to have been deliberately placed in the landscape with some regard to pre-existing features. It is conceivable that is was partly a symbolic act, the appropriation of an earlier 'spiritual' site.

However, the positioning may equally have been due to more prosaic considerations: the site would have been a practical choice of building plot, a factor apparently appreciated by the barrow builders in the Bronze Age as much as by the medieval founders of Catley Priory. The island's slight elevation above the surrounding landscape would have made it

dry, easy to drain; and a prominent, visible place in the landscape; such land would have been at a premium in the fenland. The medieval priory builders may also have benefited from the existing infrastructure, in the form of a causeway. There is evidence that elsewhere in the Witham valley, at Bardney and Tupholme Abbeys, the monasteries were expected to shoulder the burden of causeway maintenance (Stocker and Everson 2003, 279), though Catley's foundation charter does not make mention of such an obligation.

The priory's location within the landscape may also have been affected by the position of natural springs. The large depression (3) at the northern end of the priory church, (*see* Section 5.2.3), may have held a spring which has subsequently dried up. The proximity of the church and spring may have been deliberate in order to exploit the ritual significance of the natural water source.

Catley Priory

Many of the earthworks have been severely degraded, making it impossible to totally disentangle the whole priory layout or to identify various periods of activity at Catley. The surviving monastic features are largely contained within the inner precinct boundary, although there are traces of other features beyond this in the outer precinct. The crop-mark that can be seen in the eastern field represents the boundary of the levelled part of the inner precinct. The most prominent remains are those of the claustral complex, including the church. A portrayal of the elements of the archaeological landscape, both surveyed and conjectured, is shown as Figure 13.

As has been shown from the documentary evidence and the small scale of the earthwork remains, Catley was a relatively lowly, rural monastic house. Its particular interest lies in its status as one of the small number of monastic double-houses to have existed in medieval England. The claustral complex is arranged with the two cloisters adjoining the northern and southern sides of the priory church (Figure 13). Given the greater number of nuns occupying the house, it can be hypothesised that the northern cloister, as the larger of the two, was the nuns' cloister. The arrangement of the cloisters at Watton Priory, Yorkshire is somewhat different. There, the nuns' cloister abutted the church's northern wall, with a covered passage joining it to the canons' cloister, which stood separately a short distance to the east and had its own chapel (St John Hope 1901, 9, 20 & Plate 1 facing 9). Watton was the richest of the Gilbertine houses and therefore had the luxury of extensive lands and money. The arrangement of the claustral buildings at Catley suggests a more economical approach, with a single shared church and smaller cloisters. However, at Catley there is a section of the inner precinct, some one third of the original area, in the ploughed field to the east, which has no surface remains. Many other buildings would have stood there. The existence of buildings in this eastern field is borne out by an 'L'-shaped anomaly highlighted by a geophysical survey (Landscape Research Centre Ltd 1997, 6). In terms of further research, this may be a fruitful area for targeted excavation, particularly as it is currently outside the scheduled area, although there is a danger that the ploughing has completely destroyed any remains.

