

Historic Landscape Appraisal Fulford York

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Historic Landscape Appraisal

Fulford

York

1. Introduction

This section of the Environmental Statement deals with the historic landscape of the area of the development site (Fig. 1), to:

- A. Locate and describe the landscape in which the battle of Fulford took place.
- B. Assess the extent to which development down to the present day has impinged on and prejudiced a visual and conceptual understanding of that landscape.
- C. Assess the extent to which proposed developments may further prejudice the visual and conceptual understanding of the landscape

2. Prehistoric Landscape

- 2.1 The landscape of the Vale of York is the result of the action of ice and water, the glaciers that had covered the north of England leaving behind terminal moraines such as the York and Escrick moraine. Moraines consist of long narrow ridges of sands and gravels interspersed with boulder clay. Especially in the Vale of York these moraines are of relatively high ground, the York moraine at Grimston being c. 24.5m AOD, and the Escrick moraine at Stillingfleet lying at circa 18m AOD (Melmore, 1935). The glaciers also left behind deposits of sand and silt; at Fulford the outwashed sand is seen in the ridge running along the A19. Since glacial times the landscape has largely been determined by changes in sea level and the resulting effect on the rivers. In the Vale of York as the water margins retreated the remnants of gravel, sand, silt and clays formed the natural topography (Figs. 2 & 3).
- 2.2 It is well attested that Prehistoric man had a preference for these higher well-drained sands and gravels. A rise in sea level between 5500 and 300 BC resulted in the deposition of marine clays in some of the lower valleys. These encroaching

silts formed the flat plains that effectively masked any traces of earlier human activity except on the higher ridges. The change in sea level continued through the late Neolithic and Bronze Age, when conditions became increasingly swampy, resulting in the formation of peats. The published vegetational history for the Vale of York is poor. However, recent work undertaken by the Humber Wetlands Project and Managing the Cultural Landscape of the Vale of York has started to address these problems. Work by Dr Allan Hall on radiocarbon-dated peat samples from the Germany Beck site identified a sequence of peat formation that began in the Later Iron Age (2060 +/- 35 BP) and continued until the mid-Saxon period (1385 +/- 35 BP, Hall & Kenward 2005).

- 2.3 Plant pollen indicates that the small-scale clearance of woodland for pasture took place during the Neolithic period. With the later Bronze Age, and into the Iron Age, the evidence for clearance increases with a pastoral economy indicated by the dominant plant species, mixed oak woodland with pine on the margins.
- 2.4 Prehistoric sites have been defined by cropmarks and are remnants of the ancient landscape including old field systems and enclosures with circular buildings. Although no Square Barrows have been located at Fulford they are known in the area at Naburn, Dunnington, Hopgrove, Riccall and Skipwith Common, but no doubt form part of the surrounding relict landscape east of the Ouse (Stead, 1979).
- 2.5 The Field Walking and Excavations at Germany Beck have revealed evidence of Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age activity in the form of a dispersed flint and ceramic assemblage.

3. Romano-British Landscape

- 3.1 Occupation and agricultural activity in this period is attested by recent aerial photography undertaken by English Heritage as part of the York Hinterland Survey. Excavation by Bradford University in the early 1980s and MAP Archaeological Consultancy Ltd in 1996, 2002 and 2003 has confirmed previous

aerial photographic interpretation. Farmsteads and field systems were developed around York's hinterland in response to the economic climate created by the legionary fort and its associated *colonia*. A sophisticated agricultural system was required to supply food to the increasing population. Consequently, woodland clearance accelerated throughout the middle Iron Age and Romano-British periods, with the evidence of herbs and cereals indicating a concomitant growth in arable farming. Iron Age clearance of mixed oak woodland was followed by woodland regeneration with a further phase of clearance during the Roman period. The accumulation of wind-blown sands on podzolic soils during the later stages of the Roman period suggests the impoverishment of the soil and severe erosional problems.

- 3.2 A road leading to the south-eastern gate of the fort of *Eboracum* (Roman Road 1, RCHME 1962) is described as approaching York from the south-east, from Poole Bridge to Germany Beck. Its route is represented by the parish boundary. Visible remains have been noted on the golf course at Heslington, whilst aerial photographs have identified field systems which abutt this road. The road formed an important landscape feature in the post-Roman landscape, as shown by its use as the boundary between Fulford and Heslington parishes. It continued in use as a thoroughfare in the post-medieval period (see below).
- 3.3 Geophysical Survey and Excavations at the Germany Beck development site revealed a brickwork pattern of field boundaries that were dated by associated pottery to the 2nd century. There was also evidence of a second period of activity in the later 4th century. These field systems appear to have been abandoned by the 5th century AD. Whether this was due to the rising levels of the Ouse and associated and periods of flooding can only be postulated, but evidence at Hungate and other sites in York suggests that the Roman deposits were slowly being submerged by rising river levels. It is likely that this area of Fulford was becoming waterlogged land of marginal value.

4. Pre-Conquest Landscape

4.1 The rapid expansion of York in the 10th century had a symbiotic effect in the growth of rural settlement. Documentary place-name evidence suggests that the settlements of Escrick and Riccall, for example, were established in the pre-Conquest period. Similarly, the establishment of pre-Conquest churches at Gate Fulford (St Oswalds) and Skipwith (St Helens) suggests that these settlements were already in existence at this time. In support of this, a pre-Conquest structure was located underneath St Oswalds church in 1981 by York Archaeological Trust and the shaft of a churchyard cross of late 10th or early 11th century date was identified within the north wall of its nave. Recent excavation in Selby has confirmed that the town is of pre-Conquest date. The A19 road from Selby to York probably dates to this period and incorporates many of the above-named villages in its route.

4.2 In the time of King Edward, i.e. pre-1066, Morcar is recorded as having one manor at Gate Fulford.

5. Medieval Landscape

5.1 Documentary Evidence

5.1.1 In the 1086 Domesday Survey (Faull and Stinson eds. 1986), Gate Fulford consisted of a single estate of 10 carucates, held by Count Alan of Brittany; although in fact the Count held 2 ploughs in desmesne, with another 2 ploughs being held between six villagers. There were also 20 acres of meadow. The whole estate was 1 league long and ½ a league wide (approximately 1½ x ¾ mile in size – about the size of the land block of Gate Fulford township that is situated to the north of Germany Beck). The value of the estate in 1086 was 16/- a 20% reduction from the 20/- that it was worth under Morcar's ownership before the Conquest.

5.1.2 Although the Domesday Survey shows that Gate and Water Fulford (*Fuletorp/Foleforde*- foul, dirty ford) were separate estates, the prefixes 'Gate' or

‘Water’ are not actually recorded in the original Domesday document, but are instead interpolations made by the translator. The prefix ‘*Water*’ is first recorded in the 12th century, referring to its location on the banks of the Ouse. The prefix ‘*Gate*’ first appears in the 16th century referring to the high road between York and Selby. Prior to this date, the village was known as Over Fulford (*Uteriori* Fulford in the 12th century, and *Overfolforth* in the 1366 Patent Rolls). The neighbouring village of Naburn (*Narburna* at Domesday) has a suggested meaning of ‘stream where a corpse was found’ (Smith ed.1937). To the south-east Wheldrake, another Domesday village, has a derivation meaning ‘strip of land where a death had taken place’ (*ibid.*).

