

THE ORIGINS OF COMMONS AND WASTES

With particular reference to Blaxhall

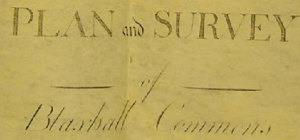
- ❖ Commons are found in all parts of the country, from the highest mountain to city centres.
- ❖ The commons that remain today are only a tiny fragment of the area they once covered.
- ❖ During the Middle Ages common land was found extensively across Britain. At this time most fields, meadows, pastures, woods and even some wetlands were shared by local communities, at least for part of the year.

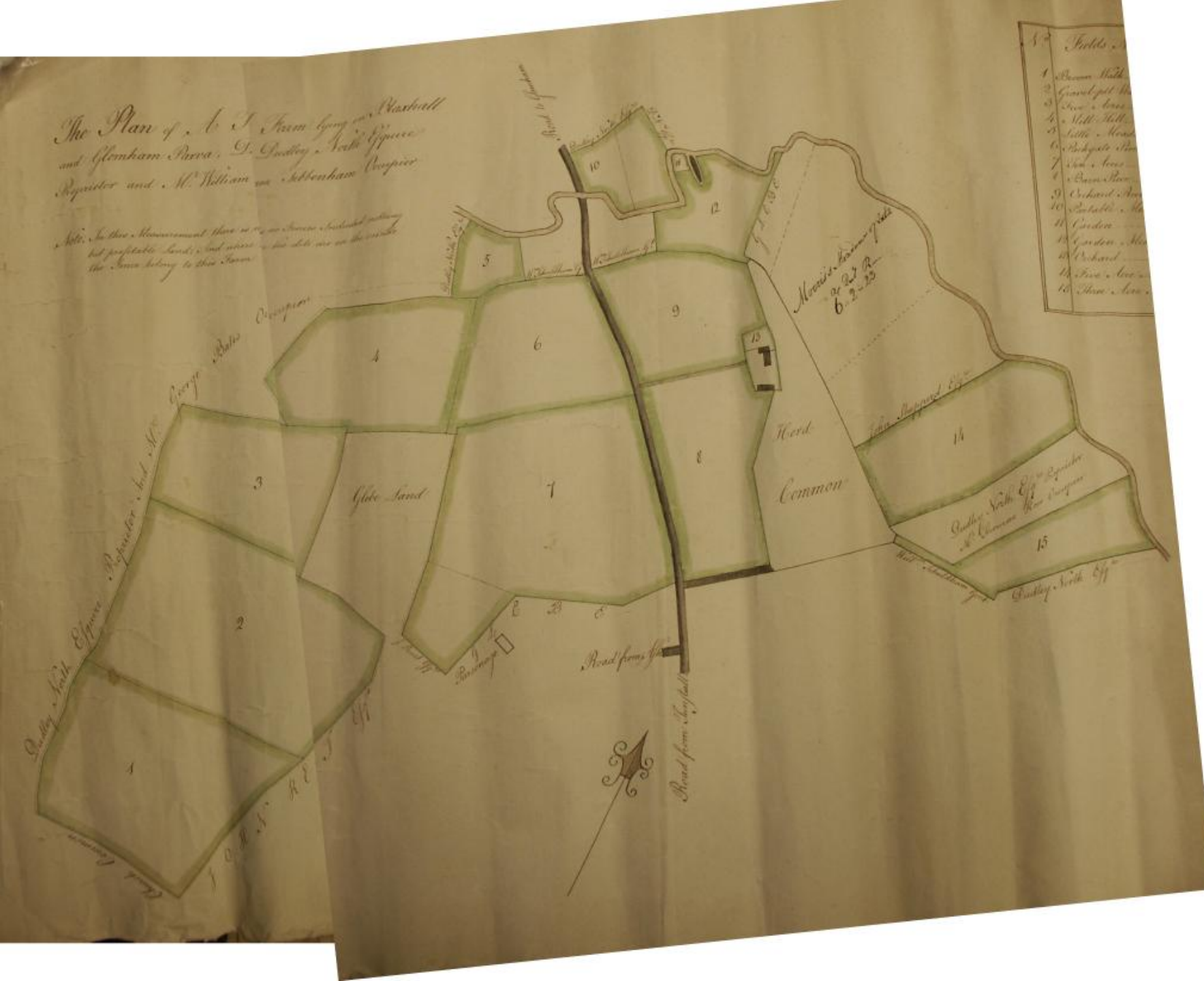
- ❖ In the parts of the country with better quality soils and large rural populations, areas were divided into tight knit and self-sufficient communities called manors.
- ❖ The people within each manor would have enough land on which to grow their crops, pasture to graze their animals, a few meadows for hay and woodland to gather firewood and building timber.
- ❖ Nearly all of this was 'common land', meaning it was shared and everyone could benefit.