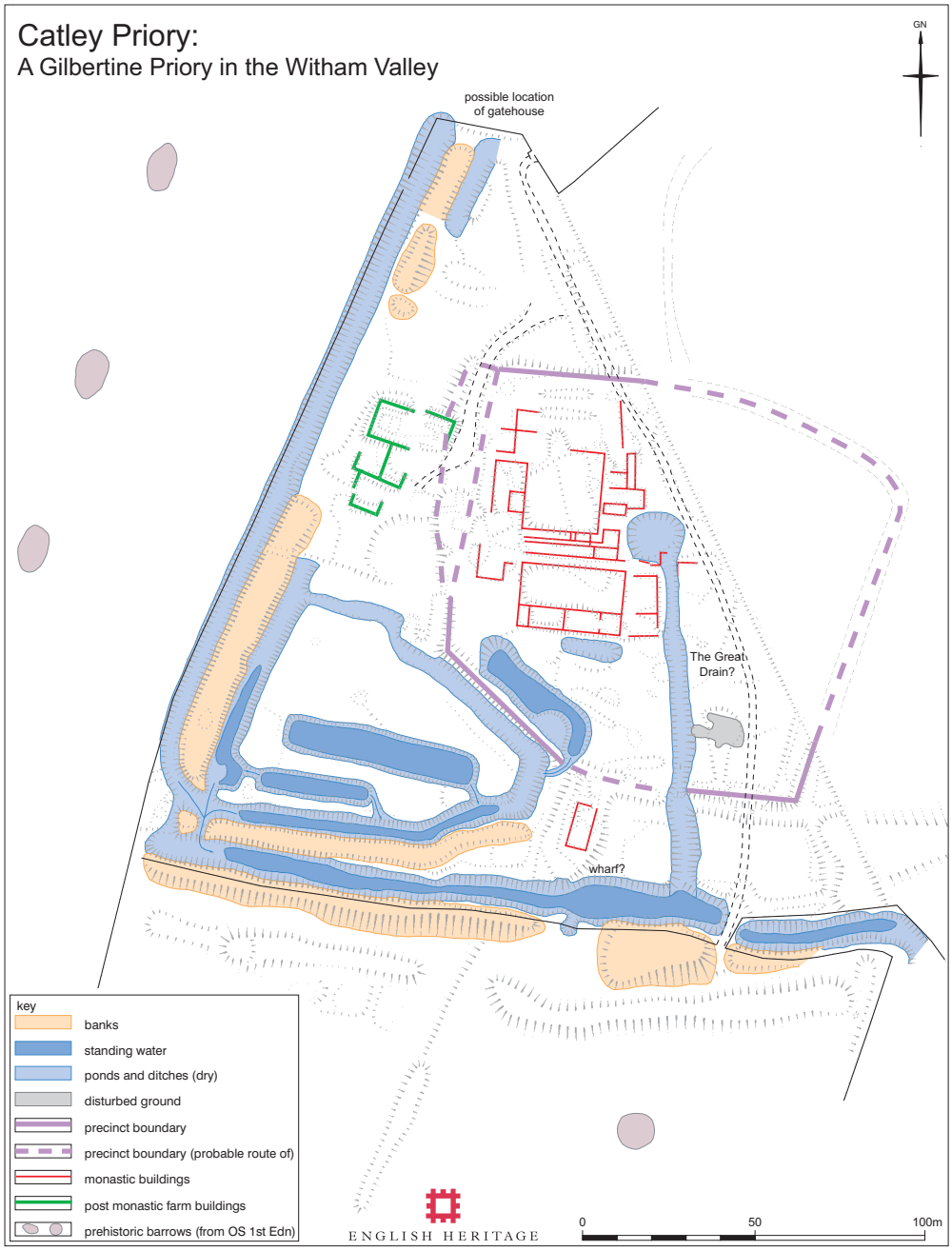

Figure 13
Interpretative plan of elements of the archaeological landscape at Catley

Access to the inner and outer precincts was probably from the north, as indicated by the causeway. The exact point of access through the outer precinct boundary is concealed by relatively modern activity and the cottages. However, east of the cottages the ditch and bank (31) may have been associated with a formal entrance through a gatehouse, often a substantial stone-built structure. Such a building would probably have been dismantled, along with any other upstanding remains of the priory, to recycle building material for use elsewhere (some of it may well have been used in the construction of the cottages).

The charter recording the original grant of land to the priory records the site thus:

> 'with waters and fisheries, and with its ditches set and made on every side of the said island of Catley, and the water mill on the same island, and the whole pool made for it, together with the banks on either side' (Stenton (ed) 1922, 72).

