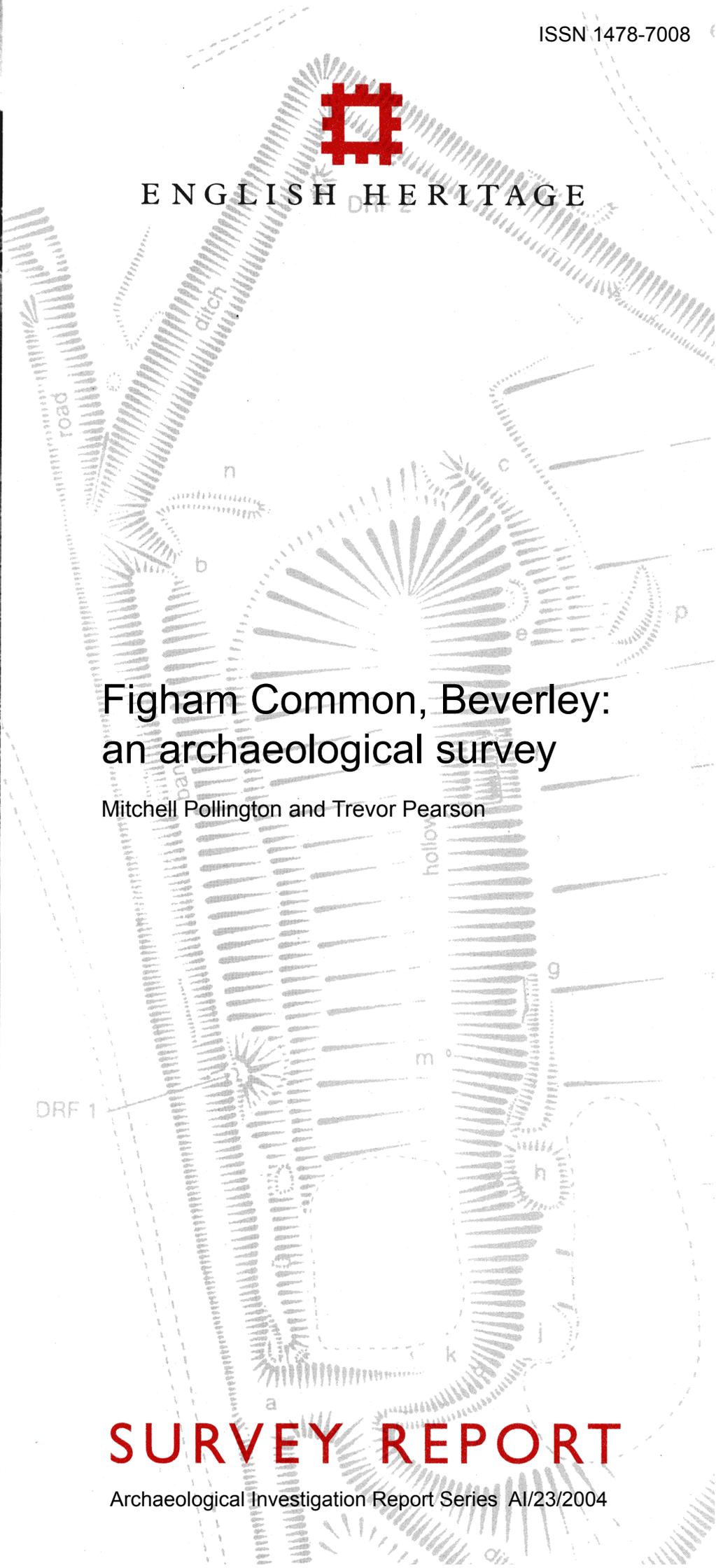




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Figham Common, Beverley: an archaeological survey

Mitchell Pollington and Trevor Pearson

SURVEY REPORT

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**FIGHAM COMMON, BEVERLEY:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

In May 2004, an archaeological investigation and analytical field survey was carried out by English Heritage on Figham Common, Beverley, in the East Riding of Yorkshire (Figure 1). This survey formed part of a national project by English Heritage to investigate the archaeological content and historic environments of urban commons in England. The commons around Beverley were chosen because of the high level of earthwork survival and the relative lack of previous archaeological recording.

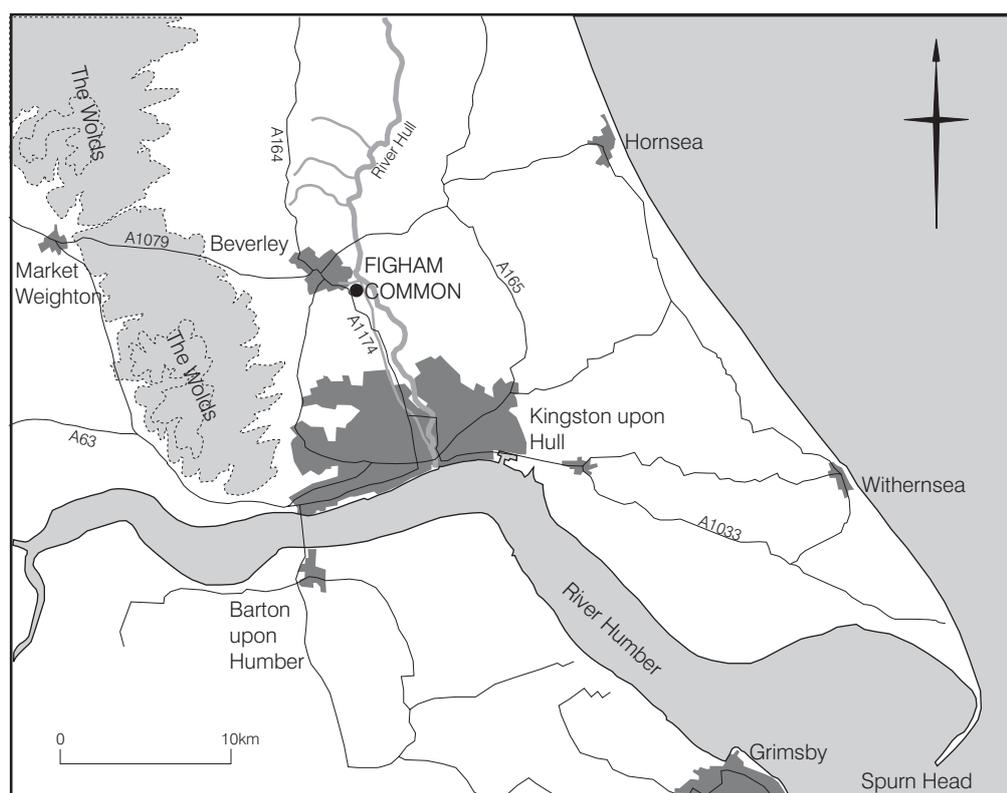


Figure 1
The location of the site

The medieval borough of Beverley included six commons, amounting to an area of around 485 hectares (1200 acres): (Figure 2). These were Westwood and Hurn, which are today effectively one common, Figham with Lund adjacent to it, Swine Moor and The Tonge (Miller *et al* 1982, 34). Although the location of The Tonge is now unclear, and has probably been swallowed by urban development, the remaining commons all survive as open ground and are being surveyed as part of the project (Pearson and Pollington forthcoming). All contain archaeological features surviving as earthworks and provide the opportunity, through survey and analysis, to gain a better understanding of how these parcels of land developed as units in the landscape.

Figham Common is an area of pasture lying to the south-east of Beverley, centred at National Grid Reference TA 058 388. Beverley itself is situated on the western edge of the valley of the River Hull, a broad strip of low-lying ground and marshland running for 20 miles between Driffield and the River Humber. The Common is bounded to the north by the Beverley

Beck, a stream canalised in the 12th century (Miller *et al* 1982, 30), to the east by the River Hull, and to the west by the Hull Road (A1174). To its south-west is an area of modern light industrial development known as the Tokenspire Park Estate.