- ❖ The commons found today are survivors from that time. There have been massive reductions in the area of common, as people with common rights have been removed, leaving private landowners in sole occupation – a process known as ‘enclosure’.
- ❖ This process of enclosure occurred at various periods including the 1200s, the mid 1500s (Blaxhall’s area) and especially during the main era of parliamentary enclosures in the 18th and 19th centuries.

- ❖ Common land derives from a time when a high proportion of resources were shared. The word 'common' comes from the Middle English term 'commune' with similar roots in French, Latin and ancient Indo-European languages. The word effectively means 'general' or 'universal' – something that is shared.
- ❖ Human societies have always exploited a mix of shared and individual resources. Increasingly, western society has focused on exclusive property rights, where a person actually owns land, can exercise strong control over it and indeed determine whether anybody visits it at all. However, such a concept is essentially modern.

Here we look at an 1809 map of the Blaxhall commons. Probably produced by a North family descendant.

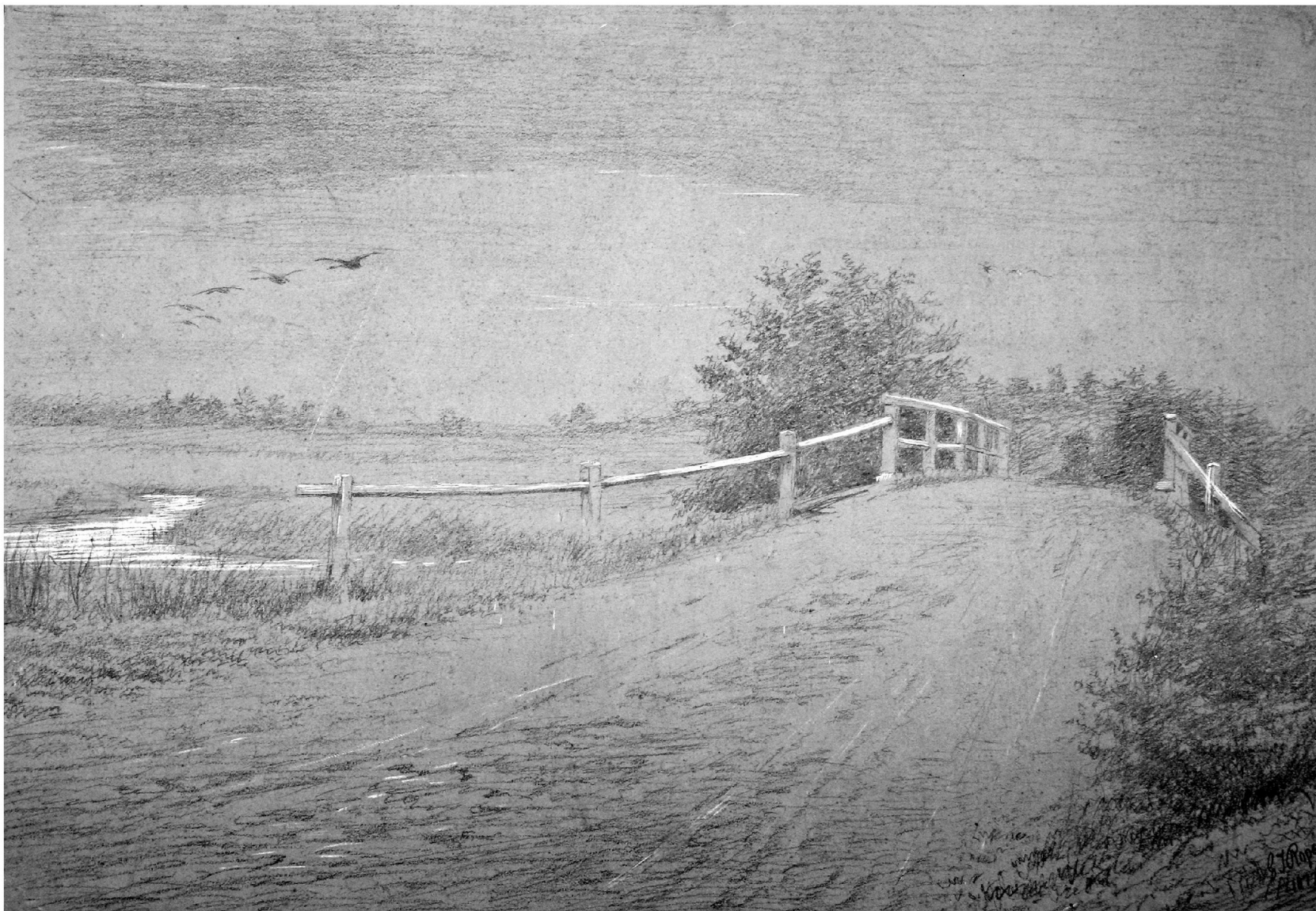




A map of Glebe Farm and its lands around 1790 when it became part of the Little Glemham estate.

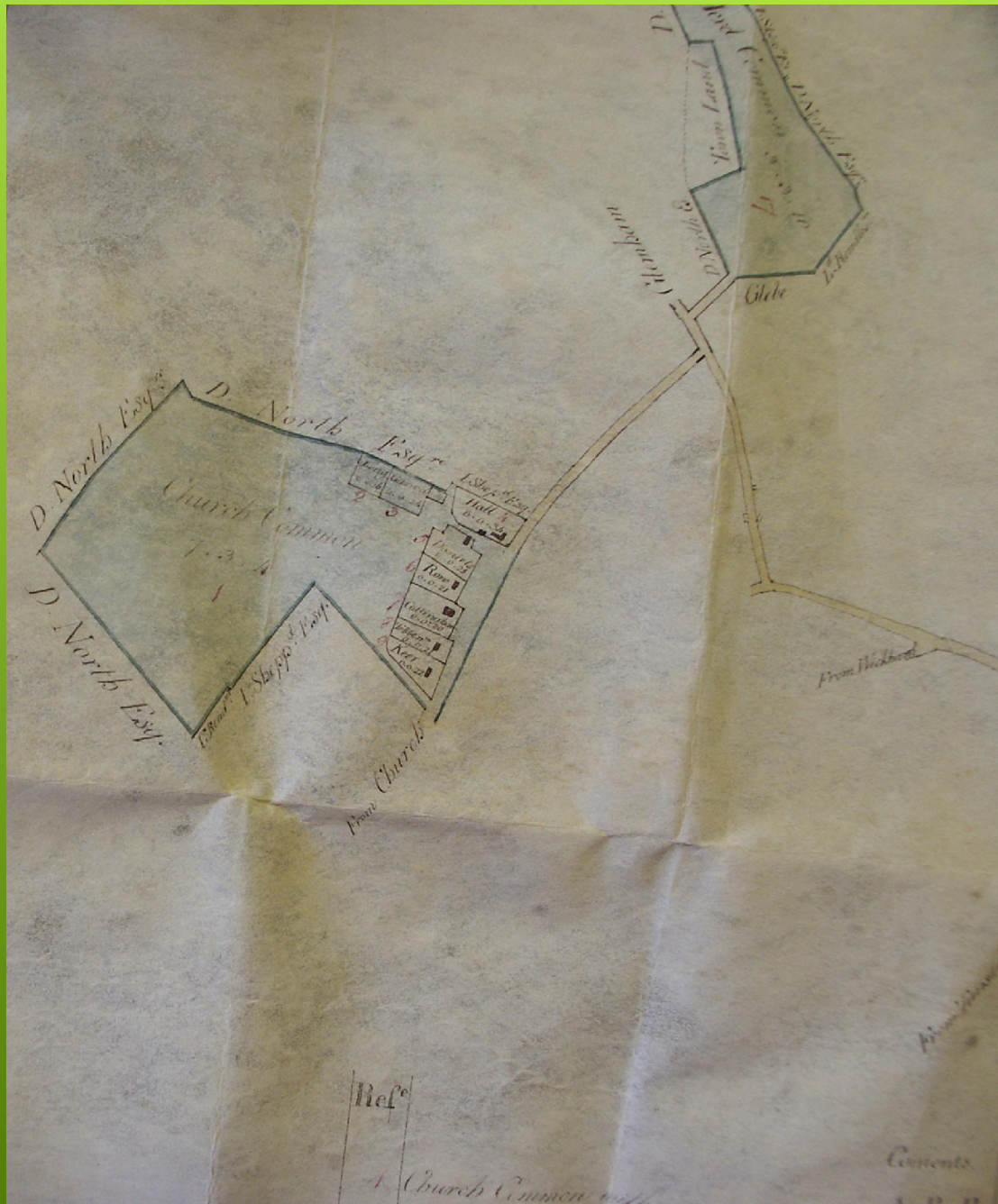
During part of its history it was also known as Water Common and Hard Common (probably a corruption of Herd). Once the workhouse was closed in the 1830s became known as Workhouse Common!

