

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 776

The site of the former Lothingland Hospital, Oulton, Suffolk

Desktop Assessment

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Local Authority No.076759

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Location: The site of the former Lothingland Hospital, Oulton, Suffolk
(Waveney District)
Grid Ref: TM 523 953
Date of work: November 2002

Summary

The study area contains no known sites or monuments of archaeological significance. Although unknown earlier sites may have existed in the vicinity, this part of north east Suffolk appears to have been thinly settled at best, with even the medieval settlements such as Oulton and Flixton being represented only by an isolated church and a handful of houses.

The site in question was therefore probably not occupied until 1765 when the hospital itself was erected as a workhouse (the House of Industry). The workhouse has seen several phases of enlargement and alteration: the main range of the original building appears to have been the only survival of the initial open-courtyard house, and that has also now been removed. Of the earlier hospital buildings, only the former chapel (now ambulance station) remains, and this lies just outside the development area (marked green on fig. 2). It will be seen that nothing now stands within the development area.

1.0 Introduction

This archaeological desktop assessment was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: WAB 1263: 20.11.2002) for Meedhurst Project Management Ltd and their clients, Barchester Healthcare Homes Ltd.

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the assessment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

No reference has been made to Listed Buildings information or other present planning constraints.

2.0 Geology and Topography

Soils in this area are mostly light sands and sandy clay loams derived from chalky Boulder Clay. The assessment area lies at a high point in the locality, at about 15m OD, with a fall to the north, into the valley of a former minor watercourse.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

3.1 Lothingland

Distribution maps of prehistoric and Roman sites and finds in East Anglia show that the light sands of Lothingland were probably thinly settled until the later

Anglo-Saxon period, with few finds from this area of the earlier periods (*An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* 1999).

The concentration of *-ton* and *-by* placenames in Lothingland suggests that settlement became established across the 'island' relatively late (that is, in the mid-late Saxon period), although there is evidence at the Roman Shore Fort of Burgh Castle that settlement was re-established there at some time in the 8th century, possibly with a 'monastic' character (Johnson 1983; Martin 1999).

3.2 The Study Area (Fig. 1)

The hospital site lies on the edge of Flixton Common, on an outlying strip of Oulton parish and close to the Flixton/Oulton boundary to the west and the Oulton/Gunton boundary to the east. It is possible that this area once provided common grazing for all three parishes, especially since Flixton Common lies within two parishes. As already noted, the ground falls away to the north, into a shallow valley, overlooked by the hospital to the south. The origins and date of these areas of high common are still obscure. In north-east Suffolk it is notable that such areas were rarely 'colonised', that is, with houses ranged along their margins, but remained as areas of grazing.

The assessment area, then, lies at some distance from the three village or manorial centres and their churches. The three settlements of Flixton, Oulton and Gunton were never more than minor settlements and only began to develop as Lowestoft began to expand in modern times. (Lowestoft itself, until urban expansion, was another minor settlement consisting of little more than its church: its *-toft* placename indicates a late origin). The site was therefore in an area of virtual 'waste', distant from settlement.

Flixton: Flixton was never more than a single manor, often linked with another local manor. Remarkably, it obtained a market grant in 1253. By the mid-16th century its church (FTN 001) was in ruins. In 1674, Flixton had just eleven inhabited houses and by 1801 this had reduced to four, with 41 inhabitants. In the 19th century, all its inhabitants were engaged in agriculture and peat digging.

Gunton: Gunton, to the east, was another very minor settlement, whose isolated church was associated with a park.

Oulton: The assessment site lies in an outlying corner of Oulton parish, with its church and probable settlement site lying 2km to the south-west adjacent to the water. Oulton seems to have had some earlier importance, its church being mentioned in Domesday. This may have had minster status (Scarfe 1999), possibly serving the south part of the island of Lothingland.

Expansion within the parish, apart from the aforementioned settlement, came late. It is represented by the house on the main road just east of the Hospital site which includes High House (now Manor House), a building with later 16th century origins (shown on Faden and Hodkinson's maps: see below).

