

Fairchild's Meadow, Haddenham

An Archaeological Earthwork Survey



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Introduction

The Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) was commissioned by Haddenham Parish Council and the Fairchild's Meadow Working Group to undertake an earthwork survey of 6.88 hectares of land on the north-west side of Haddenham village (centred NGR 546806 / 275821).

The survey was undertaken between 25th April and 16th May 2008 and covered three fields described for the purpose of this report as *Fairchild's Meadow*, *Pond Field* and *Bonfire Field* (Figure 1). All of the fields are currently under pasture and are used as a Village amenity and nature reserve. Only Bonfire Field shows any obvious sign of being recently graded and levelled in keeping with its use for public gatherings.

This report details the results of the earthwork survey and suggests an initial interpretation of the features based on evidence from local knowledge, historic cartography and other sources detailed in the *Historic Environment Record* of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Methodology

The majority of the 6.88 hectare survey area was recorded using a Leica GPS 500 base station and rover, a portable satellite linked system that was used to record 3-D points (X,Y and Z) across the three fields in order to locate all features in the 'real space' of the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Where the satellite signal was impaired (by trees etc), mainly around the edges of the three fields, a Leica TPS 1200 (Total Station) was used to record the landform. A series of temporary survey stations were set up to tie-in the two types of survey. The fields were initially walked on a grid of 2.5-5m both north-south and east-west, taking measurements at 0.5m intervals, then certain features were selected for more detailed recording to obtain a higher resolution. A total of 78,000 measurements were recorded, across the three fields. During the survey the ground conditions were reasonably favourable with short to medium length grass allowing visual recognition of features.

In the office, the survey data were post-processed to achieve a 3D accuracy of +/- 50mm in the software package *Leica GeoOffice* which uses synchronous RINEX data downloaded from the Ordnance Survey website (www.gps.gov.uk). The processed survey points were combined in *Autodesk Map 3D* so that contour plots could be created using *Golden Software Surfer*.

Results

The survey produced contour plots to a high degree of accuracy which revealed many features not visible to the eye due to the masking effects of vegetation growth. The results of the survey are presented in Figures 2 to 4 and are discussed by individual field.

Bonfire Field

The field consisted of short-cropped grass and showed signs of being recently levelled/graded. Despite the removal of any upstanding features, the 'ghost' of past ploughing (running SW-NE with the slope) was just visible. It was not possible to determine whether these cultivation remains were related to medieval ridge and furrow cultivation or a later phase of cultivation prior to seeding for grass. However, results from Fairchild's Meadow (see below) strongly suggest that the land would have been cultivated during the medieval period.

The in-filled cut of a drain was also located running diagonally SW-NE across the field surface. The cut appeared to have truncated the remnant plough scars suggesting a post-medieval date for the drain and by inference suggesting that the ploughing dated to an earlier period.

Historic maps (Figs 5 to 8) demonstrate that the current boundaries of the field are comparatively recent in date, the field being part of the larger Pond Field on all dates of historic mapping.

Pond Field

The field consisted of rough pasture grass of medium length. Topographic features were much more complex with suggestions of many phases of activity but few 'signature features' that suggested clear evidence of settlement activity. Three main features were recorded in detail – a pond, mound and possible quarry pit as well as a variety of other undulations, depressions and possible former channels.

The pond at the northern end of the field measures 116m by 11m and is served by a drain and channel that both show up clearly on the contour plot (Figure 2). The narrow pond is clearly similar to examples of medieval fish ponds which were often associated with manorial complexes and religious houses (see Hoskins 1973 for examples of such fish ponds). As a fish pond it may relate to the manor of Hinton Hall and the lands held by Richard de Chewell (Bester 1999). The more commercial-sized fisheries were operating in the delphs, where considerable numbers of eels were farmed and could be transported by river (Bester *ibid*). It is most likely that this pond could have provided a fresh source of food for the local manor. The shape and form of the feature is directly comparable to an example of a carp pond from the site of the former Dominican Friary at Emmanuel College in Cambridge (Timberlake 2008).