Cattle could graze early before going onto the marshes proper.



Langham Bridge
about 1880 –
Workhouse Common
would be to the far
left.

*By George Thomas Rope –
Grove Farm*



Church Common or Stone Common as we know it today has kept the same shape for at least the last 300 years.

Known as Church Common because of its proximity to St Peter's. Became Stone Common when the large glacial erratic was found in the 1840s/50s.





Known as Cole's Heath in 1520; Little Common in the 1780s then Mill Common soon after that date when the mill was built.



Sometime between 1809 and 1838 (this map) areas of the common were given over to allotments.

The Allotment System started around 1830, this was an attraction to landowners who could rent out pieces of waste for allotments.



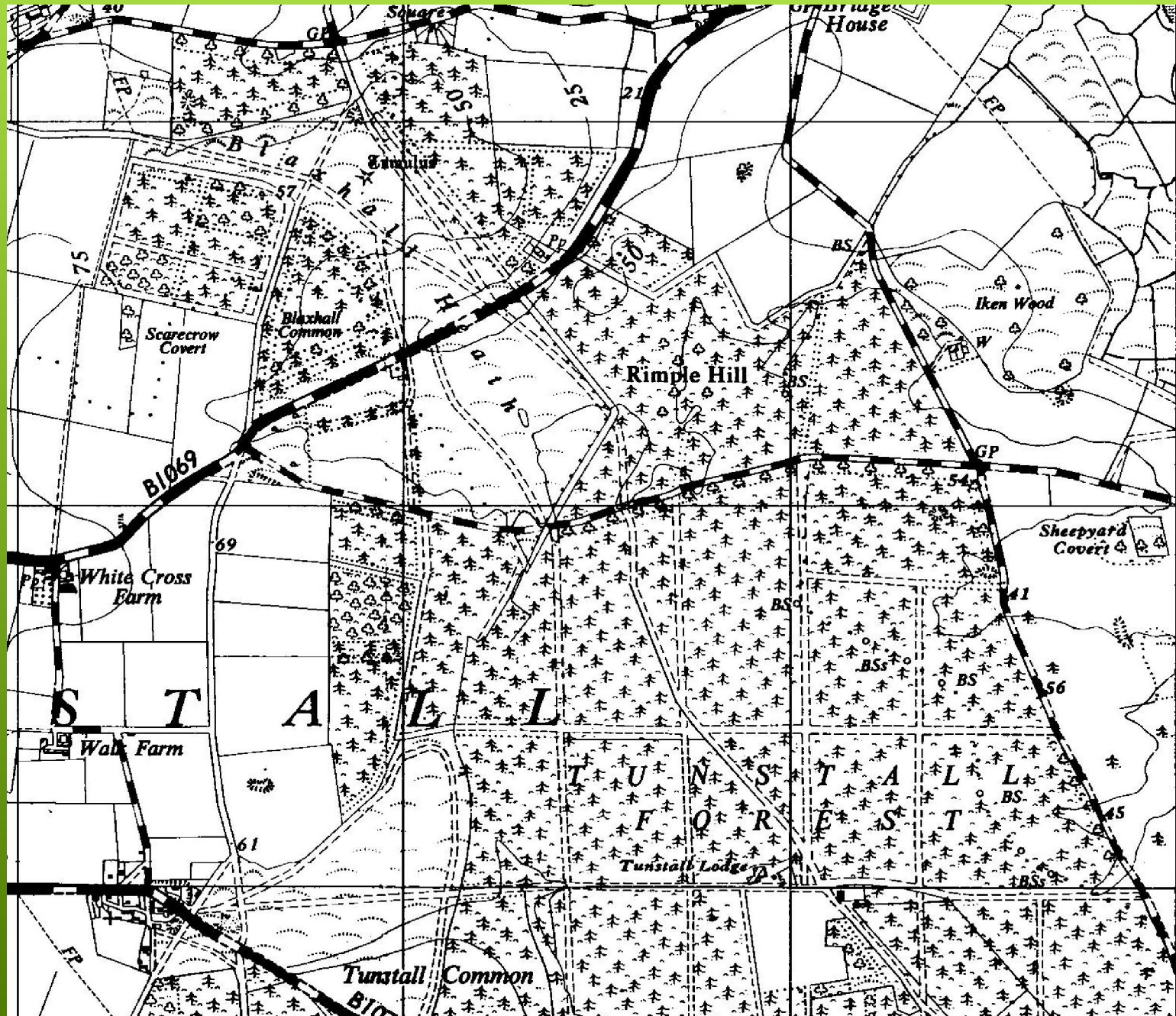
Mill Common
circa 1910 – Joyce &
Joe Iszard's house in
the background.

