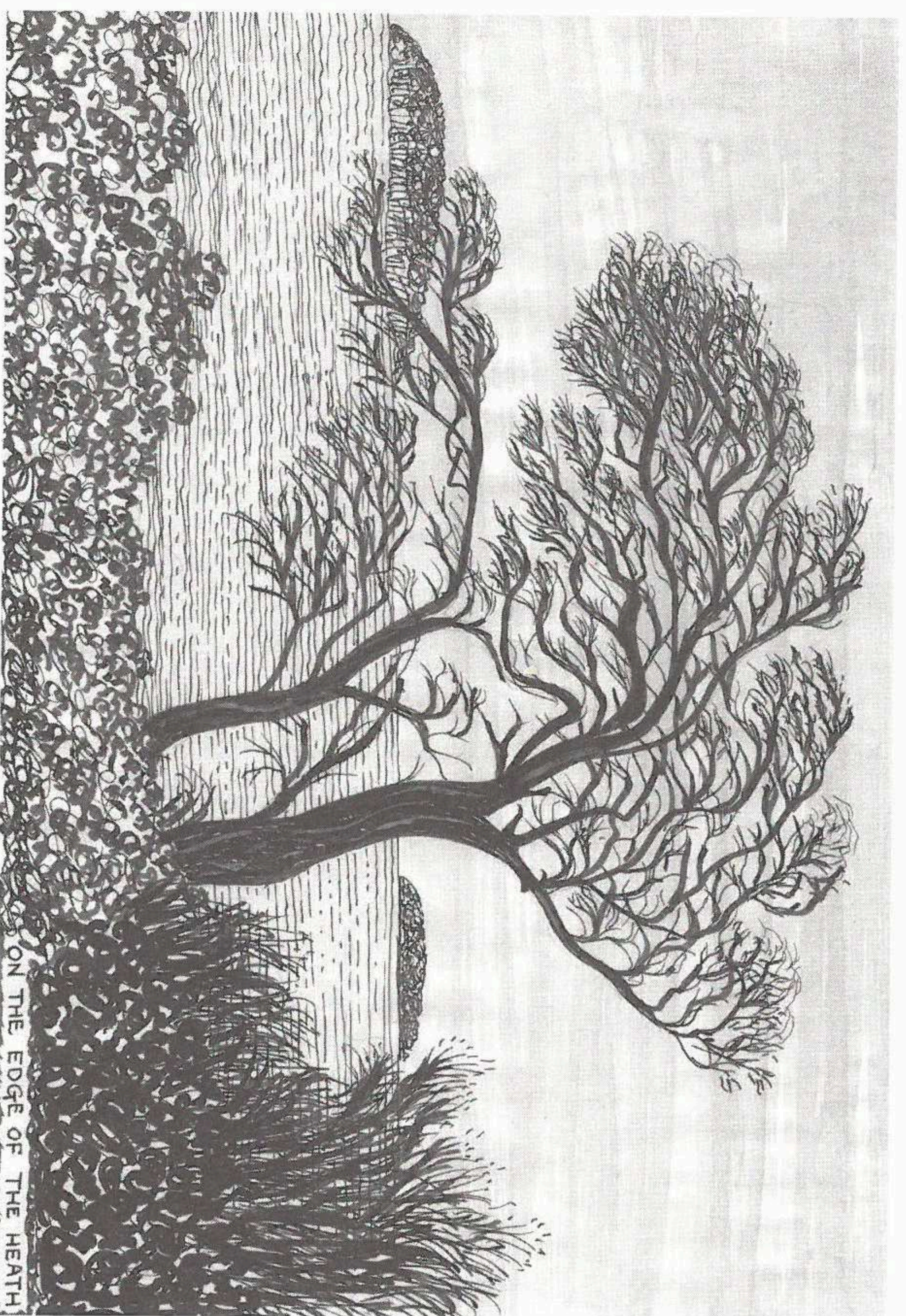


the paper, see frontispiece. His older brother Eric told me, "I saw them as tall men wearing a black cloak". Sinister visions both, but so different, as is to be expected.