The water resources of the site created the opportunity to build water-mills and fishponds, but also posed a threat in terms of flooding. Most of the water features at Catley had their origins in the monastic period but survive in modified form. The ponds and the D-shaped channel in the south-western corner of the field are the former priory's fishponds, arranged on slightly different levels, with the southern boundary ditch at the lowest level and the large rectangular pond at the highest. The existence of small channels between all of the ponds or ditches indicates management and transfer of water between them via sluices.

Most of these ponds lie in the outer precinct, a conventional position to ensure that the agricultural activities and service industries lay at some distance from the spiritual hub. Whilst some of these were fishponds, others may have been used for different industries, such as the soaking of flax prior to processing it and for driving the documented mill.

One anomaly is pond (28), which lies within the inner precinct. Its alignment, at odds with the other medieval remains, does suggest that it may have been associated with a secondary phase. The adjacent and parallel arm of the D-shaped channel (25) may also belong to this phase, as it appears to chamfer the otherwise rectilinear shape of the inner precinct boundary. In other words, the precinct's south-west corner was truncated and re-aligned, following which the pond was created. If this was the case, there are no traces of the original precinct boundary in this area.

The great drain at Catley hints at an extensive system of water management throughout the priory, most of the evidence for which is concealed. The location of the drain to the east of the claustral complex suggests that the buildings requiring a water supply, such as the kitchens, reredorter and infirmary, would have been located there. If the present form of the great drain is the result of removal of a stone conduit, then it is likely that there are further sections of pipe-work or conduits *in situ* below the surface in the vicinity of the cloisters. As the drain empties into the southern boundary ditch, it seems that this part of the Queen's Dyke was utilised to carry away waste water from the priory.

There is little other evidence on the ground for any specific industries at Catley. However, a letter from A J White, held in the Lincolnshire SMR and dated 1976, reports that tile and large pieces of vitrified flue arch had been found 'on the southern edge of the ditch at the south-west boundary of the precinct' at TF 1189 5545 (Lincolnshire SMR, Digby parish file). This suggests that there was a kiln, or more extensive tile-making complex, situated in the far south-western corner of the main field. This would have supplied the needs of the priory, rather than having to pay the high cost of importing materials from elsewhere, and would also have provided an opportunity to sell off any surpluses.

Whilst there is good evidence that the monks at Catley were producing their own fish, arable crops, meat, wool and tiles, they would undoubtedly have needed further supplies of goods in order to survive. The causeway is the obvious land route via which these supplies may have arrived and been exported. However, this was not the only mode of transport connecting the priory to the outside world. The boundary ditch to the south of the site,

although now blocked at its western end, was originally part of a more extensive watercourse, the Queen's Dyke. The dyke (described in Section 5.2.4) was quite an irregular feature east and west of the priory precinct, in contrast to the straight stretch on its southern fringe: the boundary section may have been canalised to give it a more regular form, and possibly to allow small boats easy access. The earthworks (29) and (30) adjacent to the broadening of the southern boundary ditch may mark the site of a wharf. The evidence is purely circumstantial but the priory's water transport links would benefit from further research.

A certain amount of land immediately surrounding the priory would have been directly cultivated by the lay-brothers and used for grazing. The field to the south of the priory retains fragmentary evidence of cultivation which, though subject to relatively modern ploughing, may be of medieval origin. A 1930s aerial photograph of the field to the west of the priory shows evidence of ridge and furrow ploughing (NMR TF117556 CCC5242/8053 1930s). The other surrounding fields, with the exception of the one to the east, now all have regular boundaries and are part of the modern agricultural landscape, offering no further clues as to monastic agricultural activity in this area.

Following the Dissolution, Robert Carr acquired the site of the priory in 1539. From the evidence of the surface remains, it is not possible to establish what changes or additions that he made to the site, although there were clear changes following the monks' departure. The principal remains from the post-monastic period at Catley are the prominent rectangular structure (35) and associated complex of buildings (37,38) west of the inner precinct (Figure 13). These buildings are interpreted as a post-medieval farmstead. Its location, slightly removed from the main priory buildings, is a possible indication that at the time of its construction some of the priory buildings were still standing. The structures appear to have been ranged around a yard with access from the north, along a hollow-way. The farmstead would most likely have utilised the priory's water management system, as it would probably still have been in reasonable working order. This could explain why the system survives so well today and why some of the ponds seem to have been re-cut and cleaned out more recently than the 1530s.

