

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
HEYDON GRANGE
-- A DESKTOP STUDY --

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This desktop study, commissioned by Easthope Associates, evaluates the archaeological impact of the proposed golf course at Heydon Grange, Heydon, Cambridgeshire. This study is limited to the area of direct development which encompasses approximately 300ha of land south of the A505 and Southeast of Flint Cross on the edge of the Essex Plateau (see attached figure).

The proposed development is bounded on two sides (the north and the west) by modern field boundaries and on the other two sides by roads. The development area is divided by three modern fields with a fine 17th century barn at the centre (Heydon Grange, Grade II Listed). The field boundary which runs north-west/south-east to the west of the barn marks the course of the much denuded Heydon Ditch or Bran Dyke, a probable Saxon linear defensive ditch and bank.

No excavation or systematic survey has taken place in the boundaries of the proposed development, but several findspots are recorded in the County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The aerial photographic record of the area of proposed development has been examined, but no features were apparent (R Palmer pers comm).

Landscape Context

The subsoil of the area is (middle) chalk overlain by 0.30-0.70m of sandy loam with flinty gravel. The area is a relatively hilly ground, which drains to the north from the Essex Plateau. The area drains into the floodplain of the River Cam approximately seven kilometres to the north.

The land rises from 40m OD in the north to 60m OD in the south. The south-west corner of the site is a prominent hill with dry valleys running to the north along the western boundary and through the centre. Along the eastern boundary is another promontory hill.

Environment

The southern boundary road (not much more than a track) is the route of the Icknield Way, a prehistoric and Roman trackway of great regional significance (Fox 1923:143-147). Prehistoric and Roman settlement is known along the trackway. This section is known to be associated with Roman Field-systems not far to the east (Evans 1991), and Roman pottery has been found adjacent to the development area. Prehistoric settlement (primarily Neolithic) is also common near the

