

CROYLAND ABBEY, LINCOLNSHIRE  
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY OF THE KISSING GROUND 1973

### Objective

This survey was undertaken in the field known as the Kissing Ground, surrounding Croyland Abbey on the southern and eastern sides, to investigate suspected buried building remains associated with the Abbey. The topography suggested a complicated plan of decayed walls lying near to the churchyard wall in the eastern portion and the western end of the southern portion, and it was the aim of this survey to test this suggestion and at the same time to check the supposed absence of buildings along the eastern edge of the field, hopefully to define thereby an eastern limit to the archaeology. Plan 1 shows a region of these banks, not measured to scale.

### Survey method

Linear resistivity traverses were made at 15m intervals over most of the field, using (for Traverses 1-6) Wenner, and double dipole configurations at 1m spacing, and (7-13) twin electrode configuration (square array apparatus) at 1m spacing together with a sample area survey, 15 x 30m, using the twin electrode configuration at 1m spacing. The layout of the traverses and the area survey is shown on Plan 2. Auger borings (1" core) were made at various points around the field, and the results of a 6" core boring in the north east corner were kindly supplied by Dr K Perrin of the Department of Applied Biology, Cambridge University.

### Results

Firstly, the noticeable banks were found to give correlative resistivity anomalies. Auger borings showed those along the eastern churchyard wall to contain some gravel and masonry debris, including mortar, and the rather more amorphous banks at the western end of the southern portion to be composed of more substantial fragments of stone; indeed, in the latter portion some stone lay exposed in the turf. Whilst the area survey, which was positioned to include some of these banks and hopefully, therefore, might have shown definite foundations, gave no recognisable building pattern, it did show a slight rectilinearity on an alignment with the banks.

Secondly, no ground disturbances could be seen in the south west corner of the field except a bank running alongside the dyke marking the southern boundary of the Kissing Ground. Apart from this bank, no resistivity anomalies were detected, and Auger borings confirmed a uniform spread of clean topsoil over silty-clay subsoil, with no gravel.

Thirdly, although the area in the north eastern corner appear topographically clear, the readings indicated considerable disturbance. The anomalies yielded some mortar and gravel on augering whilst the surrounding areas produced silty clay and gravel, overlain by topsoil containing particles of debris. Dr Perrin reported stiff sandy clay between depths of 0.5m and 1.0m and then gravel interspersed with layers of soft clay down to 4.8m.

### Conclusion

From the combined evidence of geophysics and borings it appears that, on the whole, the visible banks may possibly be related to the monastic complex. Thought of

as possible foundations those in Area A, see plan 1, make little sense, but considered as the banks of robber trenches they are more convincing. Their contrast in resistivity is probably due not so much to a solid stone content as to both their more rubbly content and to the very damp subsoil ("Croyland" is said to be derived from "Cru-land", soft or muddy land; and Dr Perrin reports that water rose to 1.2m below ground surface in his borehole). The disturbances in Area B are much stonier and it seems that more substantial foundation could be present in this region.