Cartographic sources do not provide any certainty to the date of pond, it being first shown on mapping from 1886 (Figure 7). The pond may be absent from earlier maps (Figs 5 and 6) because it is a 19th century feature (such as a hand dug quarry) although the absence may also be explained by the non-systematic nature of some earlier mapping. A surveyors report recorded in the *Historic Environment Record* (HER) from 1975 notes the presence of a linear bank (visible on 19th century maps) that forms the south side of a linear quarry – presumably a reference to the current pond before it was cleaned out (HER 05718).

The most intriguing feature in the field is a mound measuring 12 x 14m and standing 2m high (Fig. 4 located at NGR 546685, 275825). Historic map evidence (Figure 7) demonstrates that the mound pre-dates 1886. The mound is not shown on earlier maps, but again this could reflect the schematic nature of Inclosure/estate maps prior to the rigorous approach of the Ordnance Survey.

It seems unlikely that the mound relates to a windmill given the small size and topographic location (on the downward slope below the main 'crest' of the village). If the mound is a prehistoric feature (such as a Bronze Age Barrow), it is remarkably well-preserved considering the other (presumably much later) activity in the field and is lacking an accompanying ditch. The surveyors notes in the HER suggest that the mound may be up-cast spoil from quarrying activity in the main field – the most simple interpretation given the presence of a pit and other 'scrapes' in the field. It is interesting to note that local sources describe the mound as once being much larger and having an accompanying ditch (Bester 1999) and perhaps being related to medieval activity associated with Hinton Hall. Given the variety of possible interpretations, the true age and function of the feature can probably only be determined by archaeological excavation

A pit measuring 23m x 16m (NGR 546771, 275815) probably represents the remains of hand-dug quarrying, perhaps associated with an earlier and smaller brick-works in fields to the east (J.Reeve *pers com*). Well-developed brickworks are shown on historic maps close to the former Haddenham station (Figures 7 and 8) surrounded by a series of hand-dug pits – some of comparable size to this feature. The site of a former pond is recorded on OS maps of 1902 (Figure 8) which was filled-in after the Second World War (D. Fairchild *pers. comm*).

The only absolute date for past activity in this field came in the form of surface finds of local 16th century pottery (D. Hall *pers comm.*) which were collected where turf had been disturbed by pond cleaning contractors. Whilst some of the sherds were much abraded (and could have been imported into the site from quarry backfill) they also included one freshly broken handle of a large coarseware jug.

Fairchild's Meadow

The clearest evidence for medieval activity within the survey area was the discovery of classic ridge and furrow cultivation remains from Fairchild's Meadow which became visible through micro-survey (Figure 2). The cultivation runs the length of the field and respects the natural slope, continuing for some 300 metres (one and a half furlongs). The continuous cultivated strip suggests that this part of Haddenham was part of a cultivated 'open field' and during the post-medieval period (possibly following enclosure) the site returned to pasture thus preserving the earlier remains (see Hall 1982 for an in-depth discussion of such features).

There is no evidence of widespread disturbance to the pattern of the cultivation such as may be expected from a large quarry or brick works associated with the diggings in Pond Field. However, a small area of disturbance to the pattern of the ridge and furrow on the centre-east boundary of the field probably represents some levelling which was associated with brick making – a great deal of brick waste was recovered

from this location when the site was still agricultural land (D. Fairchild *pers comm.*). The only other visible feature was a single pond/pit in the SE corner of the field which is visible on historic maps and could represent localised digging of clay (Figure 7).

Conclusion

The earthwork survey has identified and accurately mapped a whole series of features that could be the subject of further study either through archaeological or geophysical survey. Although it was not possible to date all the features with any certainty, part of the land was clearly cultivated during the medieval period and possibly formed part of an activity area associated with Hinton Hall. Many of the visible remains in the fields probably post-date the 16th Century and are associated with local brick-making and water management.