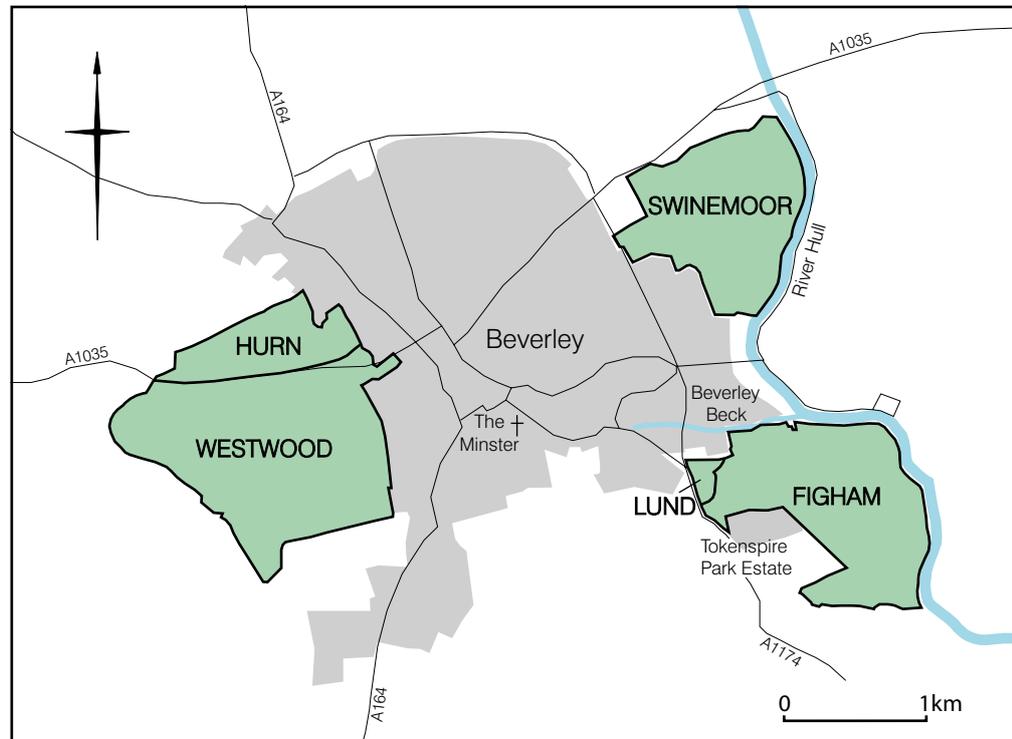


Figure 2
The commons of
Beverley

Today, Figham Common is generally regarded as a single unit of land, and is treated as such for the purposes of this survey. However, it is in fact made up of two historic commons, the majority of the pasture being Figham, accounting for around 120 hectares (297 acres), with an adjoining common, known as Lund, accounting for a further 6 hectares (15 acres). The survey encompasses the whole of the present area of Figham Common and Lund, although documentary and cartographic research has been carried out into areas outside of this, in an attempt to understand the Common's relationship with the surrounding landscape.

The survey has identified a number of trackways, areas of ridge and furrow ploughing, embanked enclosures, and a group of sub-circular mounds whose function is unclear. Documentary analysis and aerial photographic interpretation have also helped to identify a late 19th-century rifle range and evidence of Second World War activity. The study of cartographic sources has also served to identify alterations in the boundary of the Common, and its relationship with Beverley's urban layout.

The majority of the Common was surveyed in detail, at a scale of 1:2 500 (as a Level 3 survey, as defined in RCHME 1999). Initial reconnaissance of the Common identified a number of curving parallel banks in the north-west corner of the Common which resulted in a more detailed survey of these at a scale of 1:1 000.

2. GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND MODERN LAND USE

Figham Common lies on the edge of the Hull Valley, an undulating landscape with areas of marsh separated by low ridges of gravel and boulder clay (Sheppard 1958). Despite the construction of a network of small drainage ditches, the Common remains partially waterlogged and prone to flooding. A natural spring is located in the south-eastern corner of Lund.

The Common is cut by two major drainage channels: the Beverley and Barmston Drain, a wide channel which runs north to south through the centre of the Common, and the Beverley and Skidby Drain. This enters the Common from the west where it runs along the southern boundary of Lund, then flows eastward, under the Beverley and Barmston Drain, and then turns to the south. To the east of the main north to south course of the Beverley and Skidby Drain, up to the River Hull, the land is marsh with artificially raised areas of land resulting from the dumping of sludge from the nearby sewage works from the 1960s onwards.

The Beverley Pasture Masters control the management, letting and use of the Common, though the freehold of the land is held by Beverley Borough Council. The Common is largely grassland and is grazed heavily by both sheep and cattle, although small patches of scrub have become established. Lines of trees have been deliberately planted along banks on the edges of the larger drains. The land is publicly accessible and used by the local population as amenity land.

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There has been little previous archaeological investigation on Figham Common, and no detailed archaeological survey of the landscape. No archaeological features have been surveyed by the Ordnance Survey and, prior to the 2004 survey, there were no records in the National Monuments Record.

In 1982, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) carried out field reconnaissance here as part of a general archaeological study of Beverley (Miller *et al* 1982). This identified former field boundaries close to Figham Clough Bridge at TA 0588 3879 and a tract of ridge and furrow cultivation at TA 0575 3870.

During late 1990 and early 1991, a watching brief was carried out by the Humberside Archaeology Unit on the construction of a sewer pipeline (Tibbles 1991). This pipeline ran from the south-east corner of the Common, along the boundary with the Tokenspire Park Estate, and then north-west towards the sewage works; the route of the pipeline having been planned to avoid the majority of earthworks visible on the surface. A number of small ditch alignments were recorded, but these contained no dating evidence. A mound was also noted on the northern side of the Common, around 30m in diameter, and was interpreted as a medieval or post-medieval haystack platform. Although a mound of this size has not been identified in this survey, the description of its location corresponds with a smaller mound recorded in this area (see Mound A, Section 5.6). Earthworks comprising three low banks and associated ditches were also identified in the north-west corner of the Common, adjacent to the Beverley and Skidby Drain (remnants of enclosures and field boundaries; see Section 5.4). Observations showed these banks to consist of brown clay with chalk inclusions, with the depression between the banks containing dark brown, peaty material, which appeared to run underneath the clay make-up of the banks. A small number of un-stratified finds were discovered along the length of the pipeline excavation through metal detecting; a casket mount in the form of a lion's head, medieval and post-medieval horseshoes and four fragments of Mills Bombs, a type of grenade used widely during the First World War.

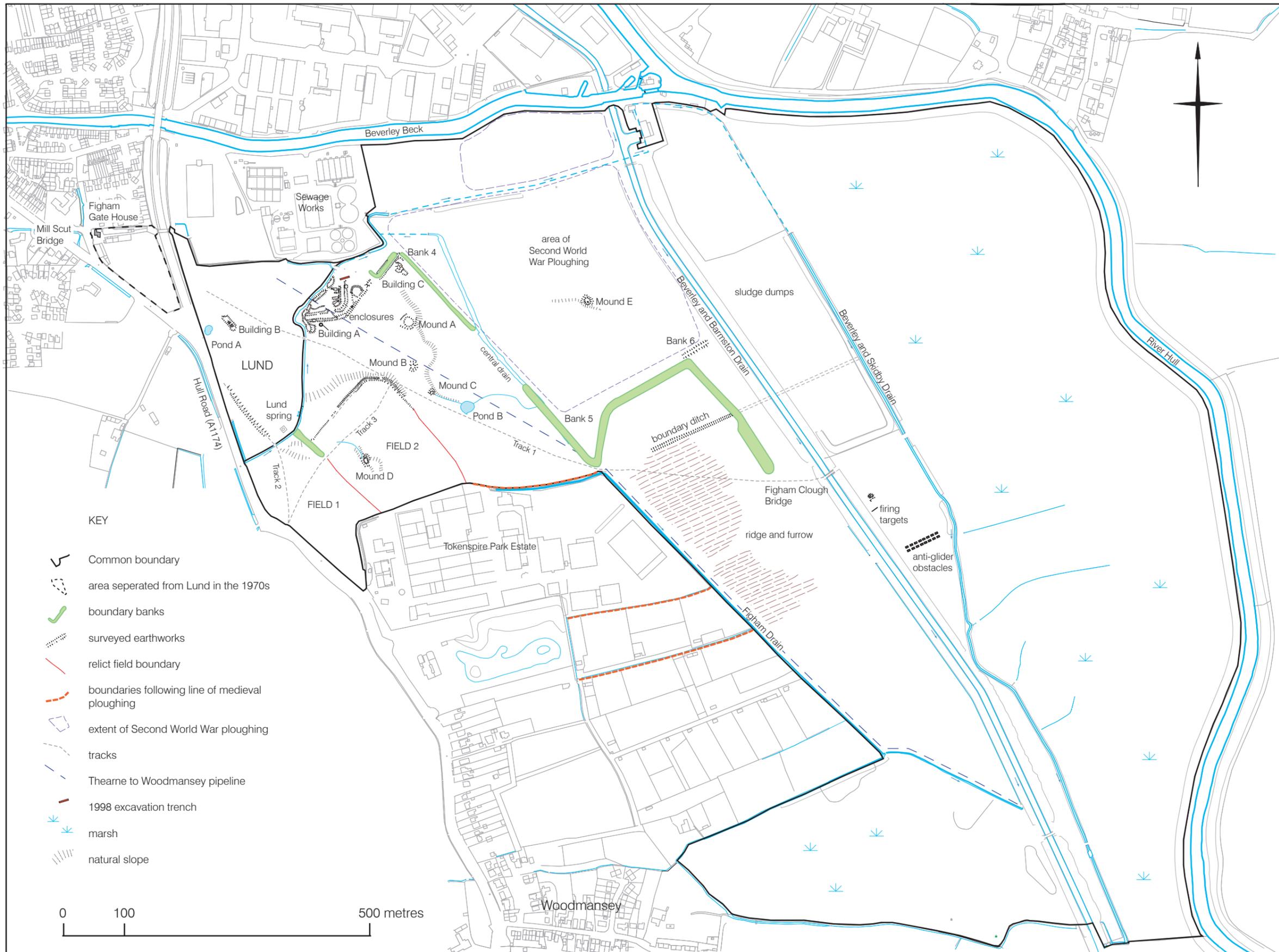
In 1998, a test trench was excavated by the Humber Archaeology Partnership prior to the construction of a pipeline by Yorkshire Water, running east to west across the northern side of the Common (Tibbles 1998; see Figures 3 and 5). This was situated with the aim of identifying a continuation of the earthwork banks and ditches noted earlier (Tibbles 1991). This excavation concluded that these banks did not originally extend beyond the limits as visible on the surface, and there was no dating evidence from this trench (Tibbles 1998). These features have been recorded on the Humber Archaeology Partnership Sites and Monuments Record (see Appendix 1).