The medieval park: As noted, this part of Oulton parish was probably once a part of a tract of common grazing and possibly woods. To the north, in Gunton parish, lay a medieval park, probably dating to the period 1200-1400 (Hoppitt 1999). It is still evidenced on maps by placenames: Parkhill, Parkhill Wood, just beyond the assessment area. The available evidence suggests that the park lay some

distance away, and was probably centred around TM 545 947, now in the northern suburbs of Lowestoft, well outside the Study Area (inf. Rosemary Hoppitt).

The House of Industry and Flixton Common: The common edge was devoid of houses on Faden's map (1797), and it must be likely that this had always been the situation until the House of Industry was erected on the north side of the common in 1765 for Mutford and Lothingland. Settlement had, however, already begun to the east on the main road, as noted above.

Built in 1765 and standing in 'no more than 50 acres' (see Shaw 1990), the workhouse, like many others, was at first U-shaped in plan, with a chapel and a burial ground (to the north), seen on Faden's map of Norfolk of 1797 (see below). The workhouse was designed by John Brown and was enlarged in 1836 with the addition of the west buildings. It was successively altered and reduced over the rest of its life (see Cartographic Evidence) (Fig. 2). In 1881 the Infirmary was added and in 1898 another infirmary block. All the original buildings have disappeared over the years, although the 19th century chapel still stands, just outside the development site. Like many other workhouses in the 1760s, it was a large brick building in a simple Georgian style with an open-courtyard plan (Morrison 1999, 22).

The Burial Ground, occupying just over 1 acre, lay to the north of the buildings and is marked on maps (see OS map of 1927). By 1885 the workhouse comprised two irregular sets of buildings to the east and west. Faden's map of 1797 (and the 1st Edition 1" OS map) shows at a small scale the original U-shaped block (Fig. 3).

The original block has also now been entirely demolished.

4.0 Cartographic Evidence

There are few detailed maps for this area, but the evidence of both Hodkinson 1783 and Faden 1797 (the two earliest maps for this area) suggests that this area, Flixton Common and Parkhill, was essentially uninhabited until the later medieval period, with some 16th century ribbon development along the main road.

Faden's map of Norfolk 1797: Faden's map (Fig. 3) shows Flixton, the common with the 'Industry House' set on its northern edge and 'High House' on the main road to the east; the workhouse can be seen to be U-shaped. Hodkinson's map is similar but also marks 'Flixton Common'.

OS 1" 1st edition c. 1835: Like Faden's map, this map (Fig. 4) shows the workhouse still U-shaped and unextended (enlarged in 1836).

OS 25" 1st Edition 1885: This (Fig. 5) shows the common gone and names the 'House of Industry' and 'Burial Ground;' to the north. The U-shaped block has been reduced and further buildings raised to the west. [The OS 25" map of 1904 shows further changes].

OS 25" 3rd edition 1927: This map (Fig. 6) shows the further changes, with the original block extended again (to the south) and new ancillary buildings elsewhere. The latest maps show that a further contraction has taken place with various buildings removed (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 shows that the remaining buildings within the Study Area are all of modern date.

5.0 Archaeological Observations in the general area (selected)

(see Fig. 1)

Within the Study Area, only the workhouse OUL 006 and cropmark circle FTN 009 are recorded. The following sites are set out here for information about the wider archaeological and historical background.

FTN 009	Near Workhouse Wood. Circular cropmark, undated.	TM 5228 9558
OUL 006	House of Industry 1765, converted into hospital in the 20th century (see OS map of 1927).	TM 532 953
FTN 001	St Andrew's church (remains), with long and short work.	TM 5170 9551
FTN 002	Two ring-ditches, noted on air photographs. Possibly Bronze Age barrows.	TM 5150 9580
FTN 003	Scatter of Neolithic flint tools.	TM 5170 9530
FTN 008	Workhouse Wood: Ancient Woodland, undated.	TM52089532
LWT 015	Pound Farm (Lane). Scatter of Neolithic flint tools.	TM 5280 9470
LWT 020	Cropmark, possible ringditch.	TM 5324 9481
LWT 028	Akethorp Manor Bank. Manorial boundary ditch, medieval.	TM 5302 9493
LWT 036	Foxburrow Wood, Ancient Woodland, undated.	TM 5363 9559
LWT 041	Linear bank, post-medieval, 1770.	TM 5330 9490
OUL 005	Cropmark of one ringditch and two other possible ringditches, undated.	TM 5182 9493