- 5.1.3 In 1086, St. Mary’s abbey (through the King) held 1 carucate and 2 bovates, Erneis de Burun held 1 carucate and 3 bovates, and Count Alan a similar amount, in Water Fulford.
- 5.1.4 About 1100 Gate Fulford was given by Count Stephen of Brittany to St Mary’s Abbey, York, along with a carucate and three bovates in Water Fulford. The Abbey retained the manor of Gate Fulford until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in circa 1540). The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* listed a total value of 80/- per annum for the temporalities held by St. Mary’s in *Fulfurth* (both Gate and Water Fulford) at the time of the dissolution. In addition, the chapel at *Fulfurth* along with churches at Askam Brian and Knapton, was worth £60- 2/- 3d.
- 5.1.6 St. Mary’s holding was assigned to Ampleforth prebend, apparently at the time of its foundation around 1219-34; in c.1295 the prebend had 12 bovates of land, 6 acres of meadow, and a toft at Water Fulford. The prebend still had 5 acres of land in Fulford in 1844.
- 5.1.7 Several other religious houses in York held estates in Fulford parish. Thomas Thurkill granted 2 houses and 12 ½ acres to St. Andrew’s priory in 1395. St. Leonard’s Hospital had property in Naburn and Fulford worth 40/- at the time of

the dissolution. In the 12th century St. Mary's abbey granted common rights in Fulford to St. Nicholas' hospital. Warter Priory was granted a bovate, a toft and croft, and meadow by Hilary de Builers between 1203 and 1241.

5.1.8 Burun's holding passed eventually to William de Ros, and in 1285 Robert de Ros held 8 bovates at Fulford. The manor was held by the Ros family until 1461, when it was attainted to the king. It returned to the Ros family under Henry VII.

5.1.9 Count Alan's holding was a soke of Clifton, and around 1100 it was given to St. Mary's Abbey, thereafter descending with Gate Fulford manor.

5.1.10 In the 16th century Water Fulford belonged to the Earl of Rutland who sold it to John Redmayne. In 1702 Water Fulford merged with Gate Fulford

5.2 Cartographic Evidence

General

5.2.1 Whilst the Domesday Survey demonstrates that Gate and Water Fulford both existed as separate estates in 1086, it is far from certain what form the villages took at this time. The 1759 Enclosure Award Map of Gate Fulford (Fig. 5) and Estate Maps of both Gate Fulford (1745, Fig. 4) and Water Fulford (1767, Fig. 6) show both settlements to consist of two rows of regular tofts (rectangular plots of land), each of which contain a farmhouse and its outbuildings. The tofts are aligned along a village street, with access to the rear via back lane.

5.2.2 The regular plan of both villages suggests that they were planned settlements. This is significant in that planned medieval villages are comparatively rare and are generally held to be of post-Conquest date. The consensus of opinion is that the majority of post-Conquest medieval planned villages were the result of a re-ordering of the earlier settlement pattern. In Yorkshire the main motor for post-Conquest planned settlements was the need to re-order and rationalize the

previous settlement pattern in the light of the depredations caused by Willam I's campaign of 1069. This was so severe that it prompted Symeon to state that "*there was no village inhabited between York and Durham*" (Stevenson ed. 1855). In the case of Gate Fulford, the 20% loss of value recorded for the estate (referred to above) may have led to the replacement of the original Anglo-Saxon settlement in the vicinity of St. Oswald's church by a new planned village situated 500m to the south-east.

- 5.2.3 Whilst a degree of caution should be exercised when using maps that were drawn many centuries after the foundation of a village, it is clear that the 1759 and 1767 maps give a wealth of clues about the history and form of both the Fulford settlements and their agricultural economy.

Gate Fulford

- 5.2.4 The 1759 Enclosure Map for Gate Fulford shows two rows of at least 15 regular crofts aligned along the village street, which also formed part of the road between York and Selby. A back lane is shown which runs along the rear of the majority of the village properties. The termination of the back lane on the east side of the village coincides with the northern end of a regular block of at least 6 rectangular properties that appear to represent a later extension of the village onto the village green, which lay immediately south of the village. The First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1853) locates the pinfold in this area. This would have been used to hold animals that strayed into open fields for which a fine was paid for their release.
- 5.2.5 Mills were essential elements of medieval villages. Fulford's mill was a windmill at Lamel Hill, in the northern end of the township, and was known as Siward How mill in the 16th century. William Strickland was listed as a corn miller in Fulford in 1823 (Baines, 1823).

- 5.2.6 The area in which Fulford lies has been described as “a distinctive agricultural landscape. The small Open Fields, large commons and extensive early inclosure contrasts strongly with the Open Field economy of the Wolds” (VCH 1976). The Open Fields of Gate Fulford can be tentatively reconstructed from both the Estate Map and the Enclosure Map (Fig. 4).
- 5.2.7 One area of Open Field lay at the north end of the township on either side of the York road, which apparently divided the cultivated land into two units. The field on the west side of the road was bordered on its western side by meadowland along the Ouse. The boundaries of the eastern field were formed by the Fulford to Heslington road to the south, Low Moor to the east, and the York to Heslington road to the north.
- 5.2.8 Another possible Open Field lay immediately on the east side of the village, suggested by the parallel, curving form of its northern and southern boundaries. The western boundary of this area was formed by the back lane of the village, the southern boundary bordered the low land at the north side of Germany Beck, the eastern boundary was formed by a lane dividing the field from East Moor, and the road between Fulford and Heslington formed the northern boundary. Fieldwalking in 1995 of part of this area that still remained as arable field recovered a spread of medieval pottery. The concentrations were greatest on the western part of this field, an area for which no details of ownership were shown on the Estate Map. The significance of this is unclear; perhaps this area had been enclosed by agreement at an earlier date or represent clearance into wasteland.
- 5.2.9 The township’s valuable meadowland or Ings lay to the west of Gate Fulford village, extending alongside the Ouse to the west of the Open Field. Rough common grazing on East Moor fringed the eastern boundary of the township. East Moor (Pls. 1 & 2) was enclosed by the time of the 1745 Estate Map, but the exact date of enclosure is uncertain.

- 5.2.10 As mentioned above it is tempting to equate that part of Gate Fulford township that lies to the north of Germany Beck with the estate recorded by the Domesday Survey. The dimensions given, 1 league long and ½ league wide (c. 1 ½ miles x ¾ mile), approximate to the size of this land block.
- 5.2.11 Analysis of the Gate Fulford Estate Map suggests that there were a number of phases of land reclamation and improvement in the area during the medieval period. Two separate enclosure blocks, for example, are shown immediately to the south of Germany Beck. These are ‘*Damlands Field*’ (Pls. 6 & 7) to the west and ‘*Abbey Crofts*’ to the east (Pl. 3). Damlands Field was mentioned in a deed of 1332 as *les Damlandes* (St Mary’s Chartulary, DD88/9). The name means “*water confined by an embankment*” as in the sense of an artificial canal or drain (Smith ed. 1937, 110). The presence of enclosures and artificial drainage indicates a regime of agricultural improvement, whilst the name ‘*Abbey Crofts*’ is a strong indication that the Abbey was at least partly responsible for the reclamation of land in this area. A thin scatter of medieval sherds recovered during the fieldwalking of Abbey Crofts (Area I) suggests that this area was being cultivated and improved through the spreading of night-soil.
- 5.2.12 The Estate Map shows a lane separating Damlands Field and Abbey Crofts from a large enclosed area labeled ‘*Old Inclosure*’. This area is shown as ‘*New Field*’ on the Enclosure Map. *Newefield* is mentioned in 1330 (DD88/9) and is probably the “*New Ridding which abuts upon Tylmire*” mentioned in 1258 (DD88/9). Further indications of land improvement during this period come from the grant of six acres of land in *Nether Intake* by John Warthill to Henry de Kepax in 1331 and a 1335 reference to *le Brekes* (DD88/9).
- 5.2.13 The Estate Map labels the lane between Damlands Field and Abbey crofts as “*lane from west to east moor*”, indicating that New Field was fringed by rough common pasture on both sides. The southern end of the township remained a boggy area during the medieval period and was described as the desmesne fishery

of St. Mary's Abbey in the 1447 Manorial Court Roll (YAD DD 88/1). The citizens of York were entitled to common pasture in Tilmire, which also included a turbary for the cutting of peat for use as fuel.