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The name Figham supposedly derives from the old Scandinavian *fé* meaning ‘cattle’ and the old English *gang* meaning ‘path’ or ‘track’ (Smith 1937, 198). The origin of this place name therefore appears to indicate that the area of Figham Common may have been used from an early period as pasture, and probably as a route into the markets of Beverley.

Although the pasture at Figham has been defined as common land since the 13th century, it has been a matter of debate as to what this definition meant in regard to its formal ownership. Figham is first mentioned in a charter of c 1255, when Archbishop de Bovill granted the townspeople of Beverley free pannage on Westwood Common, and Figham was already considered as having common rights by this time (Allison 1989, 213). Although Figham is not mentioned by name, a charter of c 1122 refers to rights of common pasture in Beverley, and when in 1201 the Archbishop attempted to dispossess the townsmen of these rights, the King intervened and confirmed their rights over the land (Allison 1989, 213). The ambiguous nature of the medieval charters, in terms of the formal ownership of the pasture, emerged as a problem in the first half of the 19th century. The Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 established a town council for the Corporation of Beverley, but doubts arose as to what powers this body had over the control of the pastures. The Corporation failed to agree that the Commons belonged to the Freemen of the town, and this was only partly resolved in 1839, when the Corporation declared that ‘...the Council have consented that the rents of the premises should be paid over to the Pasture Masters, but they have no intention to alienate the premises themselves’ (Commons Registration Act 1965). The legal definition of ownership remained unclear, however, and the agreement of 1839 held only due to an ‘amicable and free communication’ between the parties (Commons Registration Act 1965). It was not until the 1965 Act that this position was formalised. The commissioner for the Act effectively upheld the agreement of 1839, with the then Borough Council assuming the freehold over the soil of the commons, and the Pasture Masters having free control over activities on them.

Although Figham Common is at present treated as a single unit of land, the north-western corner of the present common, known as Lund, has over the centuries been intermittently alienated from the main body of the Common, and has been periodically let to private tenants. The name of this area may mean ‘little wood’ or ‘grove’ (Gelling 1984, 207; Smith 1937, 259) perhaps indicating that it was originally a more heavily wooded area. From at least 1416-17, Lund was used as common pasture, as an adjunct to Figham. However, the status of this land must have differed from the greater part of the Common, as in 1609 the town was able to separate Lund and let it out privately (Allison 1989, 213). In 1764, Lund was again re-attached to Figham Common, although it remained under the direct management of the town Corporation. Its separate status continues through to the present day, and it was not registered as part of Figham in the Commons Registration Act in 1977.



- KEY
- Common boundary
 - area separated from Lund in the 1970s
 - boundary banks
 - surveyed earthworks
 - relict field boundary
 - boundaries following line of medieval ploughing
 - extent of Second World War ploughing
 - tracks
 - Thearne to Woodmansey pipeline
 - 1998 excavation trench
 - marsh
 - natural slope

Figure 3
English Heritage
survey of Figham
Common and Lund
(reduced from 1:2 500)

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5. DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 The boundary of the Common

The boundary of Figham Common may have changed little on its eastern and northern sides since the medieval period. Partly, this is due to its geographical position: it is bounded on its eastern side by the River Hull and to the north by the Beverley Beck, a stream canalised during the 12th century, which runs eastward from the centre of Beverley into the River Hull (Figure 4). The western boundary of the Common is currently defined at its northern end by the Hull Road (the present A1174), running along its edge. The boundary turns eastward, south-east, and then returns westward towards the Hull Road, defining a roughly rectangular block of land, which may once have been part of the Common (see below). The boundary then turns eastward, following the municipal boundary of Beverley and the Parish of Woodmansey, until it reaches the River Hull.

It is likely that the irregular nature of the western boundary of the Common is the result of a number of changes over the centuries. It is probable that the Hull Road (A1174) is one of the early routes into Beverley, and that this would have originally defined the full length of the Common's western edge. The rectangular block of land at the south-west, around which the boundary now runs, may have originally been part of the Common itself. This seems to have been taken out of the common pasture during the medieval period and given over to ploughing (see Section 5.4.3).

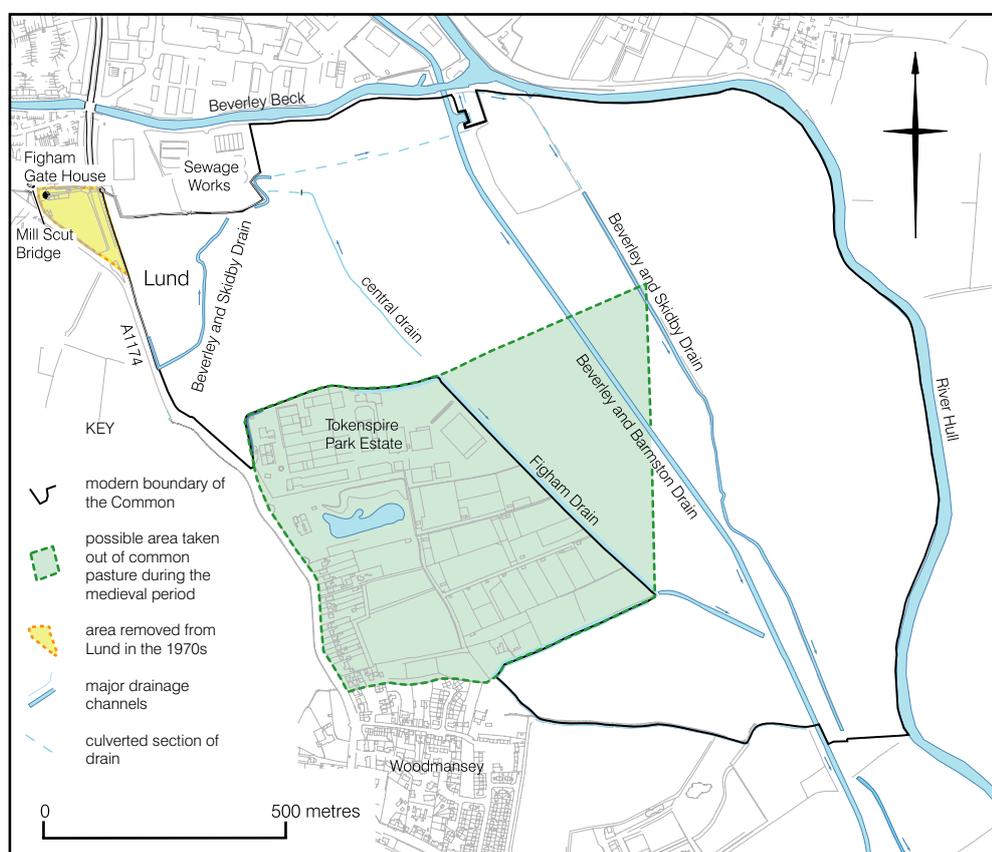


Figure 4
Plan of Figham Common and its major drainage channels. Based on Ordnance Survey mapping. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved

It is unclear whether the Common boundary was formally adjusted to exclude this block of cultivation from the rest of the common pasture. However, it is clear that the construction of the Figham Drain (see Section 5.2), in the late 18th century, divided this block of cultivation. The area to the east of this line was incorporated back into the common pasture, with the western area remaining under cultivation, but excluded from the Common.