Acknowledgments

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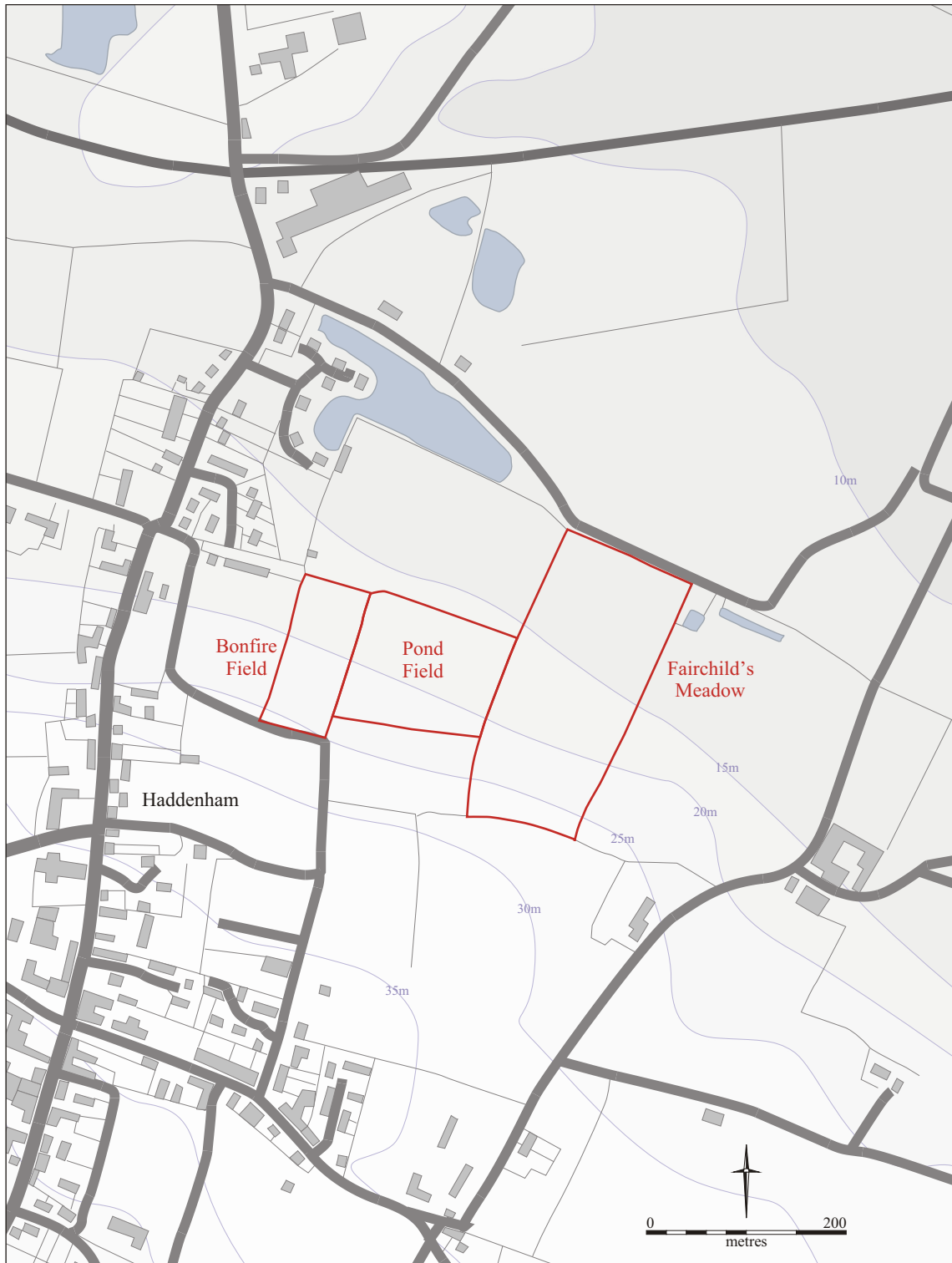