As for sound, Bob from Barford explained his view and I give his account in full. The Heiter Sprites he said, "Are just known to old people now, they come out in the Autumn when the wind is blowing and leaves fall, your feet rustle the fallen leaves, it is then they are just behind you".

So we can all have our own mind picture of the Hikey Sprite, there is scope for infinite variety, but let us avoid turning them sandy coloured, with green eyes, they have had enough of that.



The Hikey Sprites Distribution in Norfolk

I BEGAN BY STATING THE HYTER SPRITE was 'never widespread' and I believe this to be true. Most Norfolk people would have been familiar with the words mawther, loke, tizzick, huh (as in 'on the'), etc., and employed them in their speech. This would not have been true of Hikey Sprite, which I feel, had a much more limited usage; strong in some parts of the county, hardly known in others; strong in some families, absent from others.

Some of my informants believed however, from their own experience, that belief in the Hikeys was widespread when they were young. Norah (84), whose childhood was spent in Sparham, told me, "It was a common occurrence when you were a child". In Sparham I think it would have been, but not "everywhere in Norfolk", as she believed. Melanie was certainly correct though when she assured me that, "Everyone in Winterton knew about them". That was, I think, the case and still is to some extent. Several men, presented with the Hikey question, replied with confidence that it could not be a Norfolk word, because they had never heard of it.

One thing is quite clear, the Hikeys inhabited exclusively rural areas, hamlets, villages and market towns and were absent from King's Lynn, Norwich and Great Yarmouth. It was though found in the satellite villages of Costessey and Spixworth, maybe in others.

In several villages elderly people born in the parish gave me Hikey lore, while their contemporaries also born in the village, knew nothing, not even the name. The tradition was certainly very strong in some families, some of which shared other strong folk beliefs, Shuck, Jack, Father or Mother Valentine (where the 'mother wore the trousers') etc.. Shuck 'Old' or 'Black' was near ubiquitous, talked about enthusiastically by many people even those who had no knowledge of the Hikeys.

Bob in Barford described Old Goulty. 'When you heard a noise up the chimney, for instance, you said, "It's Old Goulty", or if a door creaked you said, "Old Goulty did it"? Nicky's mum, a Cley girl, was he said, "full of superstitions". Bob from Griston described his mother as, "a seer, read the tea leaves". Steve from Great Walsingham, mentioned a black dog, Shuck I thought, but no. "You've got that black dog on your back", indicating he was misbehaving again, he recalled his mum saying.

Clearly localised, the name changed in pronunciation, and to some extent meaning, in these isolated rural communities. So Hyte Sprite is widely known, as already mentioned, in Winterton, a tight knit community with a strong fishing heritage. Similar communities must, at one time, have had their own resident version of the Hikey. In the 'hot-spots' of Briston, Dereham, Hindringham, Sparham and Toftwood the Hikey tradition lingered on, a survival of something, at one time, much stronger in those and other communities.

Now where, in those villages known to the Hikeys, were the specific places where they would lurk? By far the most widespread landscape to be associated with the Hikey is woodland, dark and mysterious, it is mentioned by many of my contacts. Jane described the following incident which took place near Fakenham. "We were having a picnic near a wood," she told me, "I wanted to go and play in the wood, but mum said, 'Don't go in there it's too dark and the Hikey Sprites are there.'" Other woods mentioned were Buller Grove, Foxley Wood and woods around Oxnead. Hedges were also dangerous, hedge banks, paths bordered by hedges, gaps in hedges, lanes with hedges.

Oliver told me about his childhood in Spixworth. "There was a place called Hobgoblin Lane, with a river nearby which had Spixworth on one side and Frettenham on the other. Mum said, 'Don't go there, there's Hikey Sprites about.'" Street atlases now give the name Hog Bog Lane, change of name perhaps, or a minor lapse of memory. Hog Bog Lane is the narrow eastern end of Coltishall Lane.