- 5.2.14 Germany Beck runs in a relatively straight east-west course between Fulford East Moor and the river Ouse (Pls. 3–5). At its eastern end the beck takes a right-angled turn to run along the boundary separating Fulford East Moor from Heslington West Moor. The regularity of its course strongly suggests a man-made feature, and the documentary sources contain evidence of its likely origin. An indenture dated 6th August 1484 between the Lord Mayor and Commonaltie of York and the Abbot and Convent of St. Mary's Abbey concerning grazing rights in Fulford states that the citizens of York should only have rights of pasturage in those fields: *“lying and being on the north side of the New Dyke... of the which Dike one end butts of the Water of the Ouse and the other end of the same Dike eastwards butts upon Fulforde Moore*” The phrase “New Dyke” in this context appears to be completely unambiguous; it clearly relates to a newly-created landscape feature. With reference to medieval drainage in the Vale of York in general, Sheppard states:

“Although there are few records that describe the existence of such drains in medieval times, those that do exist suggest that the drains recorded in the inquisitions of the Court of Sewers in 1664 were, for the most part, first cut in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries” (Sheppard 1966 p. 15)

As the only traceable watercourse that runs between Fulford Moor and the Ouse, Germany Beck would appear to be the “New Dike” that the document refers to, and is therefore likely to have been created as part of a drainage scheme instigated by the Abbey of St. Mary's during the 15th century in order to improve agriculture in the township.

5.2.15 The derivation of the name ‘Germany Beck’ is not clear, but it is possible that it comes from a personal name. A *German de Bretgate* was mentioned 1258-70 (DD88/9 - 4019), and *Robert, nephew of German de Bretegate* in 1276 (*ibid.*). Nicholas de Brettgate is described in the Court Rolls for 1483 as “holding a toft and croft in *Fuleford* near the bridge, with a garden, meadow and arable land”. This establishes the Brettgate family holding as being at the southern end of the village during the 15th century when the beck was created, and suggests how the watercourse eventually came to be known by its present name.

5.2.16 That Germany Beck was a man-made feature of medieval date is highlighted by the extension of the cultivated lands of Gate Fulford into the former waste to the south of the beck. This extension was noted in the 16th century. The manorial court roll of 1509, for example, recorded that the Fulford lands extended as far as Poole Bridge, the meeting point of Fulford, Heslington, Deighton and Wheldrake townships (YAS DD 88/1). Clearly, the creation of the beck in the 15th century improved the drainage of the area and led to a concomitant expansion of arable cultivation in the following century.

Water Fulford

5.2.17 The 1767 map of Water Fulford shows two rows of tofts on either side of an east-west main street. Only the northern row contained houses and buildings in 1767, the southern row having apparently been abandoned by this date. The manor house, Roos Hall, was situated at the western end of the northern row. A back lane is discernable on the southern side of the southern row, with indications of another on the northern side visible at the north-east corner of the village (Fig. 6).

5.2.18 Two possible Open Fields are discernable. The first of these formed a rectangular area immediately to the south of the village, bounded by the York road to the east, Lincroft Lane to the south and the lands of Naburn township to the west. The other Open Field seems to form a roughly triangular area stretching south-westwards from the village, and bounded by the Naburn road to the east, the Ouse

to the north and the valuable meadowland of the Ings to the west. Both of these areas were a mixture of arable and pasture in 1767. The location of common pasture within Water Fulford is uncertain.

5.2.19 The Ouse was of significance to the communications and economic life of the village in the post-medieval period, and there is no reason to doubt that this was not also true of the medieval period. At the enclosure of 1759 allotment holders were said to have rights to land goods from the river, reflected in the road called Landing Lane leading from the York road round the northern end of the village to the Ouse.

5.2.20 As far as land-based communications are concerned, reference has already been made to the antiquity of the A19 route, which linked the pre-Domesday settlements of Fulford, Esrick and Ricall. The route of the Roman road from York that formed the eastern boundary of Fulford township was also in use in the medieval period, as it was referred to as a “former droveway” in a document in the Yarburgh MSS archives (BIHR).

6 Post-medieval Landscape

6.1 During the 17th century there were attempts to grow new crops and improve upon old rotations in the open fields. More of the waste land was being reclaimed, closes were called *new fields* in 1642 and there were about 20 closes called intacks. The Enclosure Act of 1756 comprised of 38 acres in Dam Land Fields, 54 in the riverside Ings and 508 in the Commons. The Commons included 50 acres in Low Moor, 125 acres in East Moor, 200 acres in West Moor and 125 acres in Tilmire. All allotments at the time of Enclosure were given the right to land goods from the river.

6.2 The town fields of Water Fulford were mentioned in the early 18th century with parcels of meadow in the Ings. In 1716 four closes were described as open field land. There has always been a substantial area of land under grass especially near

- the Ouse and around Water Fulford. Up until 1972 the Ings at Water Fulford were in divided ownership and more than a dozen boundary stones marked off the parcels of land.
- 6.3 The open fields were enclosed in 1759 and the field boundaries set in this period have remained static until the 20th century (Fig. 7 & Pl. 8).
- 6.4 In 1672 there were 67 households; by 1743 there were 52 families in Fulford.
- 6.5 The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1853 : Fig. 7) illustrates changes to the agricultural landscape established by the Enclosure Award. Many of the fields to the west of the A19, at the northern–western end of the parish, were occupied by gravel pits, one of which had its own light railway leading to a staith on the Ouse. Nurseries or market gardens were established to feed York’s growing population. To the east of the A19, York’s suburbs were encroaching on the former arable fields, as were institutions such the Cavalry Barracks (built 1795), York Cemetery and The Friends Retreat (a ‘private lunatic asylum’).
- 6.6 Gate Fulford village itself was beginning to expand beyond its medieval boundaries by 1853, with housing development to the north of the Heslington road. In contrast Water Fulford remained as a settlement shrunken from its original medieval extent.
- 6.7 The construction of a new parish church was completed in 1866 on land near the corner of Heslington Road, as a response to the growing number of inhabitants
- 6.8 By the time of the 1893 Ordnance Survey map, the suburbanisation of the northern part of Fulford parish was increasing, and there was further expansion northwards from the village itself.

6.9 The construction of York City Asylum took place between 1899 and 1906 on land at the border with Naburn parish.

6.10 Prospect Terrace, leading westwards from Fulford Main Street was begun in 1905, and this can be seen as the first development in the village of essentially urban character.