Modern changes to the road layout have also caused alterations to the boundary in the north-western corner of the Common. During the 1970s, the Beverley ring-road was constructed, extending the Hull Road northwards, and effectively cutting Lund in half. The triangular parcel of land to the west of the new road, including the old entrance to Figham Common, was physically separated from the larger part of the Common. A gate giving access on to the Common originally existed in this north-west corner, allowing access from the Figham Road, across the Mill Scut Bridge, into Lund. A bridge on this site was known as *Noutbrig* 'next to Littillund' when it was repaired in 1449/50 (Miller *et al* 1982, 31). The Figham Gate House, which was constructed as a residence for the Pasture Master during the mid-19th century, still stands at this former entrance to the Common, as do the Victorian gate posts. Although this parcel of land remains in the ownership of Beverley Council, it no longer comes under the authority of the Pasture Masters.

5.2 Drainage

Figham Common is drained by a number of large drainage channels (Figure 4), as well as being criss-crossed by numerous small drainage ditches that appear to have been dug as the need required, not as part of a planned scheme. The start of this piecemeal attempt to drain areas of Figham Common is impossible to date precisely. Some ditches may date back to the 13th century, when Figham was transferred to common ownership, as some drainage measures must have been required at this time to create more useable areas of pasture. These small drainage ditches have not been included in the detailed survey apart from where a stratigraphic or chronological relationship with other features was detectable. In the early 12th century the Beverley Beck, which runs along the northern edge of the Common, was canalised and widened to allow barges access close to the town from the River Hull, and it is likely that these works would have contributed to further drainage of the Common (Steedman and Atkinson 1998, 7).

Two major, late 18th-century drainage channels cross the Common: the Beverley and Skidby Drain and the Beverley and Barmston Drain. The western section of the Beverley and Skidby Drain defines the eastern edge of the area of Lund, after which it enters a pipeline to re-emerge on the eastern side of the Beverley and Barmston Drain. It was constructed after an Act of Parliament was passed in 1785 to drain and improve the land for pasture (ERYAS, DDRO/69/1). The western length of the drain around Lund follows a winding course and appears to have originally been a natural stream. This stream was certainly in existence before the creation of the main length of the drain, as its line is shown on the William Burrows map of Beverley (1747). Field observations have identified banks of earth along the edge of the drain, which may well be the remains of up-cast soil from works to deepen the natural stream course. It is known that other natural channels in the northern part of the Hull

Valley were deepened when the Beverley and Skidby Drain was constructed in the late 18th century (Sheppard, 1958, 16) and it seems likely that this stream went through a series of changes in the 1780s before it could be joined to the main section of the new drainage channel to the east.

The larger of the two main drainage channels is the Beverley and Barmston Drain, which divides the eastern half of Figham Common, lying towards the River Hull, from the better drained pasture to the west. The Beverley and Barmston Drain was established by Act of Parliament in 1798 (ERYAS, PER137/T29), running north to south across the centre of the Common, towards Hull, but it plays no direct part in the drainage of Figham Common (Allison 1989, 216).

The Figham Drain, which was constructed in the mid-1780s, runs around the north and east side of the rectangular block of land, which includes the Tokenspire Park Estate at its northern end. At the south-eastern corner of this block, the drain turns south-eastward towards the Beverley and Barmston Drain, dividing a parcel of land at the southern end of the Common from the main area of pasture. At a point close to its present junction with the Beverley and Barmston Drain, it originally turned southwards to run parallel to this. However, this stretch of the drain has now been infilled, and the remaining section has been culverted into the Beverley and Barmston Drain (Tibbles 1991).

A further large, unnamed, drain cuts across the western half of the Common, running northwards from near the north-eastern corner of the Tokenspire Park Estate. Referred to on Figures 3 and 4 as the 'central drain', this is a shallow channel around 5m in width, and runs alongside the bottom of a former boundary bank at its southern end (see Section 5.4.2). At its northern end it runs into an underground pipeline, which itself feeds into the Beverley and Skidby Drain. There is no dating evidence for this drain.

5.3 Ponds

Two ponds are located on the Common (Figure 3); one close to the north-west corner of Lund, and the other in the centre of the Common to the north of the boundary with the Tokenspire Park Estate. The first of these (Pond A) is roughly circular, around 14.5m in diameter, and lies against the western boundary of the Common close to the A1174. The second pond (Pond B) is also approximately circular with a diameter of 18m. It sits below a natural ridge of higher ground, and is connected to a number of small drainage ditches, one of which runs in a straight line from the north-western edge of the pond to the ditch surrounding a sub-circular mound (see Mound C, Section 5.6). Although natural ponds form in the low-lying hollows on the Common, they are large and shallow, and do not remain water-filled throughout the year. However, Ponds A and B are smaller and deeper than these and are likely to be artificially constructed. They were probably dug to provide a constant source of water for cattle, as well as to provide additional drainage for the pasture. It has not been possible to date these ponds, and they do not appear to have any direct stratigraphic relationship to other visible features.

A large pond is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1851), at the site of Lund Spring (see Figure 6). There are now no visible remains of this on the surface, and it appears to have been infilled. The spring is now only marked by a small area of boggy ground.

5.4 Enclosures, fields and internal boundaries

A number of internal boundaries and enclosures survive as earthworks on Figham Common, indicating that the area of the Common has been sub-divided into distinct parcels of land over the centuries.

5.4.1 Enclosures

In the north-western corner of Figham Common, close to the course of the Beverley and Skidby Drain, there is an area containing various banks and ditches (Figure 5). These were investigated, by excavation of a trial trench, in advance of the insertion of a pipeline across the Common (Tibbles 1998). The most southerly bank, Bank 1, runs eastward from close to the edge of the drain for around 50m and turns north-east for a further 60m. It is steep sided and approximately 1m high, varying in width between 4m and 6m. The middle section of this bank, just before the change of angle, is lower and less well defined, apparently the result of damage. To the north of this, a second bank (Bank 2) runs parallel to it for 35m and turns north, after a 10m break in its line, for a further 45 metres. This bank is around 1m high, and varies in width between 3m and 6m, and is similar in form to Bank 1. The breaks in the lines of both these banks appear to have been caused by the construction of a pipeline across the Common during late 1990-1991 (Tibbles 1991). Although they are no longer physically connected, Bank 1 probably originally continued as part of the tree-lined bank (Bank 4; see Figure 5) to the north-east.

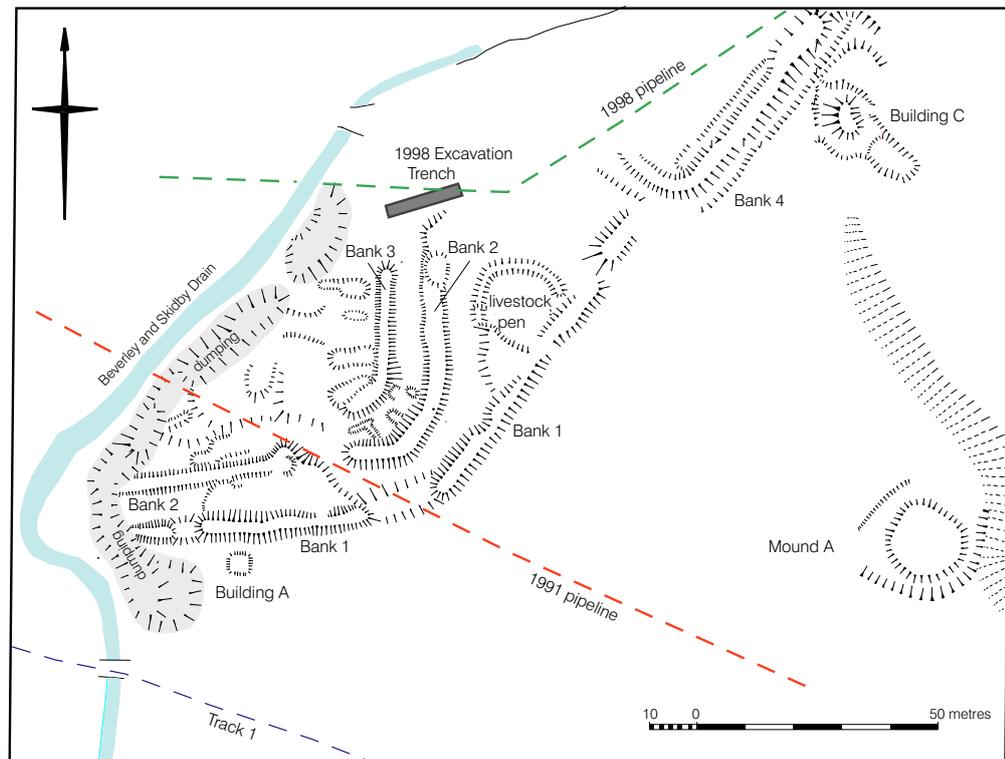


Figure 5
Plan of the enclosures in the north-west corner of Figham Common (reduced from 1:1 000 survey)