Robert Carr probably indirectly exploited the former Catley Priory and its land primarily for sheep farming, to further his family's interests as wool merchants; his father was a 'rich merchant of the Staple' (Graham 1903, 206). The document recording the inheritance of Robert Carre, Baronet (LRO, ANDR 6) supports the theory that the land was farmed indirectly by the Carr family until at least the mid-seventeenth century. This document also points towards the bulk of the land being used for pasture (*see* Section 3).

The strong evidence for a continuation of farming activities at Catley following the Dissolution is somewhat at odds with evidence from other monastic houses in Lincolnshire, where symbolic displays of royal power were being played out. Following risings against the Dissolution of the Monasteries in Lincolnshire, a concerted and very visible effort was made to impose the new order at key sites and to quash any residual temptation for further rebellion. Barlings Abbey, *c*10km east of Lincoln, was occupied by Charles Brandon, Henry

VIII's vice-regent in Lincolnshire, and was remodelled into a secular great house with an associated garden. The new, palatial dwelling was built upon what was probably the original abbot's house, thus symbolically installing the new ruler on the seat of the old (Everson and Stocker 2003, 152-6). A similar 'reinvention' can be read in the remains of Kirkstead Abbey, Lincolnshire. Here, as at Barlings, one of the monastic buildings was reworked into a secular mansion and a large part of the abbey precinct was given over to a 'ruin garden' (Everson and Stocker 2003, 150). There is no such evidence of a symbolic occupation of the site of Catley Priory following the Dissolution. This may be explained by its relative poverty, rendering it symbolically unimportant in the effort to impose Henry VIII's will on the region.

While the evidence certainly points towards a post-monastic agricultural regime at Catley, the absence of relevant documentary records makes the establishment and desertion of the physical remains of a farmstead very difficult to date. It is clear that the land was being farmed in the 1650s and was still an agricultural unit, of much the same size, in 1877. However, the 1877 document specifically mentions a cottage in association with the land (LRO, FL Deeds 1041). There is no depiction of the farmstead complex on the 1887-8 OS map (Ordnance Survey 1888 and 1889), which does show the present cottages. Clearly, by this date, these had superseded the farmstead.

The present survey included a cursory external inspection of these cottages. It revealed several substantial dressed stone blocks, probably from the priory, incorporated into the fabric, primarily at its eastern end. If the principal buildings of the post-monastic farmstead had been built of stone, it is possible that these too may have been dismantled in order to supply a source of building material for the 'new' cottages. Trollope's account of the site mentions foundations of the priory being taken up to build a cottage 'within its area' in 1775 (Trollope 1872, 500). Although ambiguous, the implication is that the cottage was built within the priory precinct utilising stone from the foundations of the priory buildings, particularly as there is no evidence of any post-monastic building on the actual site of the priory itself. It is thus most likely that the cottage referred to in 1775 is the building which is still extant, though there is evidence that the western end is an extension. It is, therefore, possible to be reasonably confident of a date range for the post-monastic farmstead of 1539 until at least 1653 (the date of a document detailing the inheritance of Sir Robert Carr, *see* Section 3), if not 1775, when the cottages superseded the farmstead. This is based upon the assumption that the land described in the seventeenth-century document was farmed from this farmstead.

Catley's poverty and relatively small size do not diminish its importance as a double-house and as one of the unusually abundant religious houses in the Witham valley. The present survey has drawn together various sources in an attempt to expand existing knowledge and has demonstrated an outline relative chronology. Undoubtedly, there will always be a large part of the story that will remain a mystery. It can only be hoped that ploughing right up to the edges of the main field and in the vicinity has not totally destroyed any subterranean deposits, as limited excavation may help to answer some of the questions which cannot be answered from analysis of the surface remains alone.