7.4 Modern Landscape

7.1 Most of the development area comprises intensively cultivated arable fields with degraded remnants of hedge line containing elder and hawthorn. The area around Germany Beck has been greatly modified by drainage engineering over the years and subjected to substantial 'improvement' by drainage engineers in the 1970s resulting in a rather uniform characterless watercourse. The stretch of the beck that runs eastwards from the A19 crossing is regularly cleaned out by a tracked excavating machine, leaving an entirely artificial dike. Germany Beck is a reasonably deep, steep-sided channel, much of the beck catchment area is intensively cultivated land, with feeder channels draining fertilizer leachate and large quantities of silt into the beck.

7.2 Fulford Cemetery, a feature that has greatly altered the character of the land south of Germany Beck, was consecrated in 1915 and was accessed via a new road and bridge. In 1948 this area of Fulford saw the laying out of the recreation ground on the south bank of the Germany Beck between the cemetery and the A19. This involved dumping of soil so as to form a relatively level area of land, altering the natural contours.

7.3 During the 20th century Fulford expanded into the suburbs of York losing much of its rural identity. The 1940s and 1950s saw the building of the council housing on Fordlands Road, and in the late 1950's and 1960's new estates were built in the Cherrywood Crescent and Heslington Lane areas. The population has increased

rapidly with the growth in housing and infrastructure network, along with the establishment of schools and a thriving business sector.

- 7.4 The insertion of a municipal tip on land to the south of Germany Lane, reflects the different ways that marginal land was being utilised for differing purposes.

8. The Battle of Fulford

8.1 *General*

- 8.1.1 The battle of Fulford took place on the 20th September 1066, when the Norwegian invading forces, under the command of Harald Hadrada and Earl Tostig, advanced towards York from Riccall and were met by an English army under the command of the Counts Morcar and Edwin. The English were defeated in the ensuing battle and the citizens of York capitulated to the Norwegians. However, a second English army under the command of Harold Godwinson defeated the invaders' forces at Stamford Bridge five days later.

- 8.1.2 The Norwegian invasion of 1066 is of national significance, both in its own right and in terms of its effects on the ability of the English to repulse the subsequent Norman invasion of William I. Within this context, the battlefields of Stamford Bridge and Fulford should be regarded as potentially significant historical sites. However, whilst the battlefield of Stamford Bridge is sufficiently well-known enough to have secured statutory protection, there is currently no consensus of opinion as to the exact location of the Fulford battlefield. This section reviews the available evidence in an effort to pinpoint its likely location.

8.2 Historical Sources

- 8.2.1 All the published accounts of the battle of Fulford, all accounts of the tactics employed there, all postulations of the likely sequence of battlefield events and all the diverse theories regarding the actual location of the battle are ultimately based

on the same limited series of primary historical sources. These include the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, the *Annals of Florence of Worcester*, Symeon of Durham's *Historia Regum*, and the Icelandic *Saga of Harald*. However, the interpretation of these sources is not straightforward. Some were contemporary or near-contemporary with the events they describe, whilst others were written several hundred years later. Similarly, the purpose for which the accounts were originally written is of paramount importance in terms of determining their historical reliability.

- 8.2.2 It is a generally-accepted historiographic principle that the closer in date a document is to the events that it describes, the more likely it is to be accurate. This is because early documents may make use of eyewitness accounts or be compilations of reports gathered within living memory. In contrast, later accounts tend to be less accurate in that they rely heavily on details cribbed from these earlier documents, embellished by unsubstantiated details and hearsay. The earliest account of the battle is contained within the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. This is one of the most consistently reliable and comprehensive of medieval sources, and covers the period from the ninth century until 1154. It took the form of a yearly account of significant events that was compiled and maintained at five separate monastic sites. The fact that the chronicle is an annual account means that each yearly entry was compiled soon after the events it describes. The Norwegian victory is recorded in all three versions of the chronicle that were still being compiled at the time (Versions C, D and E):

Chronicle C

“Then before Harold could get there Earl Edwin and Earl Morcar assembled from their earldom as large a force as they could muster, and fought against the invaders and caused them heavy casualties and many of the English host were killed, and drowned and put to flight, and the Norwegians remained masters of the field.....And then after the fight Harold, king of Norway, and Earl Tosti went into York....”

Chronicle D

“Meanwhile Earl Tosti came into the Humber with sixty ships and Earl Edwin came with a land force and drove him out, and the sailors deserted him. And he went to Scotland with twelve small vessels and there Harold, king of Norway, met him with three hundred ships, and Tosti submitted to him and became his vassal; and they both went up the Humber until they reached York. And there Earl Edwin and Morcar his brother fought against them: but the Norwegians had the victory”.

Chronicle E

“He (Morcar) went to Scotland with twelve small vessels and Harold, king of Norway, met him with three hundred ships, and Tosti submitted to him; and they both went up the Humber until they reached York. And Earl Morcar and Earl Edwin fought against them, and the king of Norway had the victory”.

8.2.3 Version E of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (the ‘Abingdon Chronicle’) is written throughout in scripts of mid-11th century date and can therefore be seen as a contemporary record. Version D was transcribed in the 12th century and Version E was copied in the 12th century from a version compiled at Canterbury. None of the extant versions name Fulford as the site of the battle.

8.2.4 The annals ascribed to Florence of Worcester were probably written between 1118 and 1140 (DeVries 2003, 7). Florence, now thought to have been a monk called John, is believed to have used earlier sources for his narrative, particularly the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. These he used “with discretion and care” (*ibid.* 204), and was “on the whole a very accurate, if somewhat unimaginative writer” (*ibid.*). Florence’s version of events reads:

“....the two brother earls, Edwin and Morcar, at the head of a large army fought a battle with the Norwegians on the northern bank of the river Ouse near York...

They fought so bravely at the onset that many of the enemy were overthrown; but after a long contest the English were unable to withstand the attacks of the Norwegians and fled with great loss. More were drowned in the river than slain on the field.”

Again, there is no specific reference to Fulford.

8.2.5 Henry of Huntingdon wrote a chronicle, the *Histora Anglorum*, between 1133 and 1154. In it he states that “*The site of the battle is still pointed out on the south side of the city*” (DeVries 2003, 255), but he does not specifically name Fulford as its location.

8.2.6 During the early 12th century an unfinished copy of Florence of Worcester’s chronicle was sent to Durham. There, Symeon of Durham incorporated elements of it into his *Historia Regum*, a chronicle of events from the middle of the 11th century down to 1153 (Stevenson ed. 1855). Symeon narrates how:

“Earl Tosti with his fleet met (Harald)...and with a quick voyage they entered the mouth of the river Humber, and so sailing up the Ouse they landed at a place called Richale, and took York after a hard struggle.....the brother Earls Edwin and Morkar, with a large army, joined battle with the Norwegians at Fulford, near York, on the northern bank of the river Ouse, and at the first onset of the fight they overthrew many; but after a long continuance of the contest, the Angles, unable to resist the force of the Norwegians, turned their backs not without some loss of their men, and many more of them were drowned in the river than fell in the field. The Norwegians were masters of the field of slaughter....”

This is the first specific reference to the battle having taken place at Fulford.