Bank 2 appears to have been truncated at its northern end. An aerial photograph taken in 1982 shows that this area was heavily disturbed at that time (Ordnance Survey 1982), probably due to heavy vehicles using it as an access route through to an area used for dumping sewage sludge on the eastern side of the Common. A third, shorter, stretch of bank (Bank 3) runs parallel to the north to south section of Bank 2 for around 25m, and has a short return to the west at its southern end. This bank is around 1m high and 3m to 4m wide. Four short ditches are aligned at right angles on its western side; three of these are 3m to 4m wide and 10m long, and the fourth is 2m wide and 4.5m long. Between the lines of the three main banks there are a number of smaller banks and rectilinear cuts into the bank sides. Abutting the western side of Bank 1 is a small enclosure defined by a low semi-circular bank, around 15m in diameter, almost certainly a livestock pen. A small earthwork platform, roughly 5m square and 0.5m high, is situated to the south of the western section of Bank 1. It probably represents the remains of a small building (Building A).

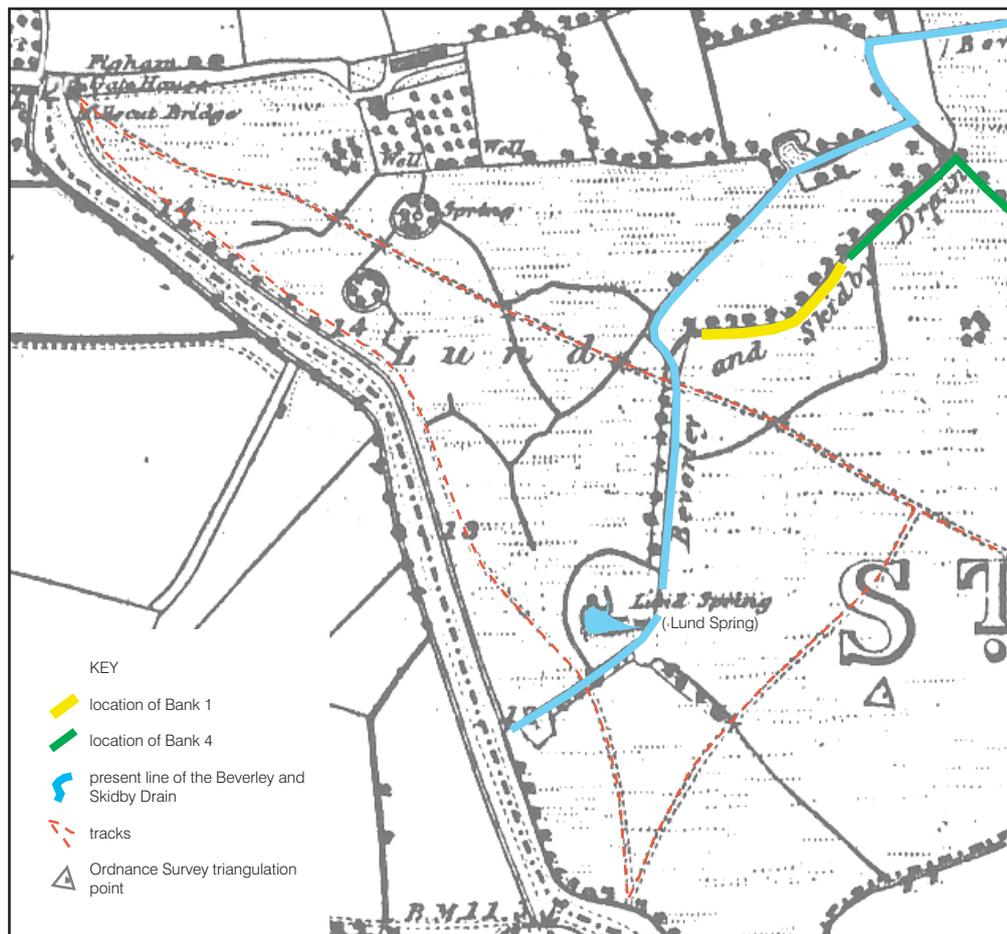


Figure 6
 Extract from 1851
 Ordnance Survey
 map, showing Lund
 and a section of the
 Beverley and Skidby
 Drain (enlarged from
 1:10 560)

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1851) appears to depict the line of Bank 1 and the adjacent south-west to north-east section of Bank 4, as the course of the Beverley and Skidby Drain, with trees growing along its banks (see Figure 6). The present line of the drain is also depicted, indicating that it split into two separate channels to the south-west, which converged again into a single channel to the north-east. The ditch to the south-east of Bank 4 presumably marks the line of the original course of the drain, with Banks 1 and 4 defining

its north-western edge. It is likely, therefore, that these features date to after 1785 when the construction of the Beverley and Skidby Drain was begun. This section of drain appears to have gone out of use by the end of the 19th century, however, as by the 1890s the Beverley and Skidby Drain is shown in its current position, and the line of Bank 1 is depicted simply as a row of trees (Ordnance Survey 1893). If Bank 1 represents the remains of the original drain, then the channel must have been purposely backfilled when it went out of use, as the ground here is too high above the present drain to allow for a flow of water along it. Excavations carried out in 1990-1991 seem to support this possibility, with re-deposited clay dumps uncovered in this area being interpreted as the intentional infilling of a body of water (Tibbles 1991).

The presence of Banks 2 and 3, and the small banks and ditches noted above, may indicate the remains of insubstantial structures and pens, suitable for holding animals, deliberately placed at the edge of the Common. If Bank 1 is the original edge of the drain, then the livestock pens and structures abutting it can be no earlier than the first half of the 19th century. The similarity in form between Banks 1, 2 and 3 indicates that they are all likely to be of a contemporary date. Banks 2 and 3 were possibly constructed to provide protection from flooding in an area where animals were being held, and when the original line of the Beverley and Skidby Drain became disused, Bank 1 also had small pens constructed against it.

Along the current eastern edge of the Beverley and Skidby Drain is a strip of wide and low amorphous banks (shown as dumping on Figure 5), which overlie the western ends of Banks 1 and 2. These probably represent the upcast soil from the cutting and re-cutting of the drainage channel. It is known that natural streams were deepened in the late 18th century along the Hull Valley when the Beverley and Skidby Drain was under construction (Sheppard 1958, 16), and these banks may have been originally formed then. However, it is likely that further clearing and dumping will have occurred since, and this may account for their amorphous appearance.

5.4.2 Field boundaries

Two relict fields, with a shared boundary, have been identified on the western side of the Common (Figure 7). The more westerly of the two fields (Field 1) is defined by the Hull Road to its west, the Beverley and Skidby Drain to the north, the Tokenspire Park Estate boundary to its south, and an earthwork boundary to its east (see below). The second field (Field 2) lies to the east of the first, and is defined by a bank that runs along the length of its north-western side, with its eastern boundary defined by a hollow that appears to be natural. The bank which defines the north-west boundary varies between 3.5m and 4m wide and is 0.5m high, and also has an inner ditch 3m to 4m wide. At its northern end there is a break in the bank 6m long, that appears to form an entrance into the field. The shared boundary between Fields 1 and 2 appears to be formed mostly by a natural hollow, although sections of the hollow at its southern end appear to have a sharper profile and may have been artificially altered. This boundary varies in width between 2.5m and 6m and is around 1.5m deep on its western side, which forms the edge of a natural ridge of higher ground. Along the centre of

this hollow there is a slight bank that runs along its length, and at the northern end this boundary is defined by a tree-lined bank. This boundary is shown on the 1851 Ordnance Survey map, defining the north-eastern edge of Field 1, although Field 2 is not depicted. There is no obvious stratigraphic relationship between the surviving field boundaries and other existing boundaries or features, and determining their date of origin has not been possible. However, the fact that they share a similar alignment along a shared central boundary suggests that both fields are broadly contemporary in date.