Figure 1. Location of survey area

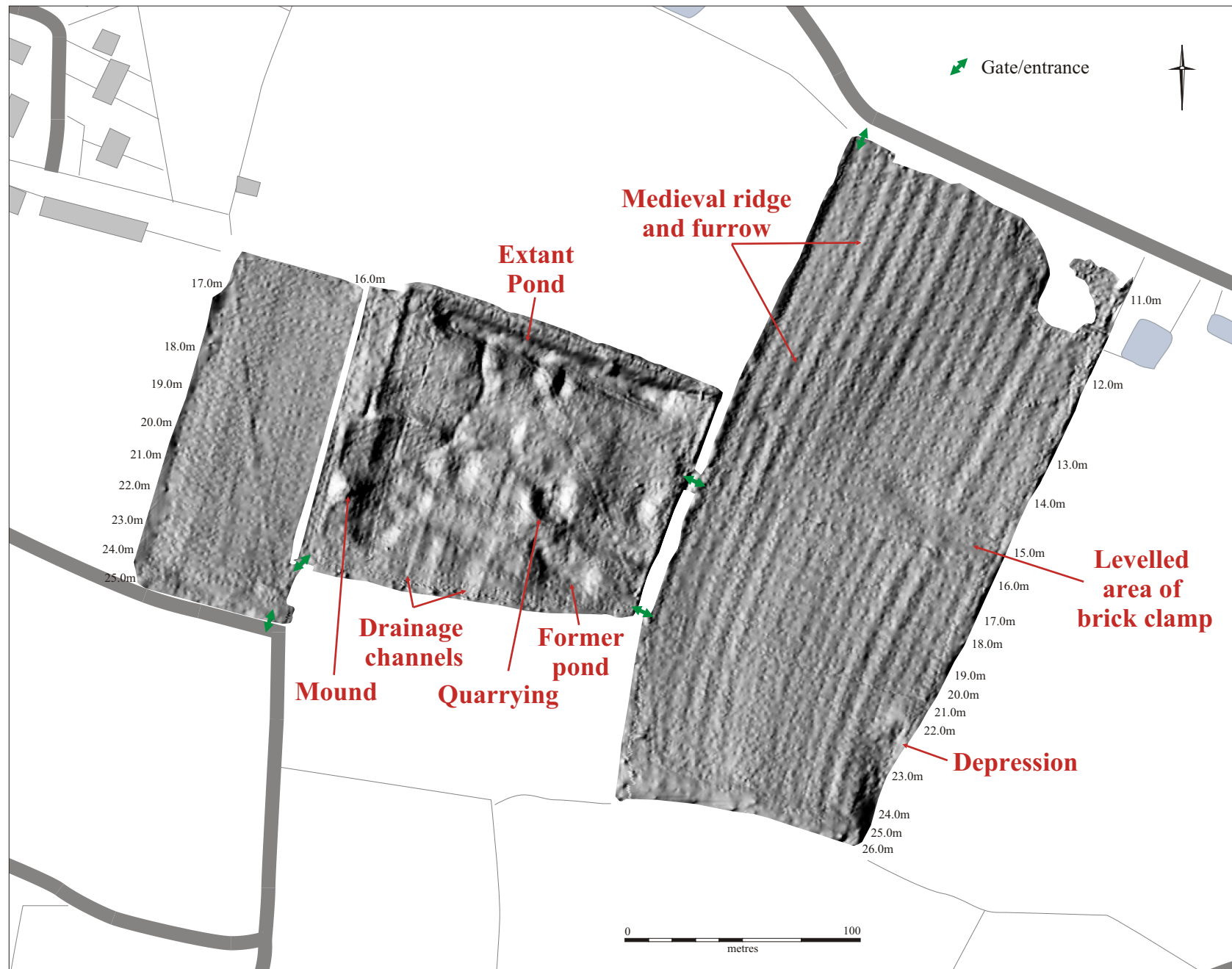


Figure 2. Shaded-relief model of ground surface