8.2.7 The fullest account of the battle is the Icelandic *Saga of King Harald*, written some 200 years after the event by Snorre Sturlason (Laing 1930, and Magnusson

and Palsson eds. 1966). The saga narrates how Harald drew up his forces with the left flank up against the river and the right flank with the weakest troops at a dyke where there was a deep and wide swamp. The English brought their army down the riverbank in close formation, then advanced along the line of the dyke, pushing the Norwegians before them. When they drew abreast of Harald he launched a savage counter-attack, which broke the English forces. Many were killed, the rest fleeing back towards York or down river. Most however fled into the swamp, where the dead piled up to such an extent that the Norwegians could cross without getting their feet wet.

8.2.8 The account in *Harald's Saga* contains a wealth of detail. However, it does need to be treated with caution in that 13th century Icelandic sagas should not be regarded as statements of historical fact, but rather as works of literature. The sagas themselves were based upon two hundred year old oral tales that were brought by the Icelandic settlers from their Norwegian homeland. They were compiled and embellished by highly-literate Christians who sought to celebrate a heroic warrior culture that no longer existed. In this respect, they are more akin in spirit, if not in content, to the medieval courtly romances based on the myths of King Arthur. This is aptly demonstrated in the assertion that the Norwegians could cross the swamp on the bodies of the dead English without getting their feet wet. Clearly, this is a picturesque literary device intended to enthrall and thrill an audience, rather than a bald statement of fact. *Harald's Saga*, then, is essentially a hagiography that is more concerned with eulogising the deeds of a revered Norwegian king, rather than providing an accurate historical narrative.

8.2.9 The limitations of the Icelandic sagas as historical sources are well-known and indeed have been discussed in the secondary literature for over 50 years. For example Brooks, writing of *Harald's Saga* in 1956, states:

"It is a pity that the most detailed account of the battle is that given by Snorri, the thirteenth century Icelandic collector of sagas [who wrote Harald's Saga] and

this for two reasons, In the first place, he was obviously quite unaware of local topography. He imagined that Riccal, Fulford and Stamford Bridge were all close together and virtually under the walls of York. But worse than this is the fact that he obviously visualised the battle in terms of thirteenth century tactics; his references to horsemen, archers and castles all lead us to that conclusion...Snorri was dependant, in the last resource, on verbal tradition and a bon mot... [that] appealing strongly to the Viking sense of humour, would be remembered far more accurately that the actual details of the fighting” (Brooks 1956 p.14).

8.3 Discussion

8.3.1 Of the primary sources listed above, only one cites Fulford as the location of the battle. However, as this historic appraisal makes clear, there are at least three separate settlement foci of that name; the original Anglo-Saxon settlement centered on St. Oswald’s church, Gate Fulford and Water Fulford. Since ‘Gate’ and ‘Water’ are both post-Conquest prefixes, it is impossible to identify which specific location Symeon of Durham is referring to. In all probability ‘Fulford’ in the context of Symeon’s narrative is used as a general term for the locality, rather than as a specific location. This would not be unusual; the battle of Hastings took place eight miles away from the town at what is now known as Battle. In this case, the battlefield is only known today because William I erected an abbey on the site to give thanks for his victory. With this in mind, the ‘battle of Fulford’ should only be located to the general area, rather than the immediate vicinity of the present village.

8.3.2 As the outline above demonstrates, it is therefore abundantly clear that the primary sources are simply not detailed enough to allow the actual battlefield site to be pin-pointed. Because of this, it is possible to propose a number of different sites as possible candidates, none of which can be verified. Some alternate battlefield hypotheses are given below:

- 8.3.3 Ormsby, commenting on the battle in the 19th century, put the battlefield at Water Fulford, near Bishopthorpe Palace and Fulford Ings (Ormsby 1895).
- 8.3.4 Professor Kelly DeVries, one of the most eminent scholars of the Norwegian Invasion, closely follows the account given in Harald's saga, with the left flank of the Norwegian army against the river Ouse and the right flank against the dyke bordering the swamp. His plan reconstruction of the order of battle shows the dyke running at right angles to the front and parallel with the Ouse. Both armies are deployed across the line of a road (DeVries 2003, 257).
- 8.3.5 DeVries' careful reconstruction of the battle is unfortunately unlocated since his siting of the battlefield on the line of a road immediately suggests two equally plausible locations. One is along the line of the Roman road and the other is along the line of the present-day A19. As the author himself states "*Today Fulford Gate is a densely inhabited suburb of York, and so it is difficult to see what the topography was on which the two sides were fighting. Nor do the original sources assist us here, for they describe little of the terrain*" (DeVries 2003, 255). DeVries' reservations regarding the exact location of the battlefield are echoed by the Battlefields Trust. Their critique of DeVries' book, published on their website, reads "*The battle plan is simplistic in the extreme, but understandable given the uncertainties about the location of the action*" (<http://www.battlefieldstrust.com>. Accessed 24/02/05). Similarly, their critique of "1066: The Year of the Three Battles" by McLynn, states that it "*suffers from an uncritical acceptance not only of the primary sources such as the Scandinavian Sagas, but also of the various 19th and 20th century embellishments of what is a very sparsely-documented action*" (Battlefields Trust, *ibid.*) The review goes on to state "*Brief discussions are also to be found in several battlefield studies, but they are no more than a footnote to the events of Stamford Bridge. None is particularly satisfactory as none has adequately understood the battlefield*" (Battlefields Trust, *Ibid.*).

- 8.3.6 An alternate reading of Harald's saga could suggest Tilmire as the swamp in which so many English are reputed to have drowned. This is a former marsh lying at the eastern end of a raised block of land that stretches eastwards from Fulford Ings. This area was apparently uncultivated rough pasture at the time. It would offer flank protection to the English, with the Ouse on the west and Tilmire on the east, and over the Ings at least, would allow the defending army the option of movement without being obstructed by a settlement with buildings, gardens and paddocks.
- 8.3.7 Further likely candidates for the battlefield site are hinted at in the etymology of Wheldrake, and the possible etymology of Naburn, two villages which butt on to the south of Fulford parish, both of which contain references to death. There is obviously a leap in assumption involved in using a possible derivation of a place-name to provide evidence for a battlefield, but even so this may be a hint that violent death once occurred in the area south of Fulford.
- 8.3.8 As can be seen, there is no consensus of opinion as to the exact location of the battlefield site. To suggest that there is would be a gross distortion of the truth. Nor is there any way to verify the location of the site except through archaeological investigation. This does not mean via studies of likely military tactics, deployments or topographic studies of militarily-suitable locations. Such studies can propose more or less-likely locations, but since studies of this nature will invariably be based on the details of the campaign that are given in the primary sources, they will inevitably be subjective interpretations of data that cannot be verified. This is clearly demonstrated by the confusion inherent in the existing secondary literature that has been highlighted in paragraph 8.3.5 above. Any claim to have identified the actual site of the battlefield that is not supported by hard physical evidence on the ground is therefore bogus. The only way to conclusively locate the battlefield is through a location of unambiguous archaeological evidence, such as weapon scatters, human remains, charnel pits or military artifacts of the correct epoch. As English Heritage states "*archaeological*

methods, especially combined with historical research, can increase our understanding of battles by reconstructing the contemporary landscape and by studying the spread of battle-related objects” (English Heritage 1995a, 5). Further, English Heritage “recommend that only planned field research should be carried out” (English Heritage, ibid). In this respect, English Heritage’s advice regarding the archaeological investigation of battlefield sites echoes its position regarding archaeological investigation in general- “it is normally only through sample excavation that questions relating to the importance of archaeological remains can be resolved” (English Heritage 1995b, 9).