*Photograph by Ada
Mannall – Waterloo House,
Stone Common*





Blaxhall Common or Blaxhall Great Common, as seen in this 1780s map, has this strange shape.



Parish boundary goes around three sides of the Great Common.

Early 13th and 14th century owners had 'right of common'.

Either side would once have been the parish of Dunningworth later (1550) to be absorbed into Tunstall.



OWNERSHIP

All the commons and 'wastes' in Blaxhall have always had an owner. Until very recently these lands were invested in the title of Lord of the Manor of Blaxhall – in other words if you had the title you also had the lands. For 500 years this was held by the Glemham family at Glemham Hall; they sold the estate to the North family around 1700 and that family retained it until 1928 when it was the turn of the Cobbold family to own the Little Glemham estate and along with it various Lord of the Manor titles.

In 1994 the title of Lord of the Manor of Blaxhall and the lands that went with it were sold by Patrick Cobbold to David Pugh of Gorse Farm, Blaxhall.

In 1994 David Pugh sold on the title to Michael Prevost along with Stone Common and the Great Common. David Pugh retained to himself Workhouse Common, Mill Common and Mill Common allotments.

RIGHTS OF COMMON

Many commons have various common rights that go with the commons. It is usually the property rather than the individual that is invested with the rights. There are six main types that exist today:

Pasturage – *the right to graze livestock*

Estovers – *the right to gather animal bedding, sticks and wood*

Turbary - *the right to cut peat and turfs for fuel (known as flags in Blaxhall)*

