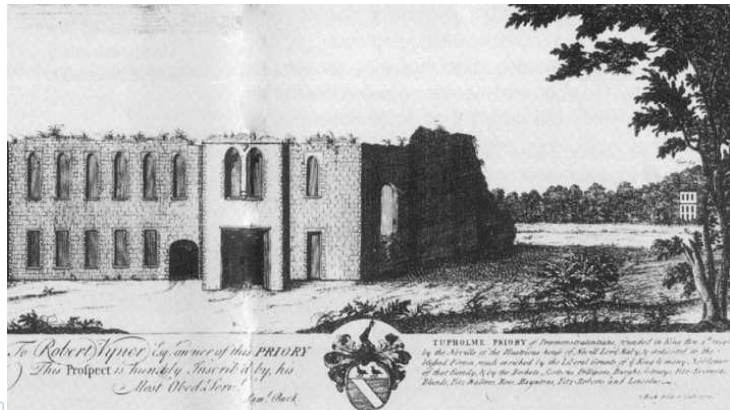


What happened to Tophome Abbey after the Dissolution?

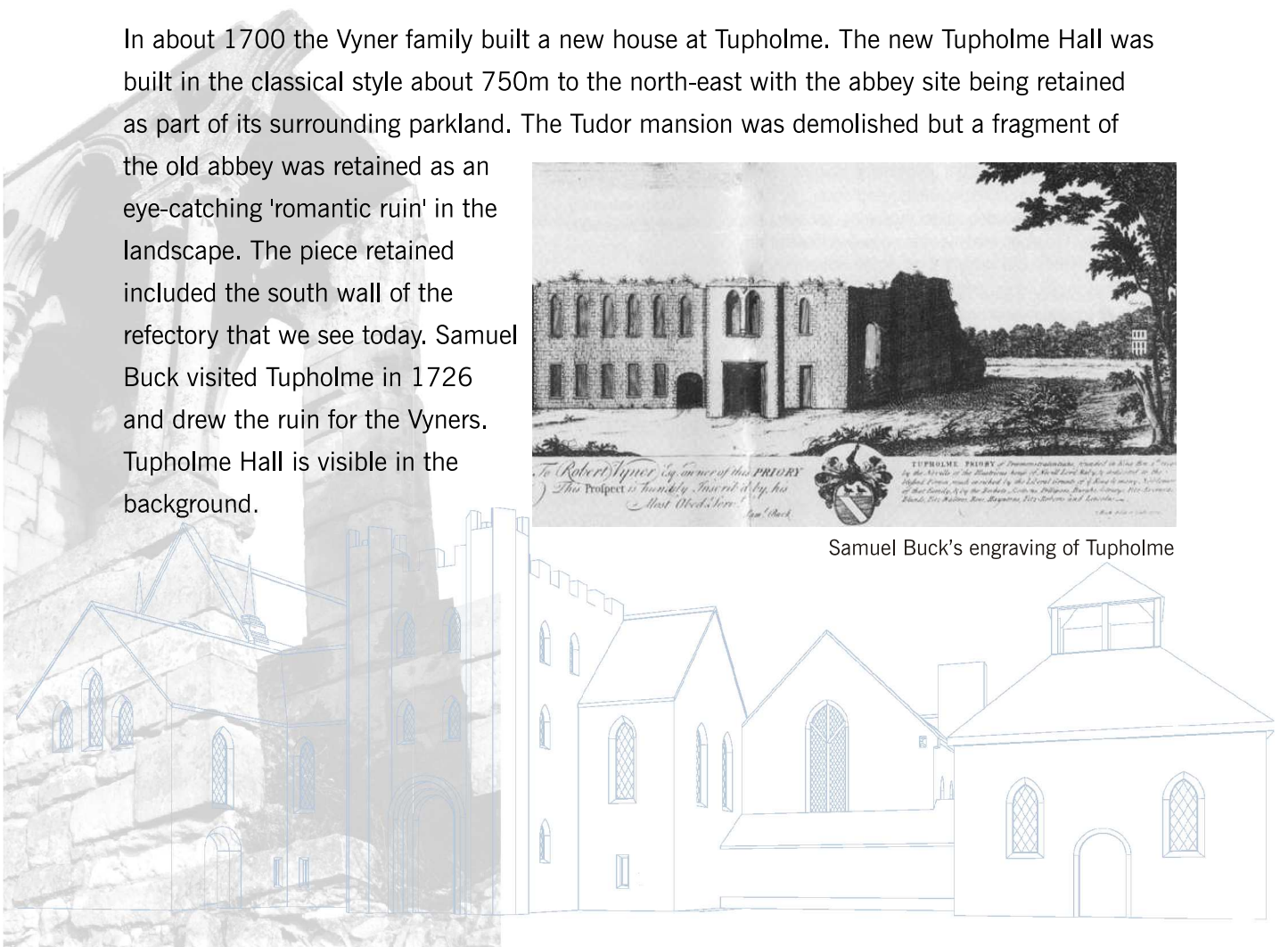
When Topholme Abbey was dissolved in 1536 the site and buildings were given to Sir Thomas Heneage of Hainton. Sir Thomas became the new owner in 1538. He built a grand Tudor mansion here for his daughter Elizabeth and her new husband William Willoughby. He did this by adapting some of the existing abbey buildings including the south refectory range, and he also retained the abbey gatehouse, but it is likely that the church itself was demolished at this time. He laid out an elaborate Tudor garden around the house. Tudor gardens tended to be very formal and were set out in orderly enclosed compartments. The remains of this Tudor landscaping are still evident in the earthworks on the site.