- 8.3.9 Of all the possible locations of the battlefield that have been proposed over the years, only one has been subjected to an intensive, prolonged and thorough archaeological investigation of the type recommended by English Heritage. That site is the location of the proposed development. Over the years, this site has been subjected to programmes of Fieldwalking, Geophysical Survey, Trial Trenching (of which a total of 76 have been excavated) and a Metal Detecting Survey. All these phases of work have been undertaken in accordance with detailed project specifications prepared in accordance with the City Of York Archaeologist. All these phases of work have been undertaken to IFA guidelines by a professional archaeological consultancy with a record of over 15 years experience of undertaking major projects within York and its environs. All the work was conducted by trained professionally-employed archaeological staff, each of whom have a minimum of five years full-time field experience and are educated to First or Higher Degree level. All these phases of work have been completed and accepted by the City Of York Archaeologist as meeting the requirements laid out in the relevant project specifications. In this entire programme of work, not one single shred of evidence has come to light that could identify the site as the location of the Battle of Fulford.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The primary objective of this assessment was to locate and describe the landscape in which the battle of Fulford took place. Whilst the historic landscape of the Fulford area has been described in detail, it has not been possible, for the reasons given above, to locate the actual site of the battle. What can be said is that there is no evidence at all that it took place on the site of the proposed development.
- 9.2 In terms of the second objective, it is clear that, in general terms, the development of Fulford has obviously prejudiced a visual and conceptual understanding of the landscape, in that there is now no consensus of opinion as to where the actual battlefield was located. As stated by DeVries (quoted above) modern development has obscured the landscape and precluded a reconstruction of the topography of the pre-Conquest landscape.
- 9.3 Since the battlefield remains unlocated, it is impossible to state whether development has impinged upon it. What can be said is that the 20th century expansion of Fulford into a suburb of York and the construction of the ring road has not provided the evidence for the battle. Even the modern cemetery, which is constantly being re-excavated, has not produced any artefactual evidence. Neither has the construction of Fordlands Road and the neighbouring housing estate.
- 9.4 The modern day landscape is greatly changed from the landscape of 1066. The natural watercourse of the Ouse has been altered by the insertion of locks at Naburn preventing the tidal surge. The profile of Germany Beck, a drainage feature that was created in the 15th century, has been altered by dredging throughout the 20th century.
- 9.5 The vistas south of Fulford have been altered by the reclamation of low lying swampy areas into large arable fields where the natural woodland species, and even many of the hedges have been removed. The insertion of housing estates on the higher ground has dramatically changed the appearance of the landscape. The

location and expansion of the cemetery along the southern bank of Germany Beck has also changed the natural topography of the area, as has the recreation ground. The construction of the A64 ring road and the up grade of the A19 also alters the perception of the landscape. A key feature of the best-preserved British battlefields is a landscape *"where visitors' appreciation of history is least distracted by inappropriate elements in the landscape of the battlefield"* (English Heritage 1995, 5). Unfortunately, the entire locale of Fulford has been the subject of wholesale remodeling since 1066. It is therefore highly unlikely that the 1066 battlefield site still exists in any meaningful form. Indeed, it is this fact that has largely precluded the positive identification of the actual battle site in the past (DeVries, *ibid.*).

- 9.6 It is impossible to state what impact the proposed development would have upon the battlefield since there is no evidence to suggest that the battlefield lies in the immediate vicinity of the development site. For all of the reasons discussed above, evidence has not been forthcoming that would allow the location of the engagement to be securely mapped. In this respect, the locality does not fully satisfy the high degree of proof- more than tradition or likelihood- that is necessary to justify its inclusion on English Heritage's Battlefield Register.
- 9.7 There is no disputing that a battle took place in the vicinity of Fulford in 1066. However, its exact location is still a matter of debate. The fact is that no consensus of opinion currently exists as to its likely location. Within this context, the proposed development site is the only probable location that has been subjected to rigorous archaeological investigation. No archaeological evidence of any kind has been recovered to suggest that development site was the site of the battle.