6.0 The Site Today

The site today contains no standing buildings, and is either tarmac former access roads or former garden areas, now overgrown, besides the sites of former buildings. The site also contains various services.

7.0 Conclusions

The site has been intensively used and developed since 1765, with the erection of further buildings around the original workhouse. There is no evidence for any significant archaeological remains within the study area and its immediate locality, apart from the remains of the former workhouse building and the cropmark circle. Within the development site the only archaeological interest known lies in the remains of the former workhouse.

One might note that the former burial ground for the workhouse lies in the study area (see Figs 5 and 6) but outside the development area.

The wider landscape, beyond the study area, contains certain relic landscape features, namely;

Workhouse Wood FTN 008 (see above).

Parkhill Wood (to the north of the assessment area).

Manor House (formerly High House (to the east, on the main road).

St Andrew's church FTN 001 (see above).

Scatter of prehistoric flints LWT 015.

Ring-ditches FTN 002, LWT 020, OUL 005

Akethorp Manor Bank LWT 028.

Linear Bank LWT 041.

It is possible, nonetheless, that the general area contains previously unknown archaeological evidence of an earlier period. It is more likely, however, that the stream valley 1km to the north of the hospital may have been a focus for prehistoric activity, often found close to water sources.

The conclusion is that the development site contains only one feature of known interest, the former workhouse. This was one of many such institutions across East Anglia, a number of which still stand.