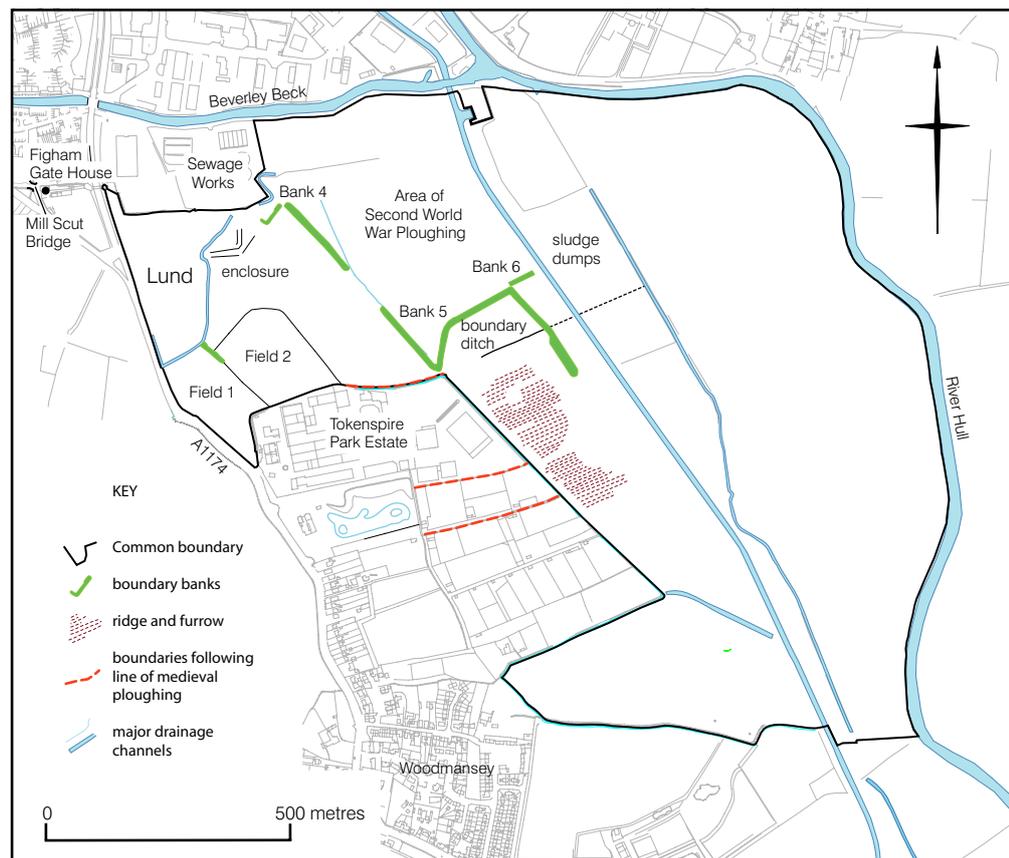


Figure 7
Plan of internal boundaries and fields.
Based on OS mapping. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved

Further features can be identified from cartographic evidence (Ordnance Survey 1851; see Figure 6), although they are no longer visible on the ground. A number of linear features are shown sub-dividing Lund. The sinuous nature of some of these features suggests that they are mostly drains. This may be supported by the observation that the track which runs south-east to north-west across Lund is shown crossing gaps in the depiction of two of these features. This is the normal cartographic convention of this period for a track crossing a drain or stream over a culvert. However, a semi-circular feature shown enclosing an area around the Lund Spring, at the southern edge of Lund, may well be a hedge or fence line. This feature is clearly visible as a snow mark on an aerial photograph taken in 1998 (Crawshaw 1998), although there are no surface remains.

Two stretches of bank (Banks 4 and 5) run across the Common (Figure 7). These appear to have been deliberately planted with trees, to form a single boundary dividing up the Common, as depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1851). As has been mentioned

above (see Section 5.4.1), Bank 4 appears to be the north-eastern continuation of Bank 1. This runs from the northern end of Bank 1, in a north-easterly direction for a distance of around 55m, before turning to the south-east. It then runs for a further 180m until it reaches the central drain, which then continues the alignment of the bank for 115m, until the boundary emerges again as Bank 5. This continues in a south-easterly direction until close to the north-eastern corner of the Tokenspire Park Estate, where it turns sharply to the north. It then turns north-eastwards for a further 150m, before turning at a right angle to the south-east, where it crosses the line of a boundary ditch associated with the medieval ploughing (see Section 5.4.3). Both these banks are of a similar construction, varying between around 1m to 1.5 m high, with ditches either side. It has been suggested that these may represent the boundary of a medieval game park (Tibbles 1991), although there is no documentary evidence for such a park existing in this area. Indeed, as Bank 5 overlies the boundary ditch that defines the edge of the medieval ridge and furrow ploughing, it is likely that it is later in date.

The north-west to south-east lengths of Banks 4 and 5 run parallel with the similarly oriented boundaries of Fields 1 and 2. This suggests that this part of the Common was sub-divided by a regular pattern of fields and boundaries, but not necessarily all laid out at the same date. It seems likely that the boundary of the Common, on the northern side of the Tokenspire Park Estate, was established during the medieval period (see Section 5.1). Fields 1 and 2 appear to have been laid out against this boundary at a later date, and define an area of higher ground that is naturally better drained than the rest of the Common. The construction of the Figham Drain, in the late 18th century, would have improved the drainage across a wider area to the east of Fields 1 and 2. Banks 4 and 5 may represent the remains of the the eastern boundary of this newly drained area. Although there is no physical connection, Banks 4 and 5 continue the line of the Figham Drain north-westward, implying that they are broadly contemporary. This expansion of the drained area of Common may have lead to the abandonment of Field 2, which was no longer in use by the middle of the 19th century (Ordnance Survey 1851).

The eastern sections of Bank 5 may also have defined an area of naturally better drained ground, which contains ridge and furrow. The fact that this last section of bank turns to the south-east, before meeting the line of the Beverley and Barmston Drain, may indicate that it pre-dates the construction of the drain around 1795 (see Section 5.2). A further line of bank (Bank 6), stretches for 55m, between the north-eastern corner of Bank 5 and the Beverley and Barmston Drain, and is probably a later addition to connect the two.

5.4.3 Ridge and furrow

An area of ridge and furrow ploughing is located on the southern side of the Common, between the Figham Drain where it bounds the Tokenspire Park Estate, and the Beverley and Barmston Drain. The ridges are on average around 7m wide, and run in straight lines with no obvious curve. The length of the plough lines is not uniform, and the ground on their eastern end seems to have been disturbed, perhaps accounting for the poor survival of the ridges here. However, it is likely that they originally continued further eastwards (see below). The western end of the ploughing has been covered by the embanked edge of the Figham

Drain. The ridge and furrow ploughing is aligned with field boundaries that sub-divide the rectangular block of land to the south-west of the Figham Drain (Ordnance Survey 1956; Figure 3). These boundaries have a reverse 's' form that is indicative of medieval cultivation (Hall 1982), and it is possible that the ridge and furrow that survives on the Common was formerly part of a single block of cultivation, that extended to the west of the Figham Drain.

This block of cultivation may have originally been defined to the north by the present northern boundary of the Tokenspire Park Estate, which in part follows a reverse 's' curve itself, and further eastward, across the present Common, by a boundary ditch. This ditch clearly defines the northern limit of the ridge and furrow ploughing, since there is no ridge and furrow visible to the north of it. It survives as an earthwork for a distance of 145m, but has been shown by aerial photographic analysis to have continued for a further 225m to the east, (RAF 1945; see Figures 7 and 10). It is not possible to precisely identify the other boundaries of this block of cultivated land, but it is likely that the marshy, low-lying ground close to the River Hull defined its eastern edge, with the Hull Road defining it to the west, and its southern edge extending to the medieval village of Woodmansey.

5.4.4 Second World War ploughing

During the Second World War areas of Figham Common were taken into cultivation. Two areas were ploughed to the north-west of the Beverley and Barmston Drain (RAF 1945; see Figure 3), perhaps chosen as they are relatively level in comparison with the rest of the Common, but there are no surviving traces of this ploughing on the ground. The remainder of the Common continued to be used as pasture during this period.

5.5 Tracks

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1851) depicts three main tracks crossing the Common (see Figures 3 and 6). Track 1 ran south-west to north-east from the Figham Clough Bridge, which crosses the Beverley and Barmston Drain, across the Common to Lund. This survives at its south-eastern end a slight earthwork bank. Track 2 ran from the gate to the Hull Road, in a north and north-westerly direction across Lund. This partly survives on the ground as a low bank, 9.5m wide, running across an area of low-lying waterlogged ground. The bank was clearly a deliberate construction to raise the level of the track above the wet ground. Both Tracks 1 and 2 head towards the original north-west gate of the Common (see Section 5.1). A further track, Track 3, is depicted on the 1851 Ordnance Survey map, running north-east to south-west, from the gate on the Hull Road until it meets Track 1, although no remains of this have been identified on the surface.