The Willoughby family owned the mansion and the land around it for nearly 125 years but in 1661 it was sold to the Vyner family. By this time the house was becoming unfashionable and new ideas about architecture were being adopted. Houses were now being built to follow the designs of the classical buildings of Rome and Greece.

In about 1700 the Vyner family built a new house at Topholme. The new Topholme Hall was built in the classical style about 750m to the north-east with the abbey site being retained as part of its surrounding parkland. The Tudor mansion was demolished but a fragment of the old abbey was retained as an eye-catching 'romantic ruin' in the landscape. The piece retained included the south wall of the refectory that we see today. Samuel Buck visited Topholme in 1726 and drew the ruin for the Vyners. Topholme Hall is visible in the background.



Samuel Buck's engraving of Topholme



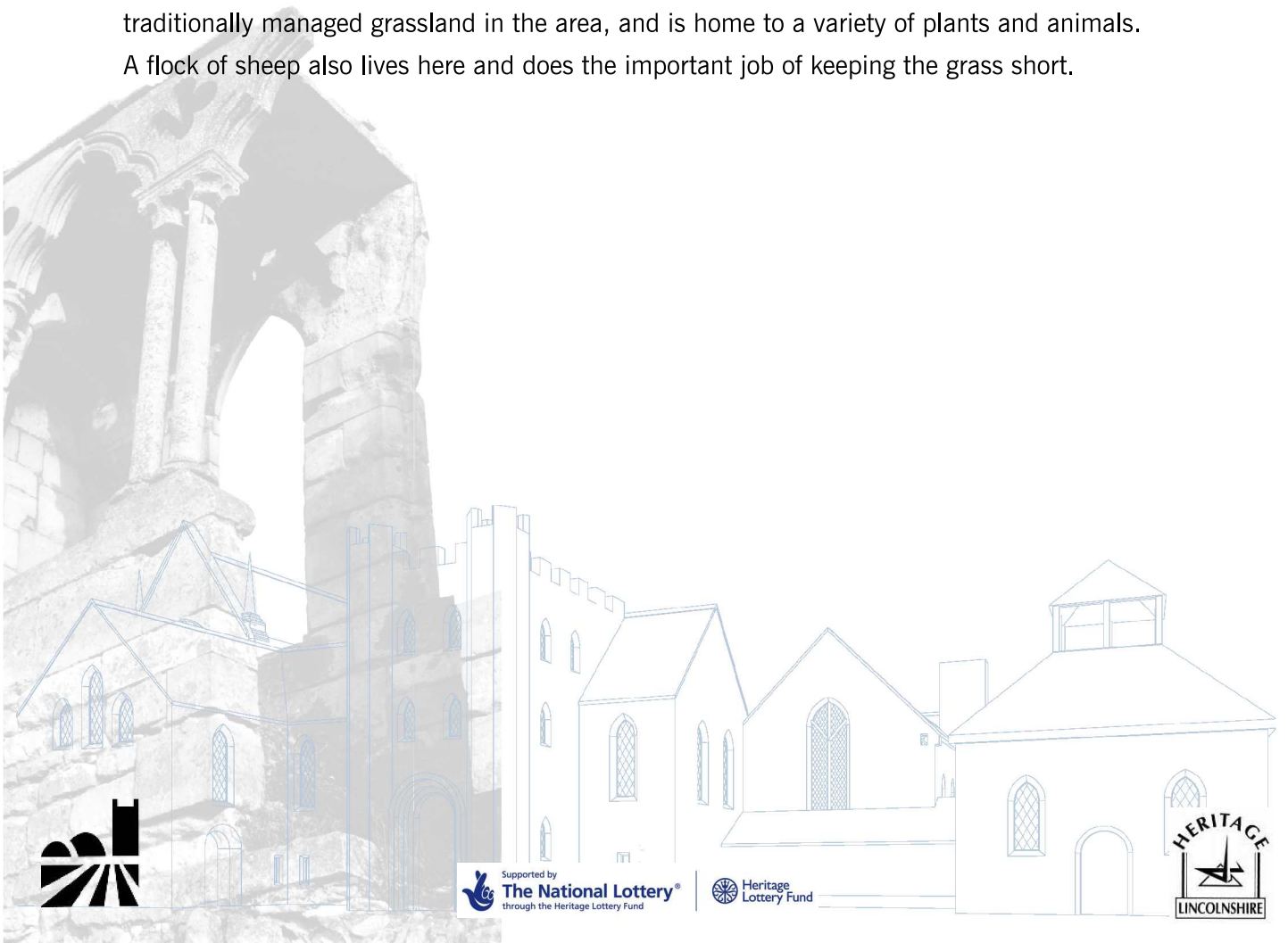
Tupholme Hall seems to have declined in importance during the 18th century. The Vyners moved to a new house at Gautby in the 1730s and a tenant moved in. The land began to be farmed and cottages were built on the south side of the refectory wall. In the 19th century Abbey Farm developed on the site and the wall became part of the farmyard enclosure.

The farm buildings became derelict during the 20th century and were largely demolished in about 1986, although some remains of the farmhouse and a cottage still survive on the south side of the wall. Pop festivals were held on the site in the 1970s.



Abbey Farm buildings

The Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire bought Tupholme Abbey in 1988 and carried out work to stabilise the wall. The whole site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is protected by legislation. The site is open to the public every day. It is one of the few areas of traditionally managed grassland in the area, and is home to a variety of plants and animals. A flock of sheep also lives here and does the important job of keeping the grass short.



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