Acknowledgements

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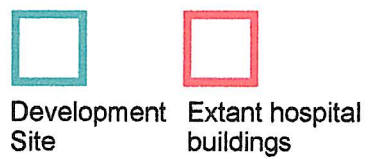
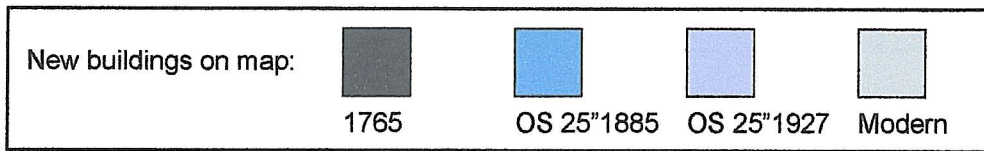
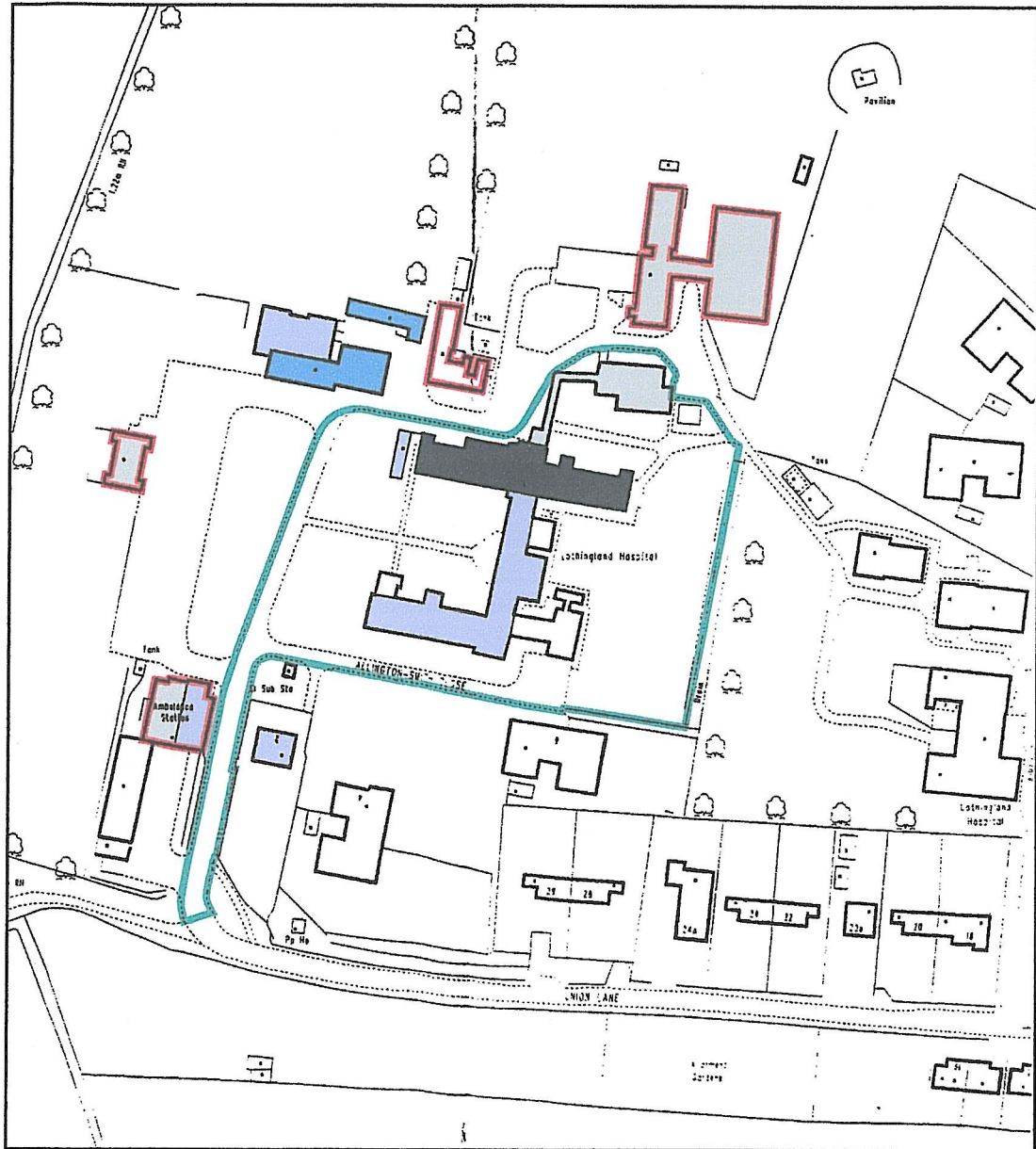
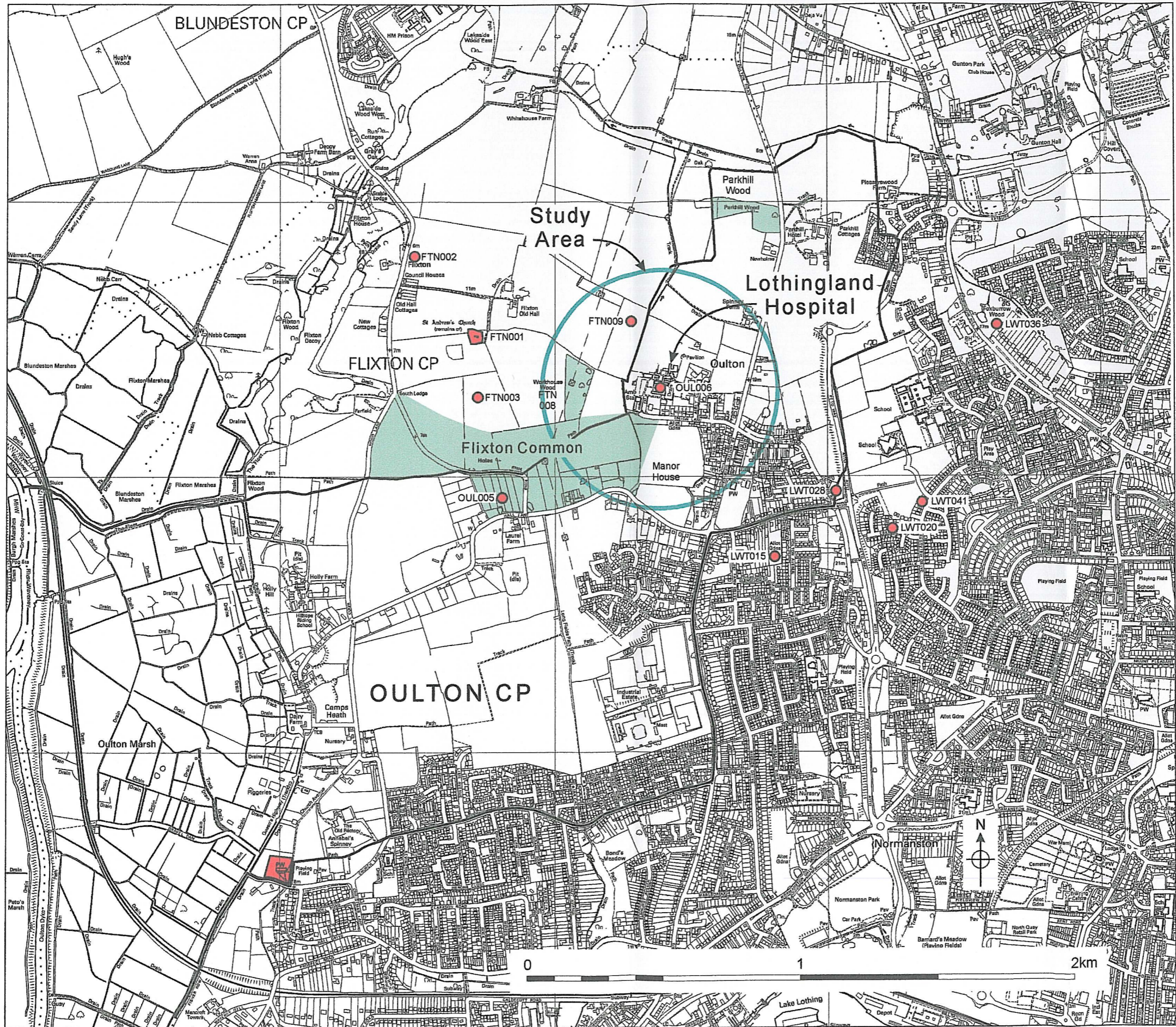