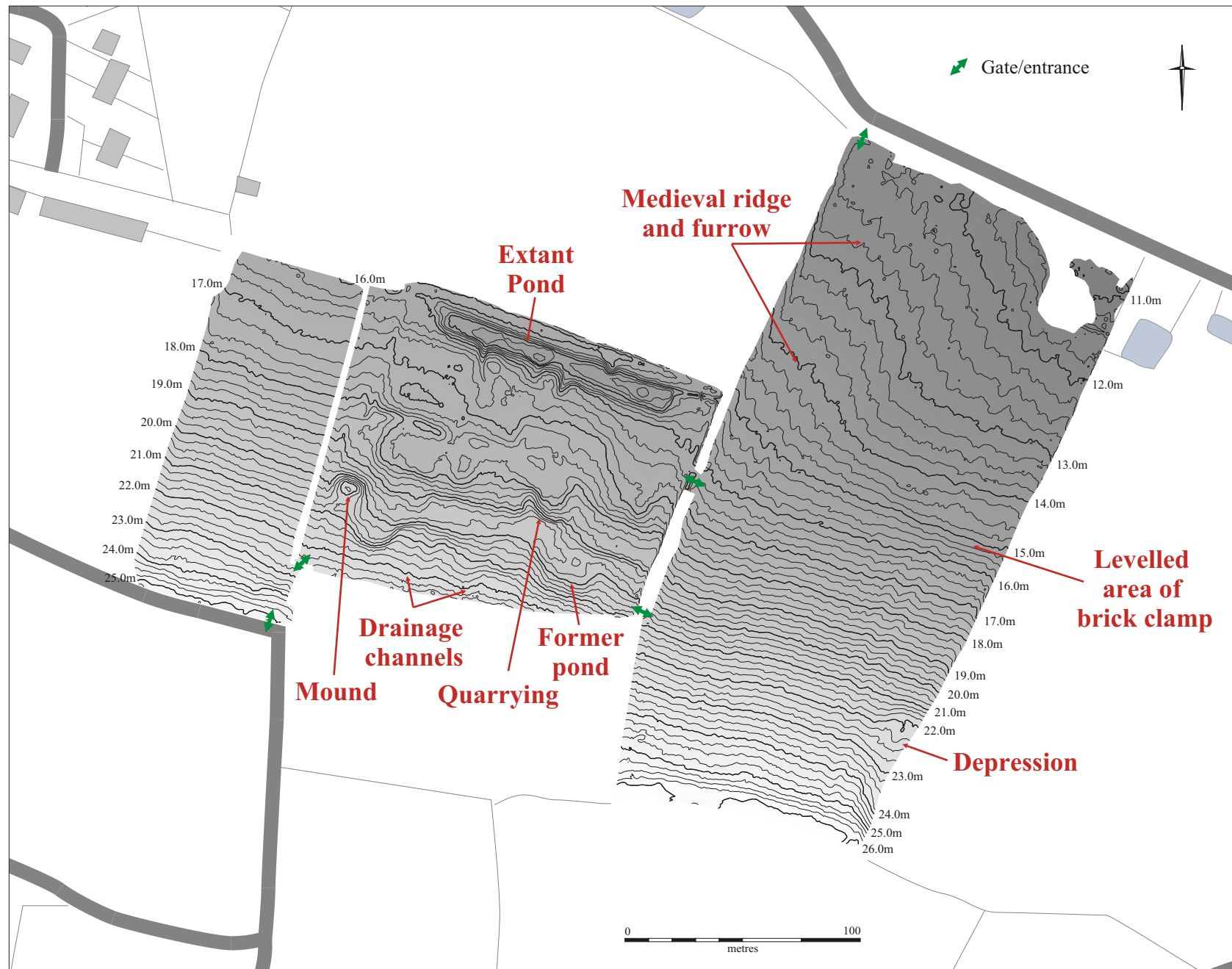


Figure 3. Contour map of ground surface

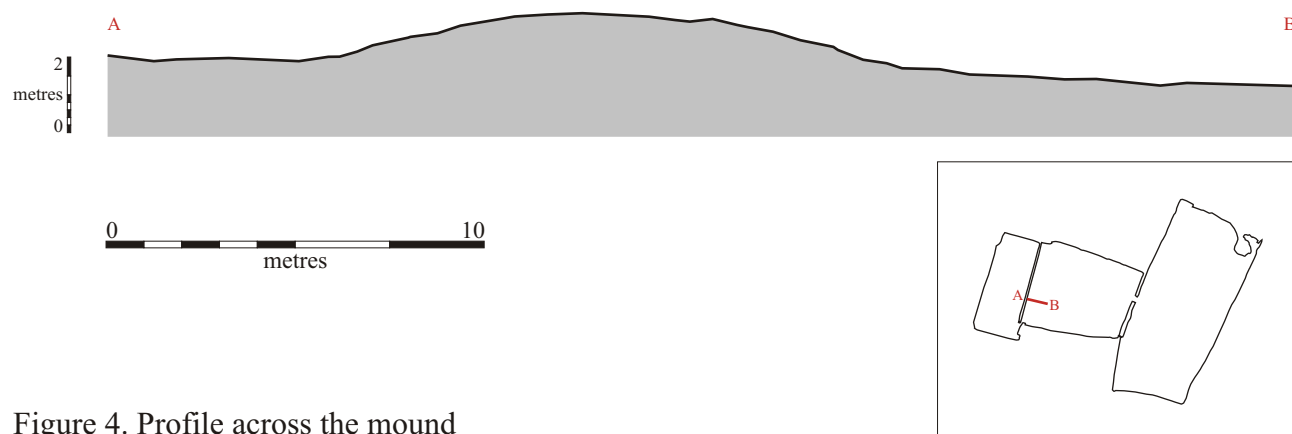