10. Sources

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Figure 1. Site Location

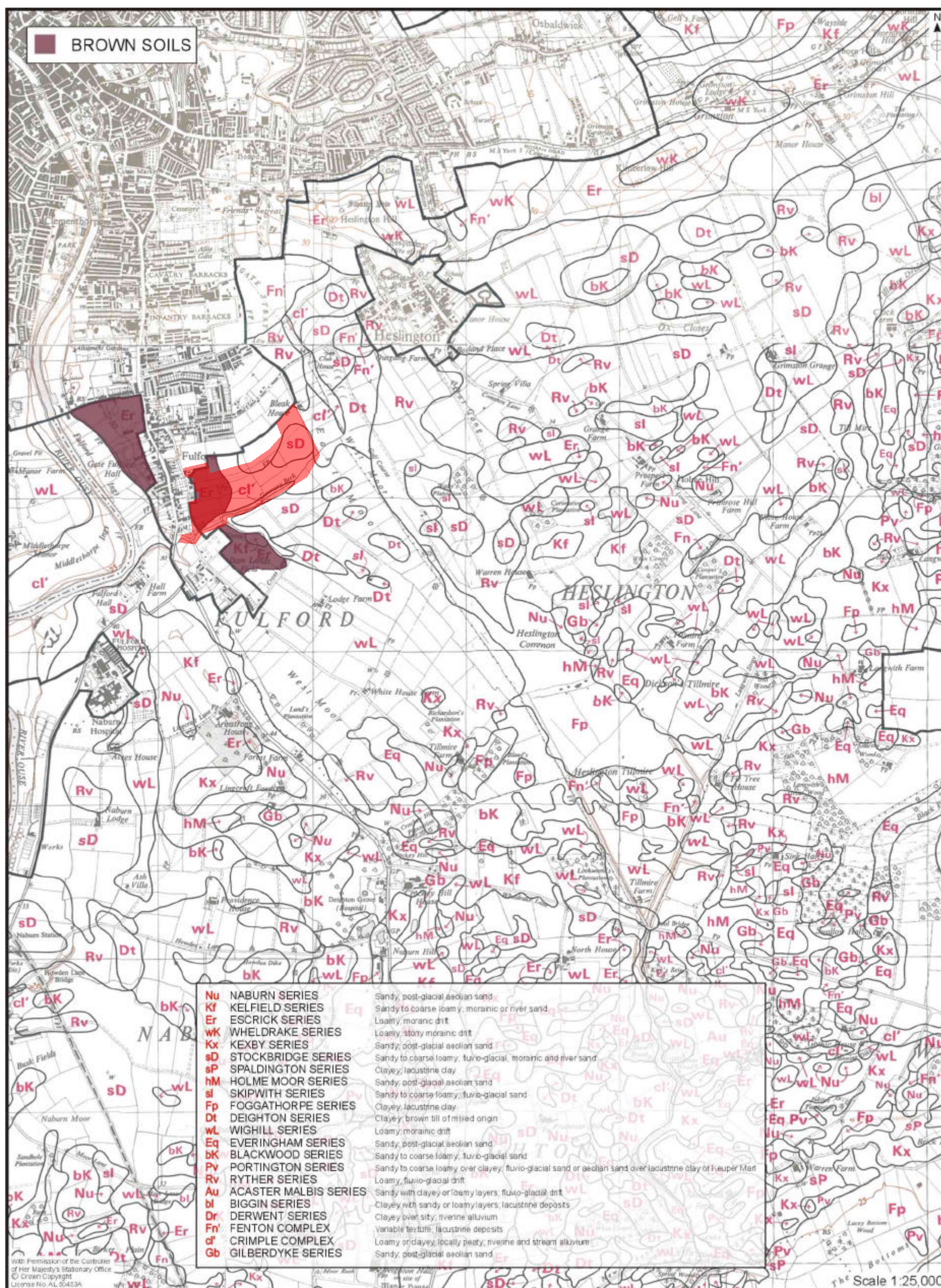


Figure 2. Soil Survey

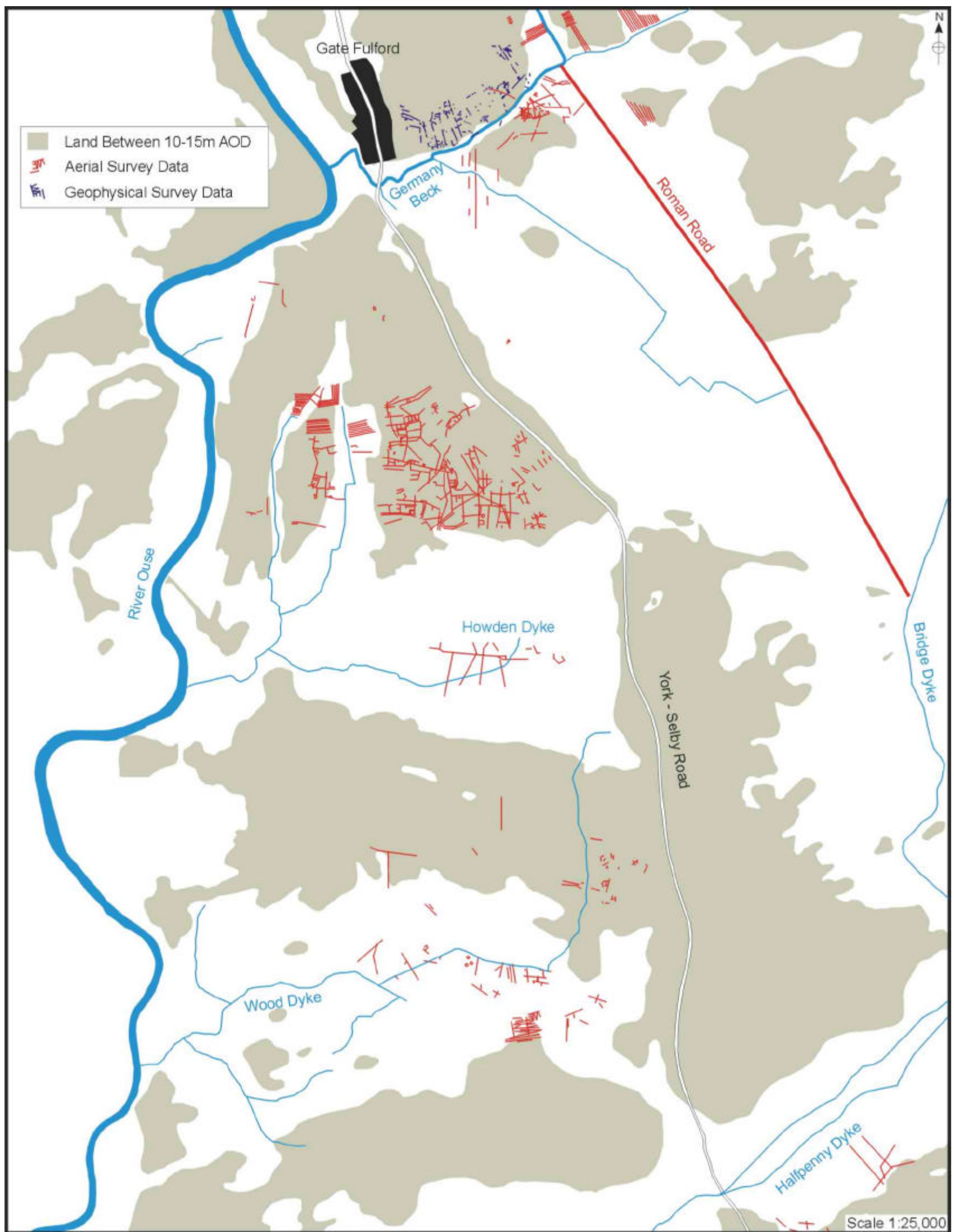


Figure 3. Fulford Landscape



Figure 4. 1745 Map of Fulford

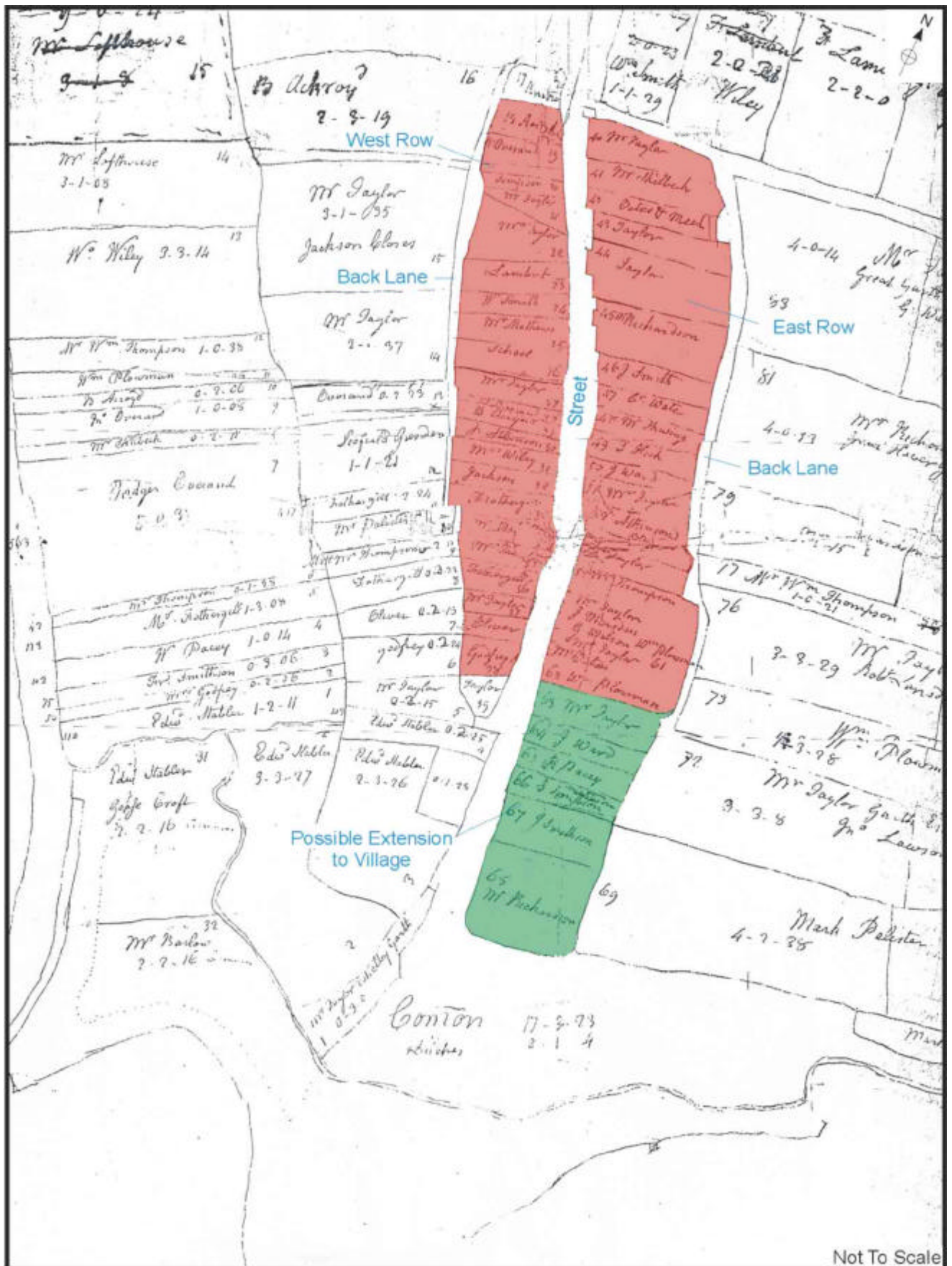


Figure 5. 1759 Map of Gate Fulford



Figure 6. 1767 Map of Water Fulford

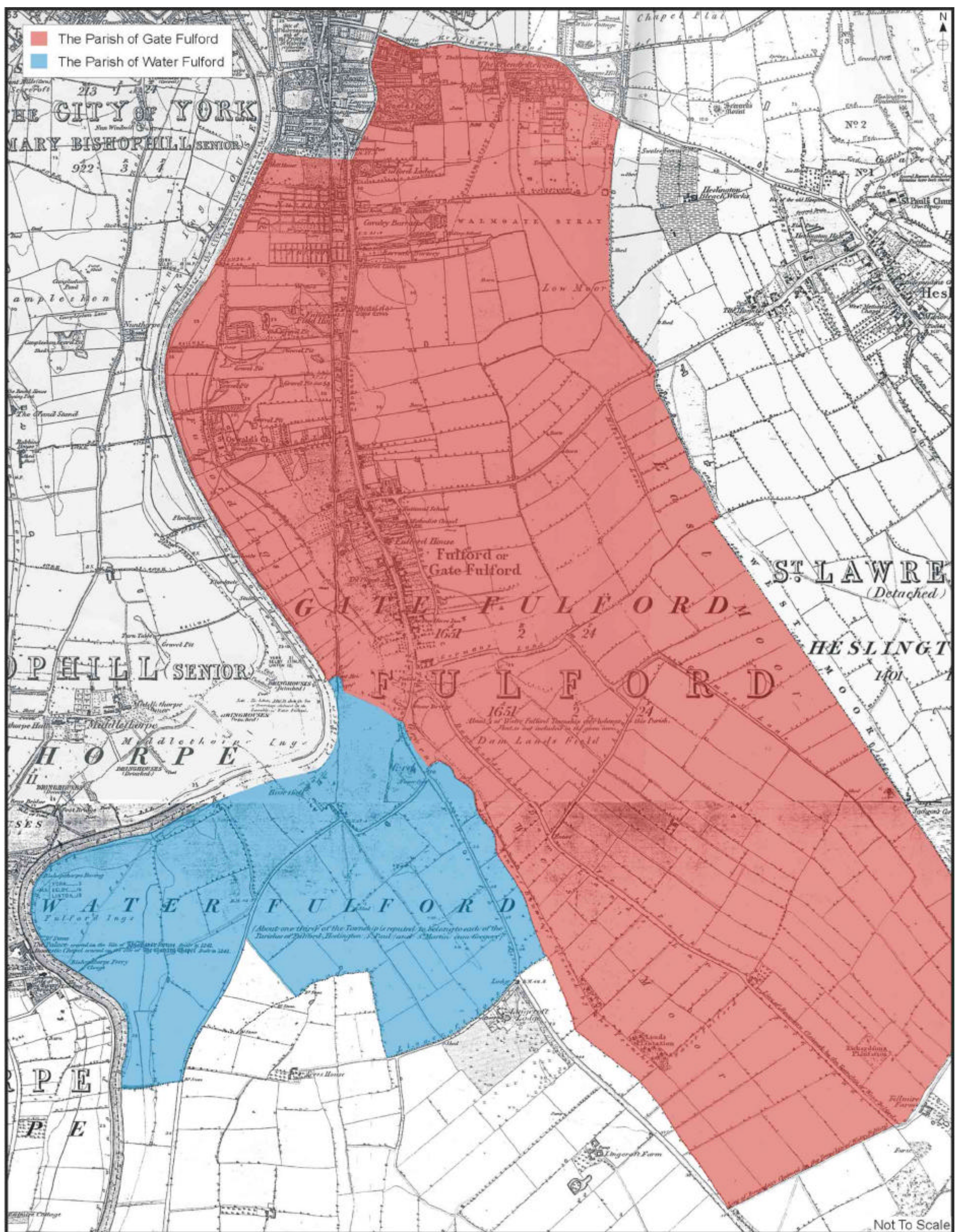