Fig. 2 Development of the site. Not to scale



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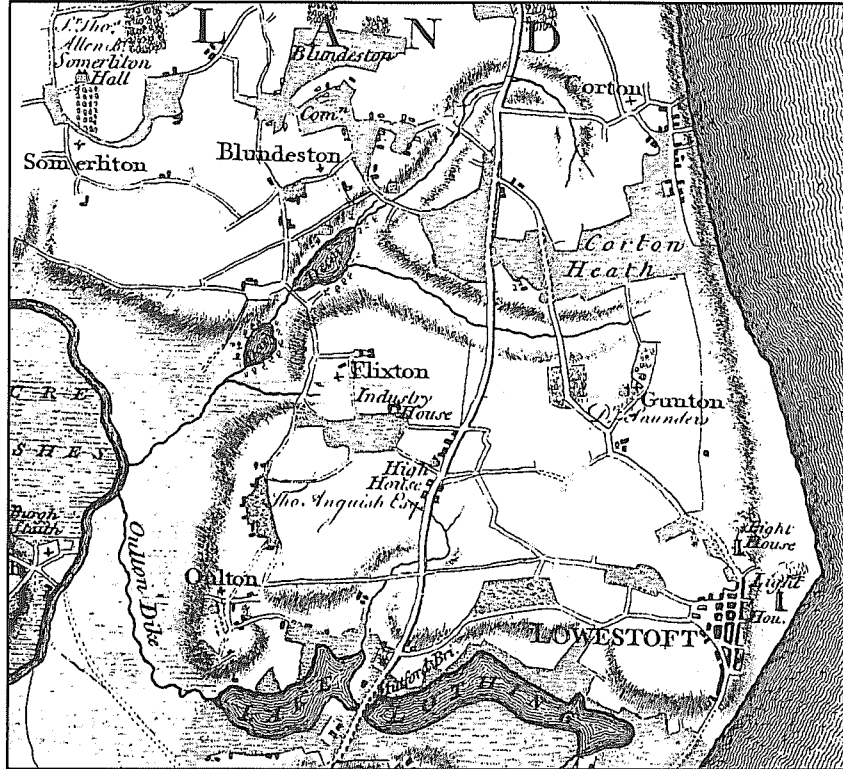