Walter Rye mentions a lane at Great Melton (a turning off the B1108) called Blow Hill as a Hyter Sprite habitat, described as, 'Prettily overshadowed with beech trees'. Remarkably, apart from a name change, now Bow Hill, it is much the same today as it was in 1872, a place of great mystery and atmosphere, with the roots of the beech trees trickling down the banks, a veritable Hikey refuge.

Heaths, commons, rough pasture land were also liked by the Hikeys, specifically Holt Lowes. Wet lands, marshes, ponds and streams were also to be avoided. Oliver's Hobgoblin Lane is still a magical spot, if you overlook the obtrusive fly-tipping (too much for even the most energetic Hikey work force to cope with). In parts deep set, with gnarled oaks, meadows to the north dipping down to the Stone Beck and a quaggy area, Alder Carr, it would have attracted adventurous children and been a source of concern for parents.

Stay clear too of ruined buildings, houses, barns, any tumble-down structures. From Gunthorpe Fred (84) wrote, "I have known some people would tell children not to go to certain places, because the Hikey Sprites would get them. One place children were warned about was an old ruin of a rectory, not far from the church, and an old house, on a meadow, not far from mine. It was meant to keep children away from where you were not supposed to be".

Wild places all, where the young might come to harm, but where the Hikey Sprite's influence guarded them against injury or misfortune. Wild places where the Hikeys felt comfortable away from noise and human activity. Their function was, I believe, to preserve you from harm, they would never (well never is a big claim) entice you into dangerous places, especially children, especially at night time. It was the excitement, mystery, risk, freedom and tingle of fear that drew children there, not the Hikeys. You, my reader, may have a different interpretation, but this is mine.

The two maps show where informants, some times their parents, spent their childhood. Figure 2 shows the villages mentioned by Rabuzzi as sources of Hikey information, but he only records this for about a third of his contacts. Figure 3 shows where my informants and their parents spent their childhood. This has to be viewed with some caution. I used public transport throughout my fieldwork, with extensive walking from bus stops and train stations. It could be argued that my map shows areas easily reached from my base in Norwich, this may be partly true, but nevertheless I think in the main the map shows the core Hikey area, their homeland.

I too, to some extent, tested other areas to the west and south of Norfolk; Thetford, Downham Market, Attleborough for instance, but drew a blank. I would be happy if this booklet teased out information from the blank areas on my map. Both maps significantly show the tradition either weakens or is entirely absent from the west and south of the county, is at its strongest in the north-east.