Further smaller routeways may have existed along the boundaries of fields and enclosures on the Common. A ditch which runs inside the north-western boundary bank of Field 2 may have acted as a drove-way for cattle, and leads to the break in the bank that appears to be a deliberate entrance into the field. The enclosures that are situated in the north-west corner of the Common (see Section 5.4.1) may also have formed routeways between small enclosures and animal pens.

5.6 Mounds

Five mounds have been identified across the Common (Figure 8). These differ in size, but their basic form is similar, with a central low mound partly surrounded by a shallow ditch.

Mound A sits in a low-lying marshy area. It is circular, around 1m in height at its highest point, with a diameter of approximately 18m (Figure 9). The south-eastern half of the mound is surrounded by a ditch 2m wide, which cuts into a natural ridge of higher ground on its eastern edge. A further straight section of ditch, around 1m wide, runs along the northern edge of the mound. It is probable that this is the mound identified in the 1990-1991 watching brief, during the construction of a pipeline across the Common, and which appears to have been mistakenly recorded as 30m wide (Tibbles 1991; see Section 3).

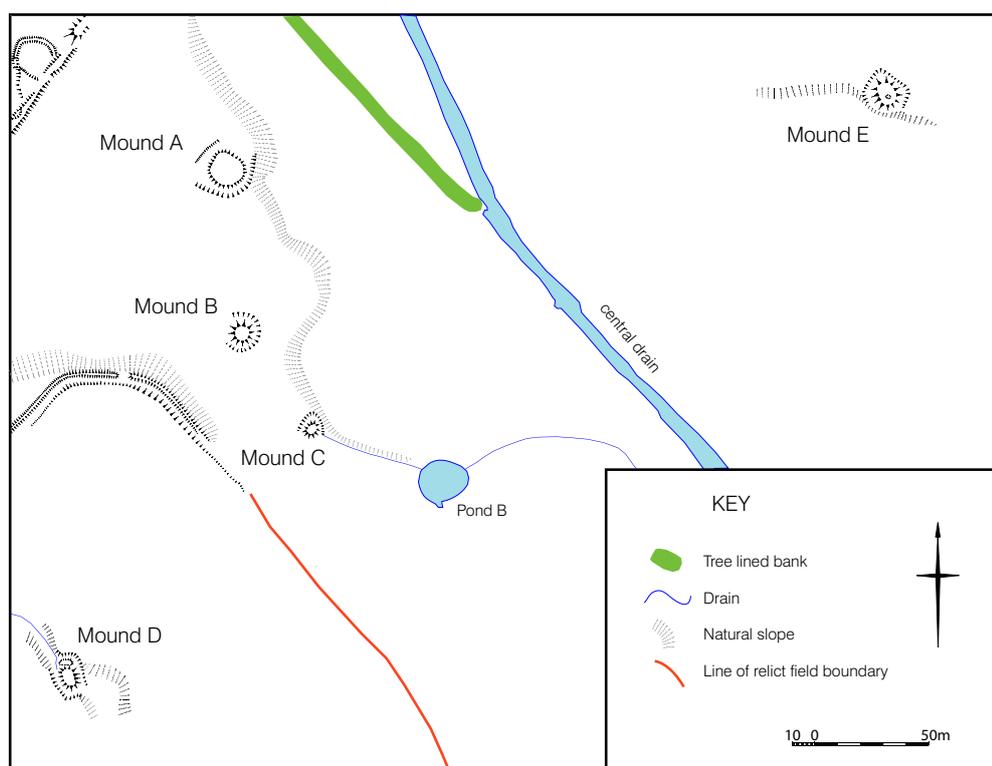


Figure 8
Location of the
mounds

Mound B is situated to the south of Mound A, in a natural hollow between two ridges of higher ground to its east and west. This mound is circular in shape, but has steeper sides and a more rounded profile than Mound A. It rises to a height of 1m in the centre, and is around 12.5m in diameter. Except on its western side, it is surrounded by a 2m wide ditch, which is connected to a small drainage channel to its west.

Mound C is the smallest of the mounds found on Figham Common. It is roughly circular in shape, around 8.5m in diameter and less than a metre in height at its centre. Around its northern edge there is a shallow ditch, 3.5m in width, which cuts into the ridge of ground on its eastern side. A drain is connected to this surrounding ditch and runs straight into Pond B lying to its south-east.

Mound D lies further to the south-west of these. It is sub-rectangular in shape, around 13m in length and 10m wide, and rises to a height of 1m in the centre. Two lengths of ditches,

3.5m wide, run along the eastern and western edges of the mound, cutting into the sides of natural ridges between which the mound is situated.

Mound E is located in the centre of the Common towards the Beverley and Barmston Drain. The mound is approximately circular and around 15m in diameter, rising to a height of around 1.5m. It is partly surrounded by a ditch, around 4m in width, which forms a rectilinear pattern around the eastern and north-eastern sides of the mound. A small hollow appears to have been dug into the top of the mound. This mound is situated on top of the edge of a natural ridge, differing in position from Mounds A-D which sit below, or between, ridges of higher ground.



Figure 9
*Photograph of Mound
A from the south*

The original function of these mounds is not clear and there is no firm dating evidence for them. Indeed, their form may indicate a number of different possible functions. They are reminiscent of prehistoric barrows; however, their position in the landscape seems to make this conclusion doubtful. The low-lying, marshy nature of the ground here, which is still prone to flooding despite major drainage works, makes this an unlikely situation for a barrow cemetery. The fact that this area has seen repeated flooding also makes it probable that any prehistoric features would have been covered by the build up of sedimentary deposits. Mound E is the largest and most obvious of the mounds, and that fact that a shallow pit has been dug into it may indicate that it has previously been mistaken for a barrow.

Another possibility is that they are pillow mounds, built to provide artificial warrens for the rearing of rabbits. These are often found on marginal ground which would have been difficult

or costly to improve, although rarely on waterlogged or marshy land (Harris 1970, 433-434), and are often surrounded by ditches. The ditches surrounding the mounds would have been necessary to provide better drainage, thereby creating a drier, more suitable, habitat for the rabbits. The fact that these ditches are also connected with other drainage channels, including connecting the ditch around Mound C to Pond B in the centre of the Common, indicates that they may also have functioned as part of a wider scheme of drainage. It might be expected that the builders would have chosen the better drained ground on top of the ridges, although placing them below the ridges may have provided more shelter.

The 1851 Ordnance Survey map depicts a ring of trees at the location of Mound A, and aerial photographs also show Mounds A and B with rings of trees growing on them (RAF 1946). It is possible that these mounds provided a raised platform on which clumps of trees could be grown above the waterlogged ground. However, this may well represent secondary use of the mounds, and not their original function.

It has also been suggested that one of these mounds (presumably Mound A) could be the remains of a medieval or post-medieval hay rick (Tibbles 1991), a platform upon which hay stacks were placed to keep them dry.

5.7 Military activity on Figham Common

There is evidence for military activity on Figham Common dating from the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. These activities must have largely involved training exercises; surface remains of a rifle range have been discovered on the Common and remains of Mills bombs, grenades first used in 1915, have provided evidence of military training during the First World War. During the Second World War, defences were constructed on the eastern side of the Common, apparently to protect against airborne glider landings.

5.7.1 Rifle range

A rifle range was established on the eastern side of the Beverley and Barmston Drain in 1872 (HRO, DDX/3907/2). At this time, the area immediately east of the drain was open ground, and targets were established at 50 and 100 yard intervals to a distance of 700 yards. Although the rifle range is marked as 'disused' by the time it was surveyed in 1908 (Ordnance Survey 1910), it continued to be depicted on mapping until the 1950s (Ordnance Survey 1956). During the 1960s, the majority of the range was covered over by the dumping of sludge from the local sewage works. Some features at the southern end of the range have survived outside the area of sludge dumping. A short section of wall, around 2.5m in length, survives on top of a low mound, surrounded by large concrete blocks, which appear not to be *in situ* (Figure 3). These appear to be the remains of the 'mantlets', protective firing positions, which are depicted on the 1893 Ordnance Survey map. To the south of these, a section of brick wall, 11m long, survives to a height of around 0.5m. This is marked on the 1893 Ordnance Survey map as a target.