Fig. 3 Faden's Map of Norfolk 1797 (detail)

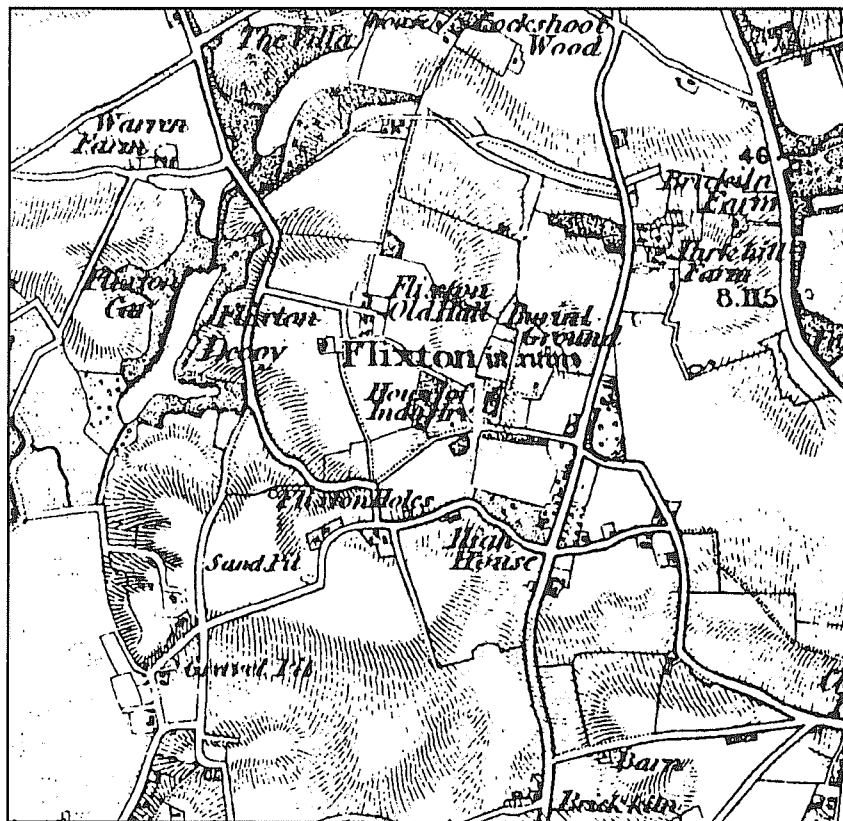


Fig. 4 OS 1" 1st Edition c. 1835 (detail)