7. Survey Methodology

The survey was carried out using a combination of instrumental (Trimble dual-frequency Global Positioning System (GPS)) and graphical methods. The GPS base receiver was set up over a temporary survey station in order to bring in latitude/longitude co-ordinates via the OS active station GPS network. While the base station was logging the satellite data necessary to make the calculation, 'roving' receivers (Trimble 5800), working in real-time kinematic mode, were used to record points of hard detail and a network of control points marked with temporary survey markers. This was processed via Trimble Geomatics Office (TGO, version 1.6) and GeoSite (version 3.22) software and then plotted from AutoCAD Map 2004 at 1:1000. A scale plot was taken into the field and the archaeological detail was recorded using standard graphical techniques of taped baseline and offset.

Working photographs of the site were taken by Abby Hunt using a digital camera (1.3 mega pixels) and are retained at English Heritage, York.

A survey archive has been deposited in the NMRC, Swindon, where it is available for public consultation upon request. Applications for copyright should be made to NMRC, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ (reference number: TF 15 NW 6).

8. Acknowledgments

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ANDR6 Carre Book. 'Copies of deedes and recordes Enrooled in Severall places in the Rodea and elsewhere Recorded the inheritance of Sir Robert Carre baronet Anno Domini 1653'.

FL Deeds 1041 'Particulars and plan of the Digby Estate (1877)'

Material held in the Public Record Office

STAC 4/3/8 Plaintiff: Francis Hussey and others, inhabitants of Couldounsbe (Dunsby?), Ponton, Holdingham, and Sleaford. Defendant: Robert Carre. Place or Subject: Destruction of towns and churches. County: Lincolnshire. 19/07/1553 - 17/11/1558

E134/11Chas1/Mich41 Sir Robert Carre, Baronet v Henry Callowe, Luke Russel, Wm Lambert.: Manor of Sleford, Old Sleford, New Sleford, Quarrington and Handingham. Meets and bounds. Touching custom of "suit and service" to the old mills within manor. Lincoln. 11 Chas 1.

E134/12Chas1/East26 Sir Robert Carr, Bart v Henry Callow, Luke Russell, William Lambert.: Town lordship, and castle of Sleeford, in the county of Lincoln, and the market there. Custom of toll of corn. Lincoln.

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NMR TF1155/10 CCC5242/8053 ?1930s

NMR TF1155/3 CAP 8022/9 8-Jun-51

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Aerial photographs held in the Cambridge University Committee for Aerial Photography collection

CUCAP PH34 29-Mar-55

CUCAP RC8 BF52 2-May-76

CUCAP AZY67 2-May-76

Appendix 1

List of NMR numbers linked to the survey

SITE NAME	COUNTY	DISTRICT	PARISH
Catley Priory	Lincolnshire	North Kesteven	Walcott

SITE NAME/DESCRIPTION	NGR	NMR No.
Medieval moated enclosure	TF 1074 5546	TF 15 NW 2
Mounds containing medieval inhumations	TF 1172 5557 - TF1173 5562	TF 15 NW 5
Catley Priory	TF 1187 5556	TF 15 NW 6
Bronze Age barrow cemetery	TF 123 557	TF 15 NW 15
Elongated mound	TF 1158 5557	TF 15 NW 25
Bronze Age round barrow	TF 1189 5539	TF 15 NW 28
Possible Bronze Age barrow	TF 1165 5579	TF 15 NW 38
Medieval water channel	TF 1042 5767 - TF 1174 5548	TF 15 NW 39

ENGLISH HERITAGE

NATIONAL
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air photography.

World Wide Web: http://www.english-heritage.org.uk

National Monuments Record enquires: telephone 01793 414600

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