5.7.2 Anti-glider obstacles

Three parallel lines of pits, running at right angles between the Beverley and Barmston Drain and the Beverley and Skidby Drain, can be identified on aerial photography taken in 1945 (RAF 1945; A, B and C, Figure 10). Each line consists of evenly spaced pairs of rectangular pits positioned either side of a central mound, but only the shortest, southern line (A) remains visible on the ground. This consists of two rows of eight pits, aligned in pairs, and separated by a low mound along their centre. Each pit is rectangular in form and around 4.5m in length and 2.5m wide. The two longer lines (B and C) to the north are now covered by dumps of sewage sludge.



Figure 10
Vertical aerial
photograph showing
anti-glider obstacles
in 1945
© Crown copyright.
NMR 3G/TUD/UK2
(5066)

The form of these features suggests that they may be trench-and-mound anti-glider obstacles, dating to the Second World War. However, they have a different form to the usual lay-out of these defences, which normally have a sequence of mounds and pits alternatively staggered from one side to the other, rather than the parallel pairs of ditches and central mounds found here. Despite this difference, this is still their most likely function (information from RJC Thomas, English Heritage Military Support Officer), although it is also possible that they could be military practice works.

5.8 Other structures

In the north-western corner of the Common, within the area of Lund, a rectangular feature (Building B) has been cut into the edge of a flat ridge of high ground above an area of marsh to its east (Figure 3). This terrace is 25m long and 10m wide, and is 0.5m deep. Cut scarps define the feature on three sides, but it is open on its southern edge, with only a right-angle

cut in its south-eastern corner indicating a possible continuation of its southern side. There is also a break in the scarp in the north-eastern corner, where its northern side turns at a right angle. Three low mounds are positioned along the centre of terrace, each around 4m wide, separated by shallow 1m wide ditches. It appears likely that the rectangular feature is a stance for a structure such as a building or a shed, with an entrance-way in the north-west corner, and possibly another, larger entrance, on its southern side. The central mounds and cross ditches may represent the remains of internal divisions of the building.

A further feature is situated at the inner angle of Bank 4 on the northern side of the Common (Building C). This comprises a sub-rectangular cut feature, 15m long, 10m wide and around 0.5m deep. This is broken on its western and northern sides with gaps, both 2.5m wide. In the centre of the cut feature there is a low mound, around 9.5 m in diameter. On its south-eastern side there is a further rectangular cut feature, 11.5m long and 7.5 m wide, which is deeper than the first, with sides around 1m in depth. This appears to be the site of a small rectangular building, with a yard or small pond on its southern side. The breaks on its northern and western edges, which are both of equal size, may be interpreted as entrances into the building.

The 1851 First Edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 6) shows that a triangulation point had been placed on the Common, to the south-east of Lund Spring. It is marked on the map by a triangle with a dot in the centre. This would have been visible on the surface when the First Edition map was being surveyed, but nothing now remains.

6. SUMMARY

The low-lying land of the Holderness Plain, on which Figham Common sits, has produced evidence of activity from at least the Mesolithic period, around 8000 BC (Loughlin and Miller 1979). Excavations on the eastern edge of Beverley have provided evidence for Neolithic and Iron Age settlement, as well as a Romano-British farmstead (Evans 2000, 13). On Figham Common, however, field survey has produced no evidence of any activity prior to the medieval period.

The attempts to drain the Common over the centuries have contributed significantly to the present landscape of Figham Common. It is crossed by lengths of small drainage ditches that attest to attempts to improve the drainage after it first became common land during the medieval period. The larger drainage channels effectively divide the Common into two distinct areas; an area of useable pasture to the west, and marshland to the east along the edge of the River Hull. The Beverley and Skidby Drain, constructed in the 18th century, prevents the western half of the Common from becoming constantly waterlogged, providing usable pasture throughout the year.

It is probable that the original extent of the Common was larger than the present area and that the rectangular block of land on its south-western edge, which includes the Tokenspire Park Estate, was formerly common land. Possible evidence of medieval cultivation in this area can be interpreted from aerial photography, in the form of boundaries with a reverse 's' curve which are normally indicative of cultivation during this period. These boundaries appear to align closely with the remains of ridge and furrow ploughing which survives on the Common, and it is possible that this originally constituted a single block of cultivation. This block may then have been truncated by the construction of a drain running north-west to south-east during the late 18th century, with the boundary of the Common being moved to follow its line.

There is also evidence for fields and cultivation on the Common during the medieval period. Relict field boundaries to the north and north-east appear to be the remnants of a pattern of rectilinear fields which are post-medieval in date. The parallel alignment of the boundaries suggest that this division into fields was planned, rather than being piecemeal. Such a planned sub-division of the common land around Beverley appears to be unique to Figham Common, as recent surveys on Westwood and Swinemoor Commons have found no evidence for such divisions (Pearson and Pollington, forthcoming).

The last episode of cultivation was during the Second World War, when an area in the centre of the Common was ploughed. Small enclosures, such as the area defined by the banks on the north-western side of the Common, were also used to divide up the land; here, perhaps, to create small pens and paddocks to hold animals temporarily. The remains of small rectangular structures, to the east of this and in the north-western corner of Lund, may be evidence for small agricultural buildings, possibly associated with the management of livestock.

Perhaps the most distinctive features surviving on the Common are the five mounds, though their function and date remain unclear. It seems unlikely that they are prehistoric barrows; their position, within an area of land prone to flooding, is an unlikely position for such features. Also, if they were prehistoric in date then it seems probable that they would have subsequently been obscured by sedimentary deposits from regular inundations. A further possibility is that they are the remains of artificial rabbit warrens. However, the circular form of these mounds is very different from the long mounds found in 18th and 19th century warrens, which are also normally situated on higher, better drained, ground (Harris 1970, 434). It is, however, possible that they were used for small-scale rabbit farming. That two of the mounds were used as platforms for rings of trees during the 19th and 20th centuries is evidenced by maps and aerial photography, but this is probably a re-use of existing features.

It is also clear that the Common was used for non-agricultural activity. The presence of a rifle range along the eastern edge of the Beverley and Barmston Drain may provide evidence of 19th-century military use, or perhaps, alternatively, use as a civilian shooting club facility. Further military use of the Common has been seen in the evidence of a series of anti-glider obstacles on its eastern side, built either to prevent gliders landing on flat ground, or as military practice works.

Overall, Figham Common has been an important and integral factor in the economy and plan of Beverley from at least the medieval period, providing pasture for cattle and access to Beverley's markets from the south. It seems that beyond this, however, its use has been limited to small-scale agriculture, together with periods of military and recreational use. No doubt its use has been limited by the waterlogged nature of the ground, despite attempts at drainage.

7. METHODOLOGY

The archaeological field survey was carried out by Mitchell Pollington and Trevor Pearson. The survey was undertaken using a Trimble dual frequency Global Positioning System (GPS), with two rover receivers (Trimble 4800 and 5800 models) working in real-time kinematic mode. As well as this, certain features were recorded using graphical methods with tape measures

The report was written and researched by Mitchell Pollington with the help of Trevor Pearson, and advice on illustrations from Philip Sinton. The report as a whole was commented on by Alastair Oswald and Trevor Pearson, and edited by Stewart Ainsworth, Senior Investigator, Archaeological Investigation Team.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

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HAU	- Humberside Archaeology Unit
HRO	- Humberside Record Office
NMR	- National Monuments Record
RCHME	- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England

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APPENDIX 1

Table of NMR and SMR numbers linked to the site.

Name	SMR No.	NMR No.	NGR
Trackways		TA 03 NE 16	TA 0552 3880, TA 0505 3883
Ridge and furrow		TA 03 NE 17	TA 0583 3863
Pond A		TA 03 NW 100	TA 0499 3897
Pond B		TA 03 NE 18	TA 0542 3884
Mounds		TA 03 NE 19	TA 0532 3898, TA 0532 3891 TA 0535 3887, TA 0525 3876 TA 0560 3901
Beverley Beck	9474	TA 03 NE 20	TA 0447 3928 - TA 0573 3937
Boundary banks	697	TA 03 NE 21	TA 0535 3904, TA 0570 3887
Boundary ditch		TA 03 NE 22	TA 0577 3880
Enclosures	8202	TA 03 NE 23	TA 0520 3900
Buildings		TA 03 NE 24	TA 0502 3898, TA 0530 3907, TA 0517 3898
Figham Clough Bridge	12311	TA 03 NE 25	TA 0600 3873
Mill Scut Bridge	12292	TA 03 NW 102	TA 0478 3913
Figham Gate House	12291	TA 03 NW 101	TA 0481 3913
Firing range		TA 03 NE 26	TA 0607 3868, TA 0606 3870
Anti-glider ditches		TA 03 NE 27	TA 0615 3863



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