Fig. 2

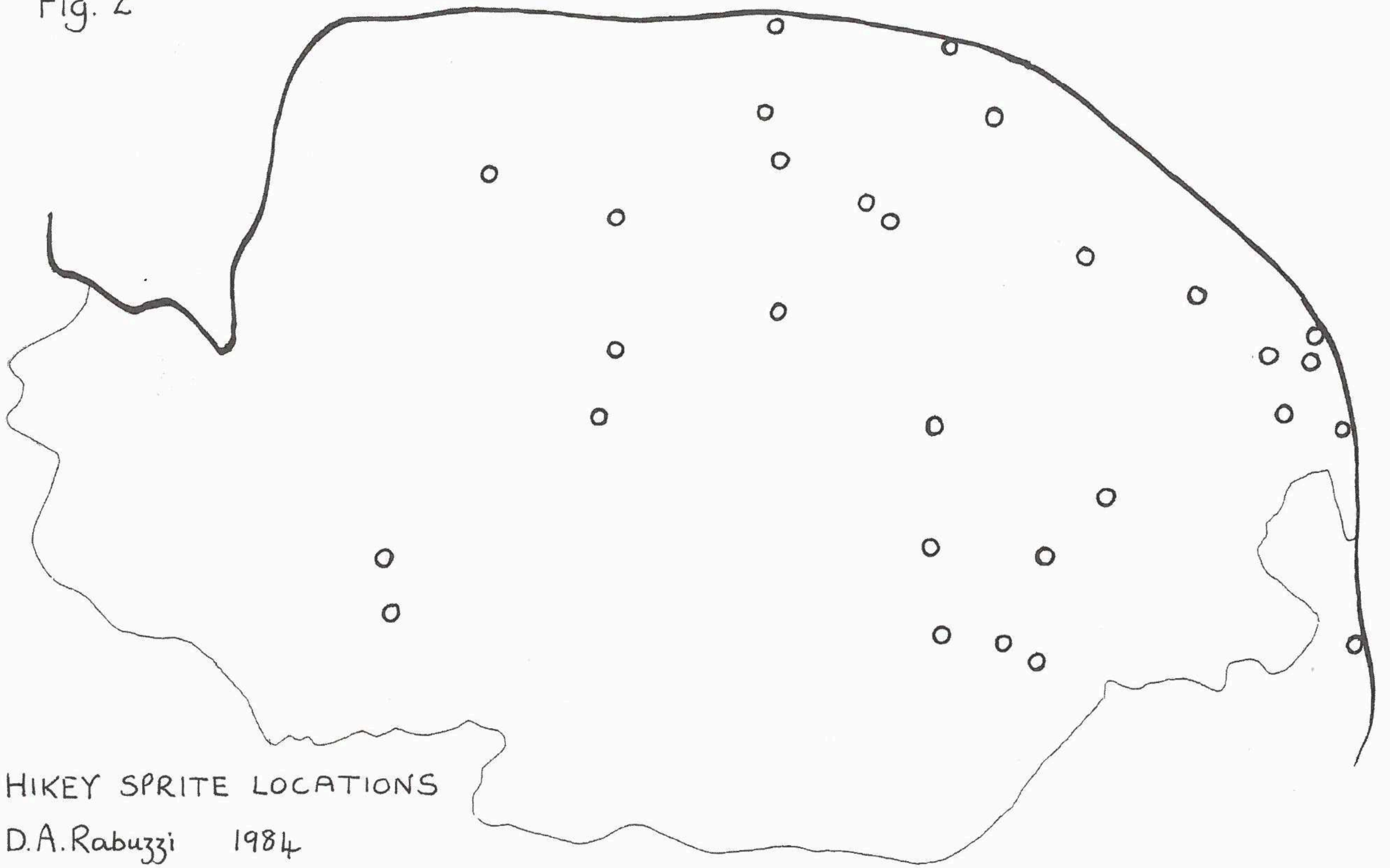