Plate 1. East Moor, Facing North



Plate 2. East Moor, Germany Beck and Old Abbey Crofts, Facing East

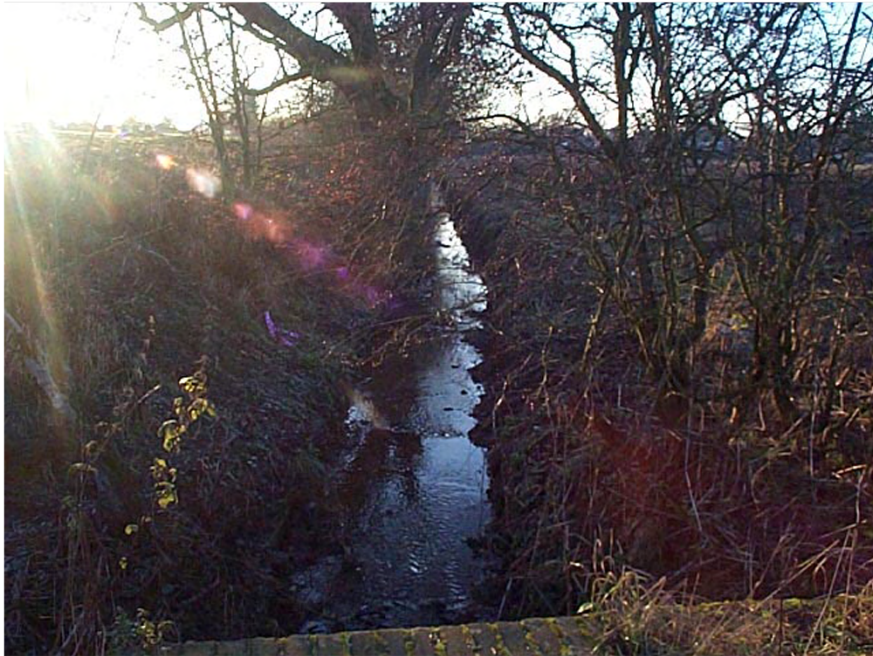


Plate 3. Germany Beck, Facing West



Plate 4. Germany Beck and Bridge, Facing North east



Plate 5. Junction of Germany Beck and Dyke, Facing East



Plate 6. Entrance to Damlands, Facing South



Plate 7. Damlands and Dyke, Facing South



Plate 8. Hedges of Open Field, Facing East