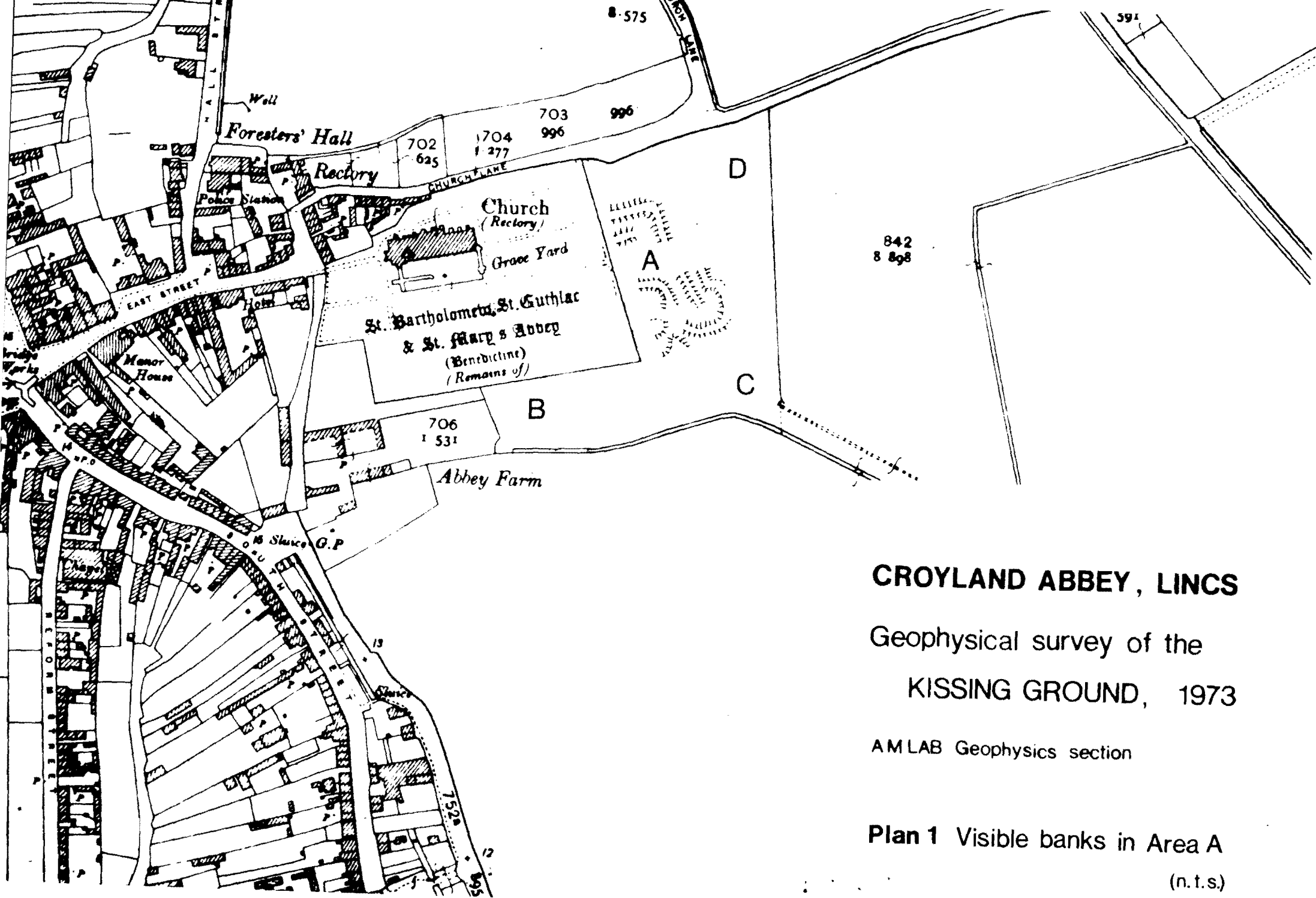
An explanation of robber trenching would help to interpret the bank pattern in Area but this hypothesis is rather attenuated by the (loose) evidence of a plan, displayed in the Abbey, reconstructed from a plan of 1747 and Canon Moore's notes of 1850; on this the only building to the east of the choir is the outer belfry, which should thus lie in the vicinity of the area survey, while the main range of outbuildings is shown to the south. Nevertheless, this range is terminated at the eastern end by the Holy Trinity chapel, slightly to the north of this line, and if the relative position of the buildings, though not necessarily the scale, be taken as correct, this chapel could just conceivably have been in the region of the banks sketched in Plan 1.

Time did not allow a more thorough examination of the south eastern corner of the field, Area C, but the absence of mortar particles etc, in the auger cores, together with the blankness of the resistivity traverses strongly implies an absence of building remains in this area.

The occupants of the bungalow in the next field to the east stated that gravel had been taken from that field for building purposes. Also, the U.S. geological map shows Croyland to be on a tongue of gravels running roughly SW-NE; the Abbey is recorded as having been built, reasonably, on an island in the fen. Adding to this Dr Perrin's report it seems probable that some of the broader resistivity anomalies in the NE corner of the Kissing Ground, Area D are due to gravel spread, although there are no surface indications of gravel working in this field. Some features, however, do appear to be worth excavating, if only to discount them definitely as archaeological.

/survey To sum up therefore: while the survey was not able to define an eastern edge to the remains, the south eastern corner appears clear of archaeological features. No enclosure wall or ditch to the Abbey was discovered. No recognisable patterns emerge from the region containing visible banks, although a more extensive area might have been of help, at the least to provide an accurate plan of them. The content of those in Area A suggests robber trench upcastings while those in Area B appear stonier. Confirmatory excavation therefore appears essential to the analysis, particularly in the north eastern corner at the places marked, because only here were found possible archaeological features independent of surface indication.

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Geophysical survey of the  
KISSING GROUND, 1973

AMLAB Geophysics section

**Plan 1** Visible banks in Area A

(n.t.s.)