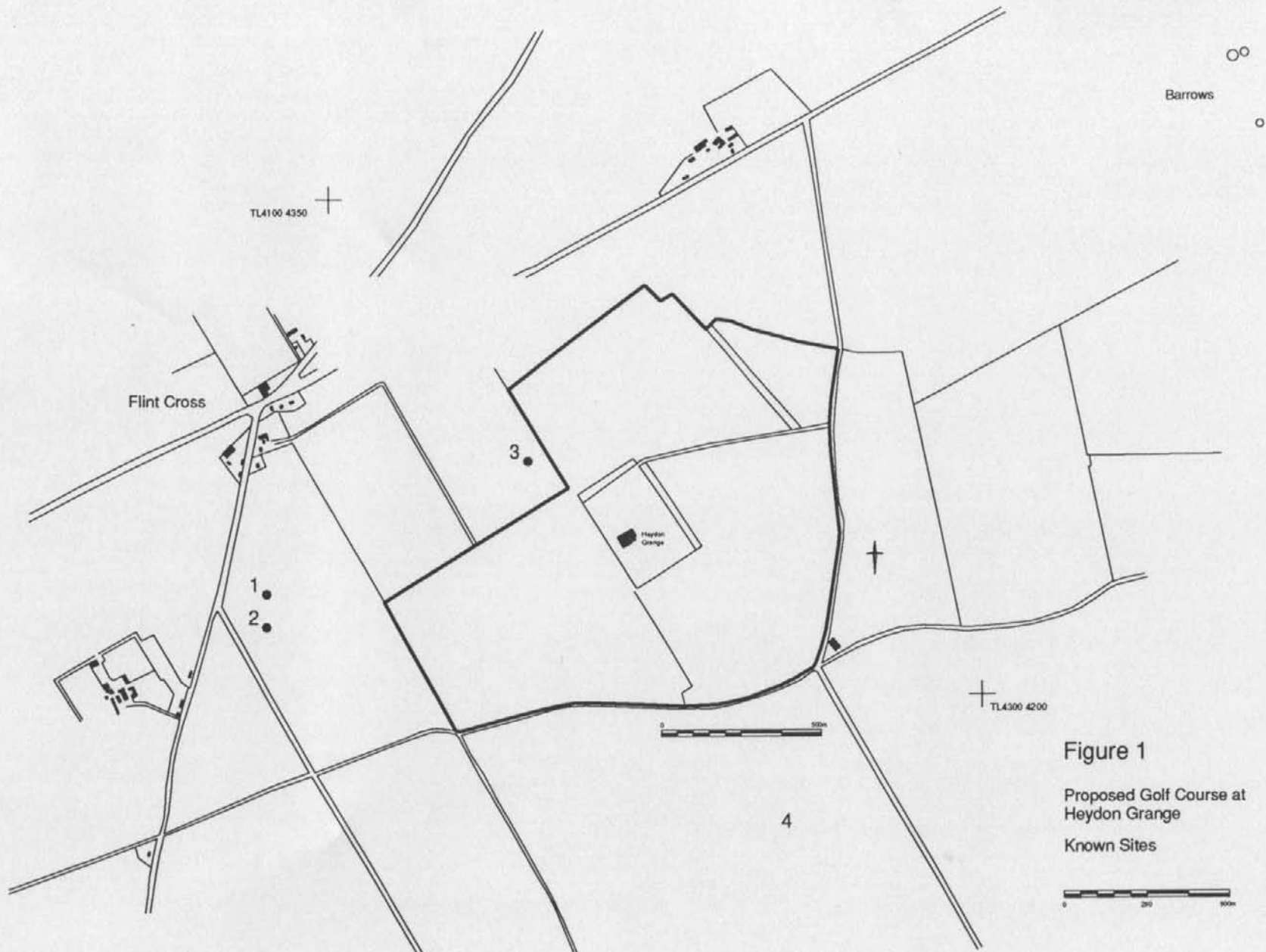


Figure 1
 Proposed Golf Course at
 Heydon Grange
 Known Sites



trackway, and two Neolithic finds scatters are known immediately to the east.

The Bran Dyke (or Heydon Ditch) runs through the development area. This linear earthwork which extends for 3.25 miles from the edge of the Essex Plateau to the Black Peak in Fowlmere (Fox and Palmer 1925). The earthwork is now almost completely levelled along its whole course, but the bank and ditch survive in some areas as a low undulation in the ground.

Early excavations suggested that the Dyke may have been constructed in the 1st century AD, possibly representing Iron Age defenses (Fox and Palmer 1925:20-22,35). Recent interpretations have favoured a Saxon date, however (D. Hall pers comm). There is no known Iron Age or Saxon sites associated with the ditch in the development area.

The historical record offers little information for the immediate area around the Grange. The enclosure map of Heydon (1831, County Records Office P90/26/1) shows that all the area was 'old inclosure' (ie taken out of the common fields appreciably before that date). It was called Breach and all except 15.5 acres of it belonged to the lord of the manor, Sir Peter Soames, Bart. To the south of the Icknield Way (outside the development area) laid the great open fields, called Brand Ditch Field, Middle Field and Hill Gap Field.

The map shows that the proposed area had no subdividing hedges, but the Grange was there, without its enclosing tree belts. Since no medieval remains of any kind are known at the Grange or in the immediate area, it is unlikely that it represents a true medieval monastic grange, but presumably relates to a post-medieval farm placed in the old enclosure.

GAZETTEER

No.	SMR No.	Description
1	03984	Flint scatter of blades and scrapers, probably Neolithic.
2	03985	Stray find of a single sherd of Roman Samian Ware pottery.
3	04004	Flint scatter of blades and scrapers, probably Neolithic.
4	07802	Heydon Ditch or Bran Dyke.

DISCUSSION

Outside of the standing barn at Heydon Grange and the Heydon Ditch, it is unlikely that any other sites of national importance exist within the development area. Prehistoric and Roman material is known from the immediate area, however, and prehistoric barrows are found less than 1.5km to the north-east. The development area, cleft by a dry valley, also offers prime land and soils for prehistoric settlement. We could expect extensive prehistoric sites anywhere within the proposed development, but they are most likely on the sheltered ground to the north. Roman field systems or settlements may also be possible along the route of the Icknield Way which runs along the southern border of the development area.

Roman and/or Saxon material may also be associated with the Bran Dyke, and the Dyke itself is a substantial archaeological feature. Though the bank and ditch of the dyke are greatly denuded, primary and secondary deposits will survive in the now infilled ditch. These deposits must be preserved and the possible localized waterlogging should not be threatened. The exact extent and degree of any waterlogging should be assessed where there is a threat of de-watering.

The more recent history of the site also seems to be enigmatic. The location of the barn and the historic documentation relating to the farm (RCHME 1949) would suggest early agricultural activity in the area. The 1831 enclosure map, and the absence of any furlong boundaries, suggests that the land was heath until very recently, however. There is, therefore, very little possibility for medieval remains within the development area.

Though the 17th century barn is called Heydon Grange, it is unlikely to have had any monastic associations. This means that it is also unlikely that any associated monastic buildings ever existed around the surviving barn. Such conclusions should be demonstrated through field evaluation, however, and the building remains a fine example of a red brick 17th century barn that must be preserved.

References

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- Roberts, G.F. 1957. A history of Heydon, *Privately Published*.