Pannage – *grazing pigs in woodland*

Piscary - *the right to take fish*

Common in the Soil - *the right to take minerals*

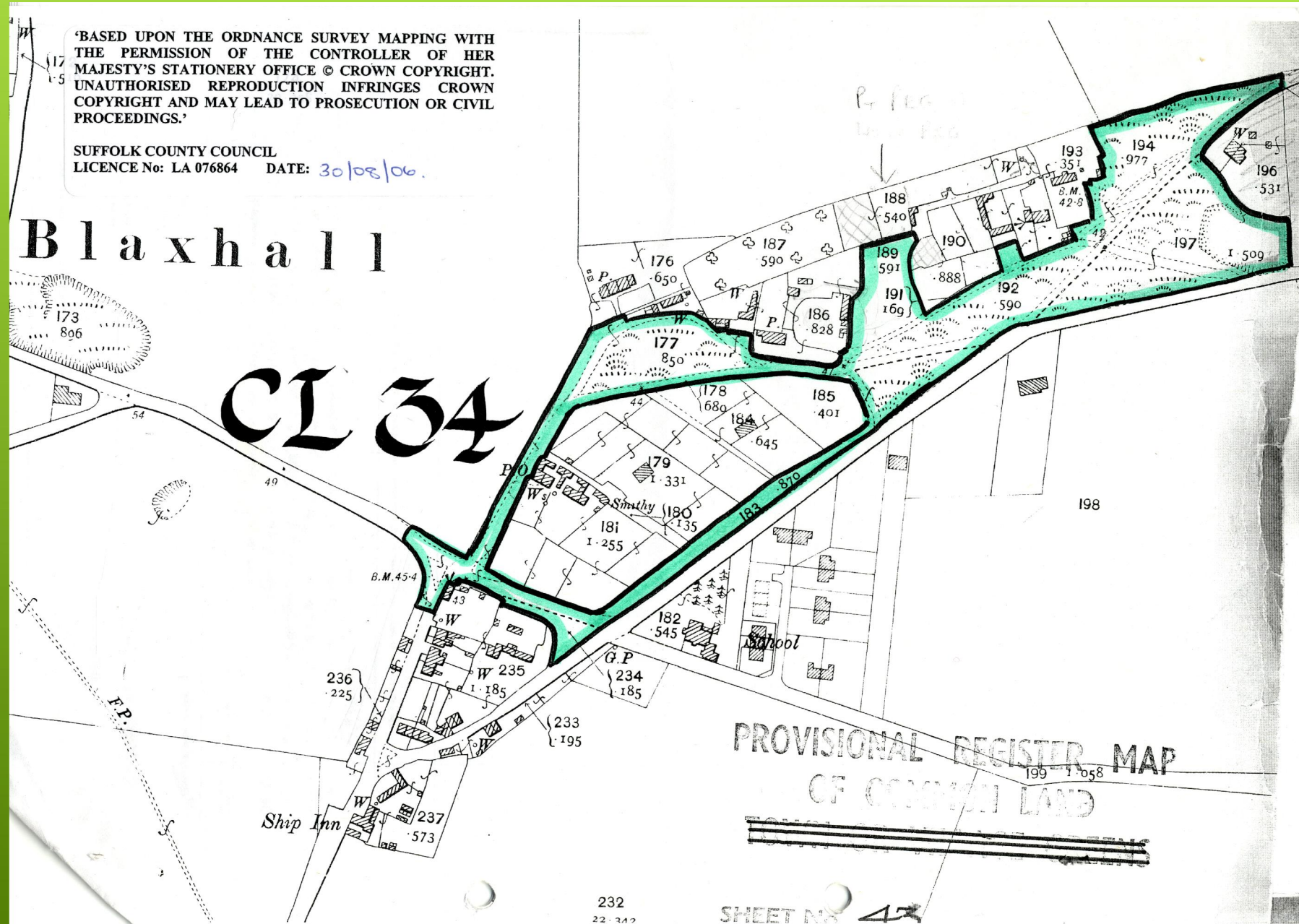
These rights are rarely written down and there has been no evidence that there were Rights of Common going with any of the Blaxhall commons.

'BASED UPON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPPING WITH
THE PERMISSION OF THE CONTROLLER OF HER
MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE © CROWN COPYRIGHT.
UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION INFRINGES CROWN
COPYRIGHT AND MAY LEAD TO PROSECUTION OR CIVIL
PROCEEDINGS.'

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL
LICENCE No: LA 076864 DATE: 30/08/06.

Blaxhall

CL 34



In 1965 there was the opportunity to register common land, so it was incorporated into Government legislation.

Unfortunately, not all of the Blaxhall commons were included in the registration (note the allotments – still part of the 'waste' of Blaxhall were not included).

OPEN ACCESS

All the Blaxhall commons, that is; Stone Common, Workhouse Common, Mill Common and the Great Common have Open Access designation.

You can access some land across England without using paths – this land is known as ‘open access land’. Your right to access this land is called the ‘right to roam’, or ‘freedom to roam’. But there are rules!

The Great Common is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Its reason for notification was that it is a rare fragment of once extensive ‘Sandlings’ heath and is host to many rare and fragile plants and animals like; Heath Bedstraw, Bell Heather and Harebell. Animals like Ant Lion, Silver-studded Blue butterfly, Woodlark, Nightjar and still the odd Glowworm!