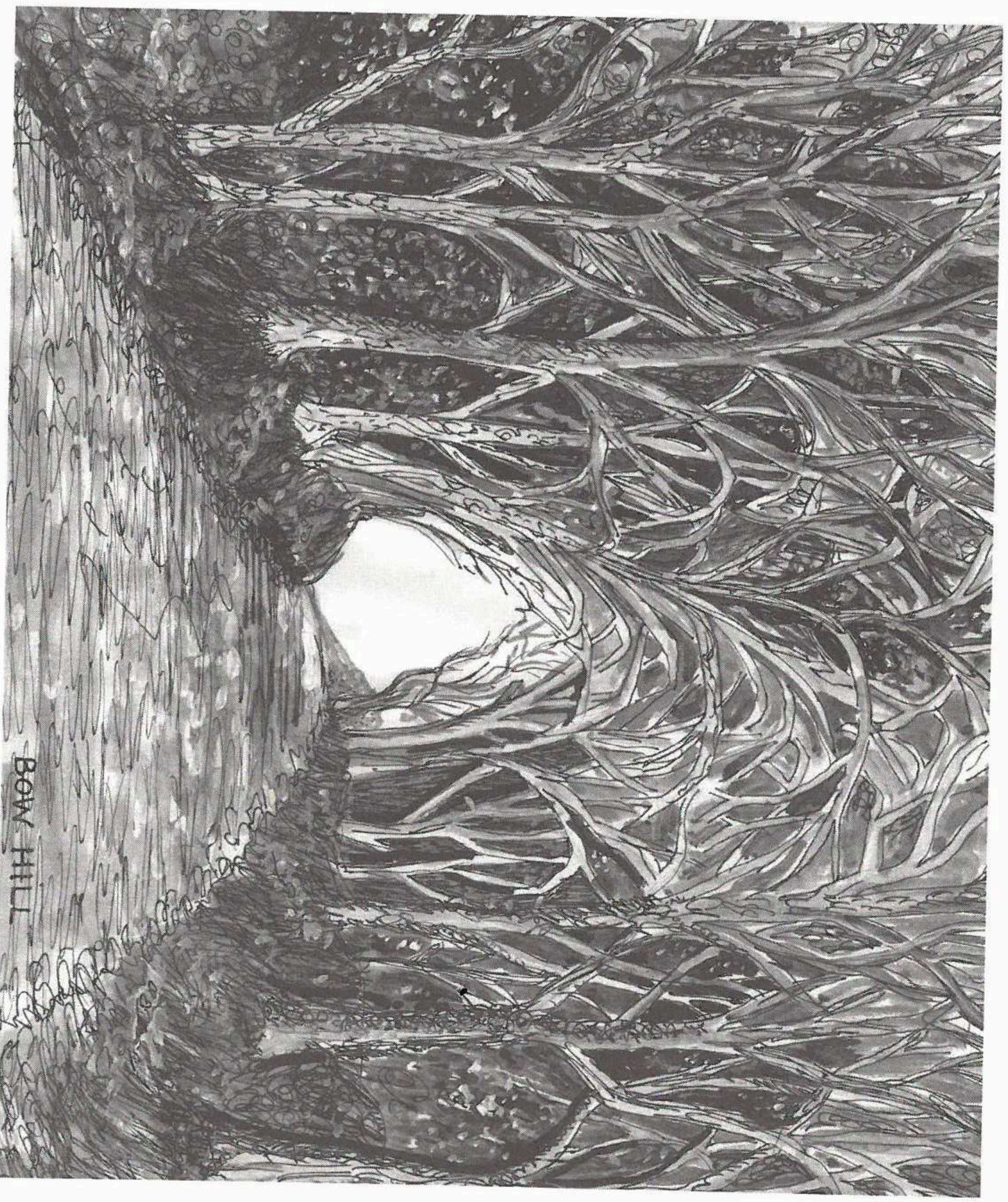