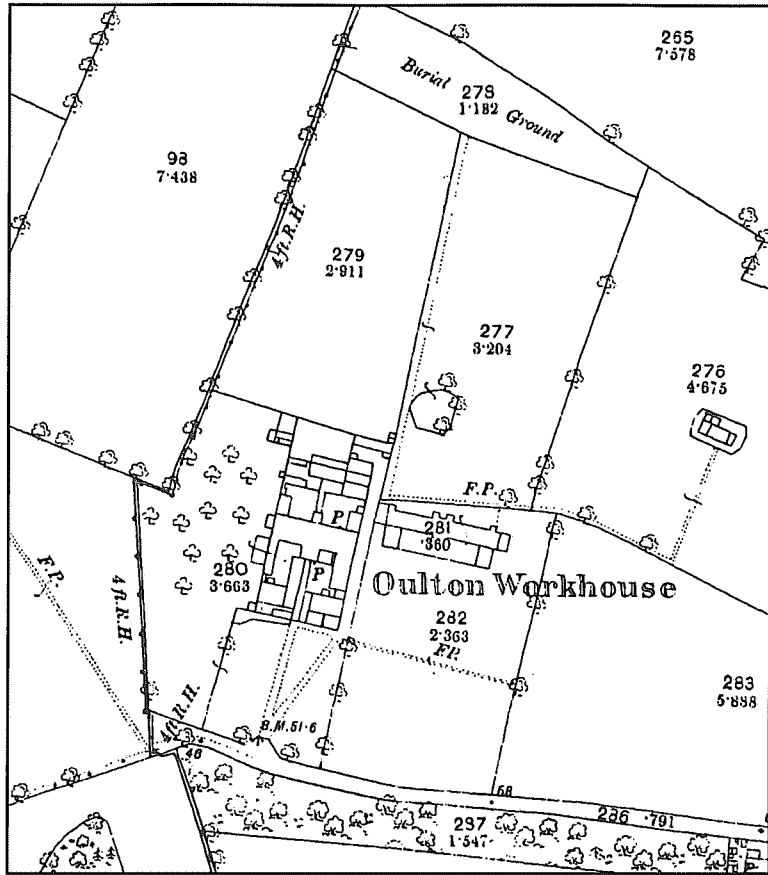


Fig. 5 OS 25" 1st Edition 1885 (detail)

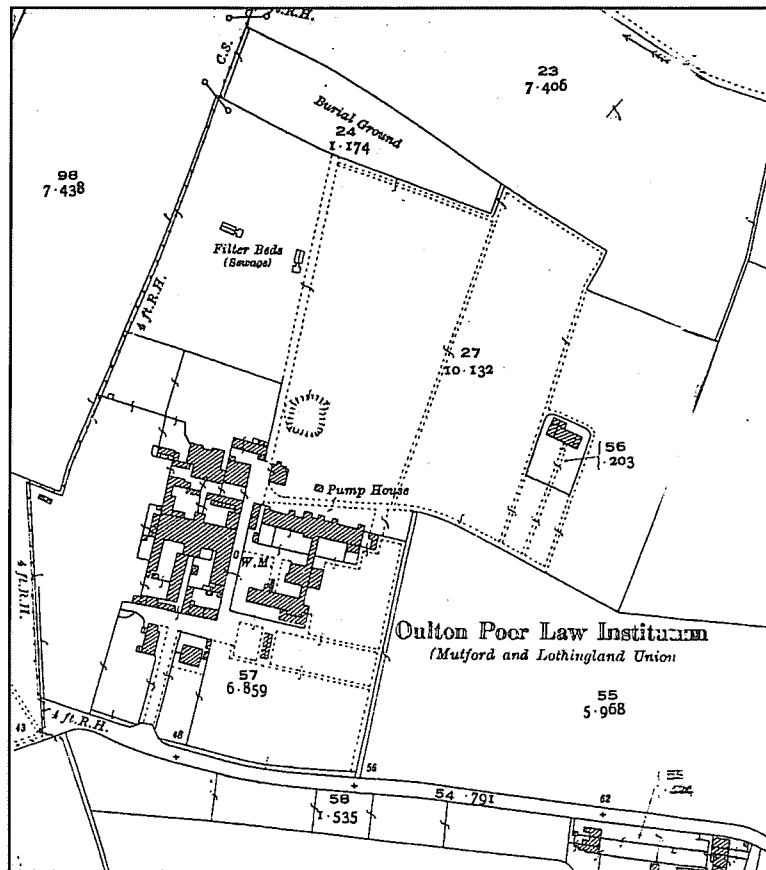


Fig. 6 OS 25" 3rd Edition 1927 (detail)