Figure 2: Hikey Sprite Locations 1984

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Baudeswell | Oulton Broad |
| Bittering | Oxborough |
| Blakeney | Poringland |
| Caister | Pudding Norton |
| Catfield | Roughton |
| Corpusty | Sharrington |
| East Carleton | Surlingham |
| Filby | Syderstone |
| Hempnall | Tharston |
| Hensby | Topcroft |
| Martham | Wending |
| Melton Constable | West Runton |
| Northwood | Winterton |
| Old Costessey | Worstead |
| Oulton | |



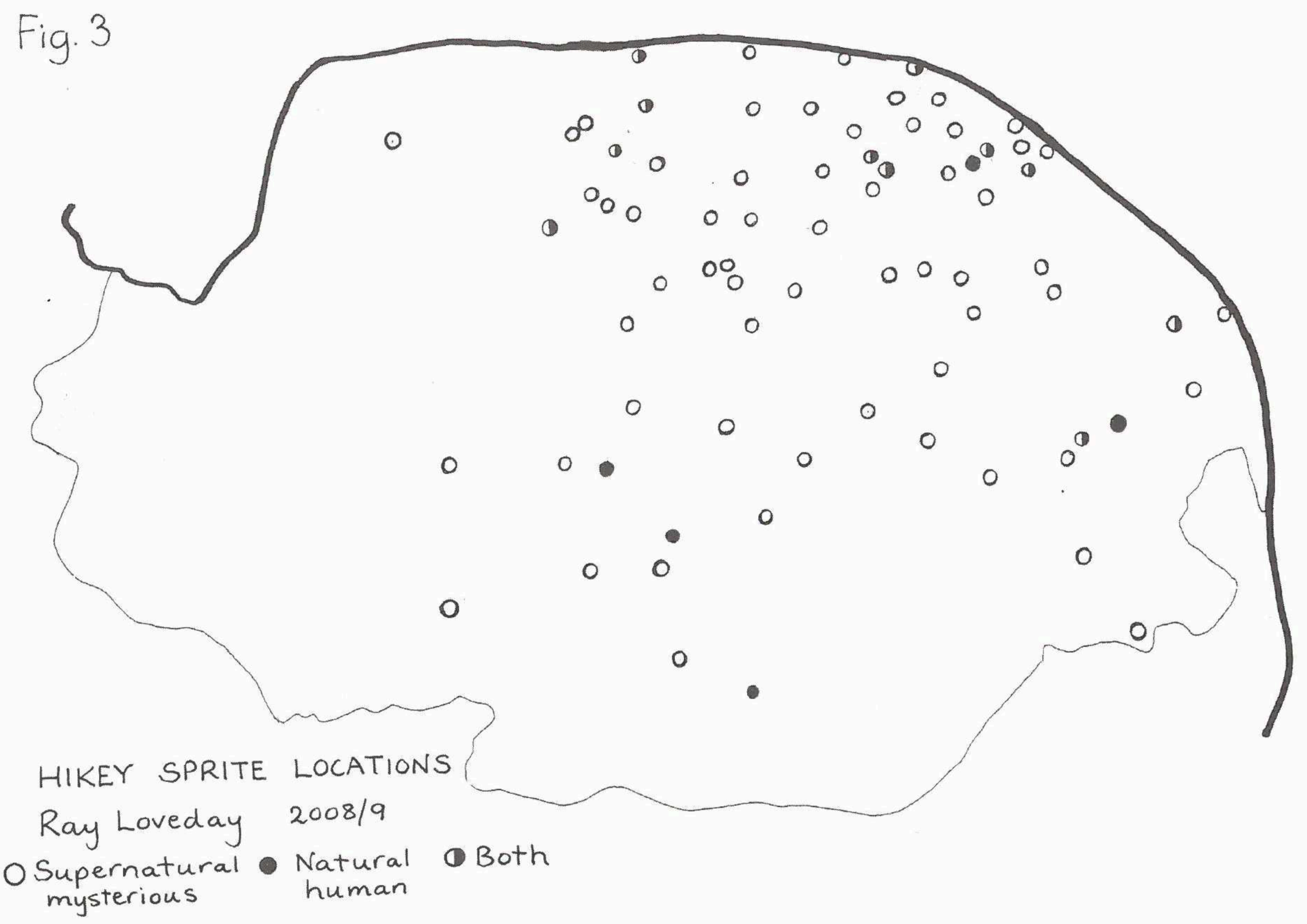


Figure 3: Hikey Sprite Locations 2008/9
Supernatural and Mysterious

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Alby | Great Walsingham | Oulton |
| Antingham | Gunthorpe | Overstrand |
| Bacton | Hargham | Oxnead |
| Barford | Hindolveston | Paston |
| Barton Turf | Hindringham | Roughton |
| Bessingham | Holt | Scottow |
| Bodham | Ickburgh | Sheringham |
| Briston | Kirby Bedon | Smallburgh |
| Calthorpe | Kirdistone | Southrepps |
| Cley | Kettlestone | Sparham |
| Colishall | Little Barningham | Spixworth |
| Costessey | Little Ellingham | Srumppshaw |
| Cromer | Little Snoring | Swaffham |
| Docking | Little Walsingham | Themelthorpe |
| East Dereham | Linguwood | Thurning |
| Edingthorpe | Loddon | Toftwood |
| Fakenham | Marsham | Trunch |
| Felbrigg | Mattishall | Twyford |
| Filby | Morston | Wicklewood |
| Foulsham | Mundesley | Winterton |
| Fulnondeston | North Elmham | West Bradenham |
| Gillingham | Northrepps | |
| Griston | North Walsham | |

Figure 3: Hikey Sprite Locations 2008/9
Natural and Human

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| Acle | Hingham |
| Alby | Linguwood |
| Aldborough | Martham |
| Banham | Morston |
| Bradfield | Overstrand |
| Fakenham | Shippham |
| Field Dalling | Southrepps |
| Hindringham | Trunch |