Figure 4. Profile across the mound

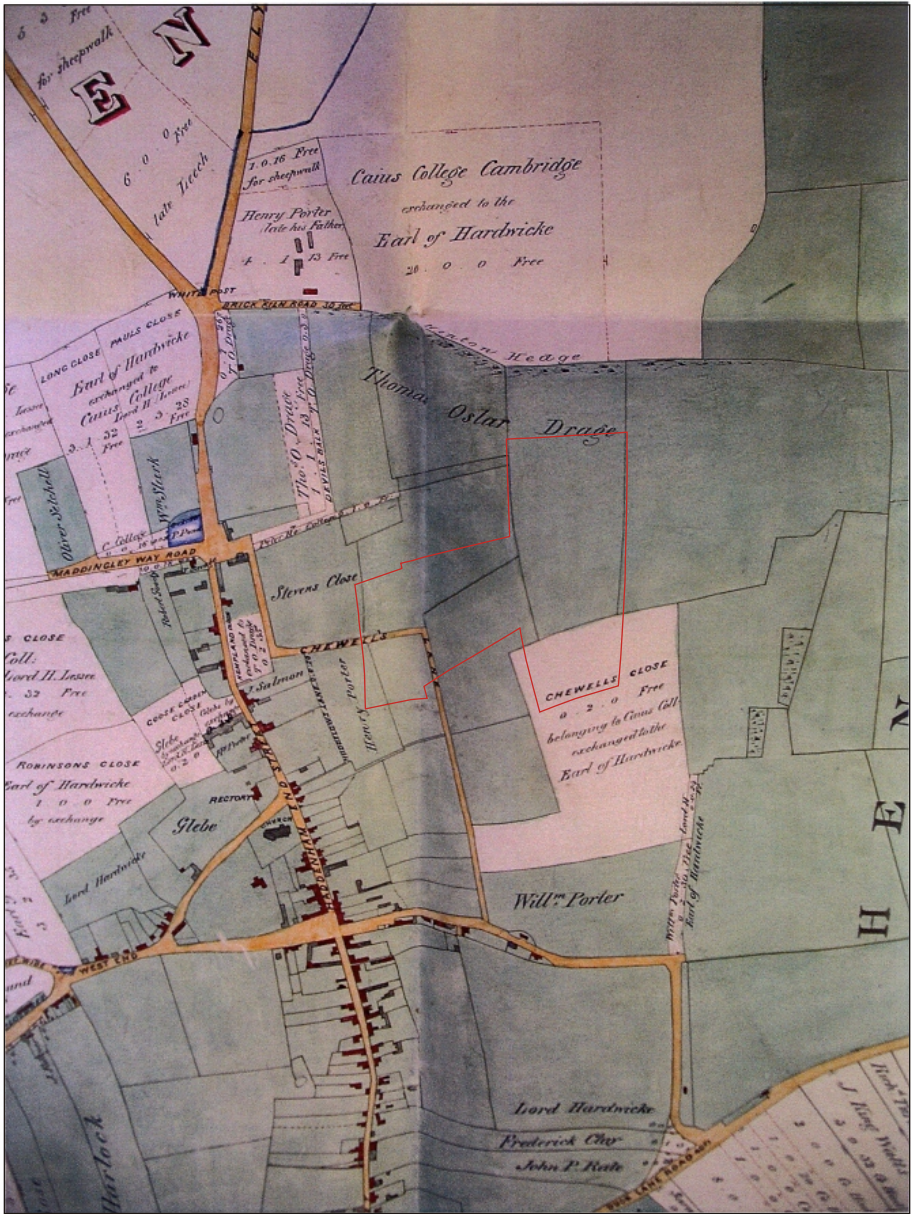


Figure 5. Enclosure map

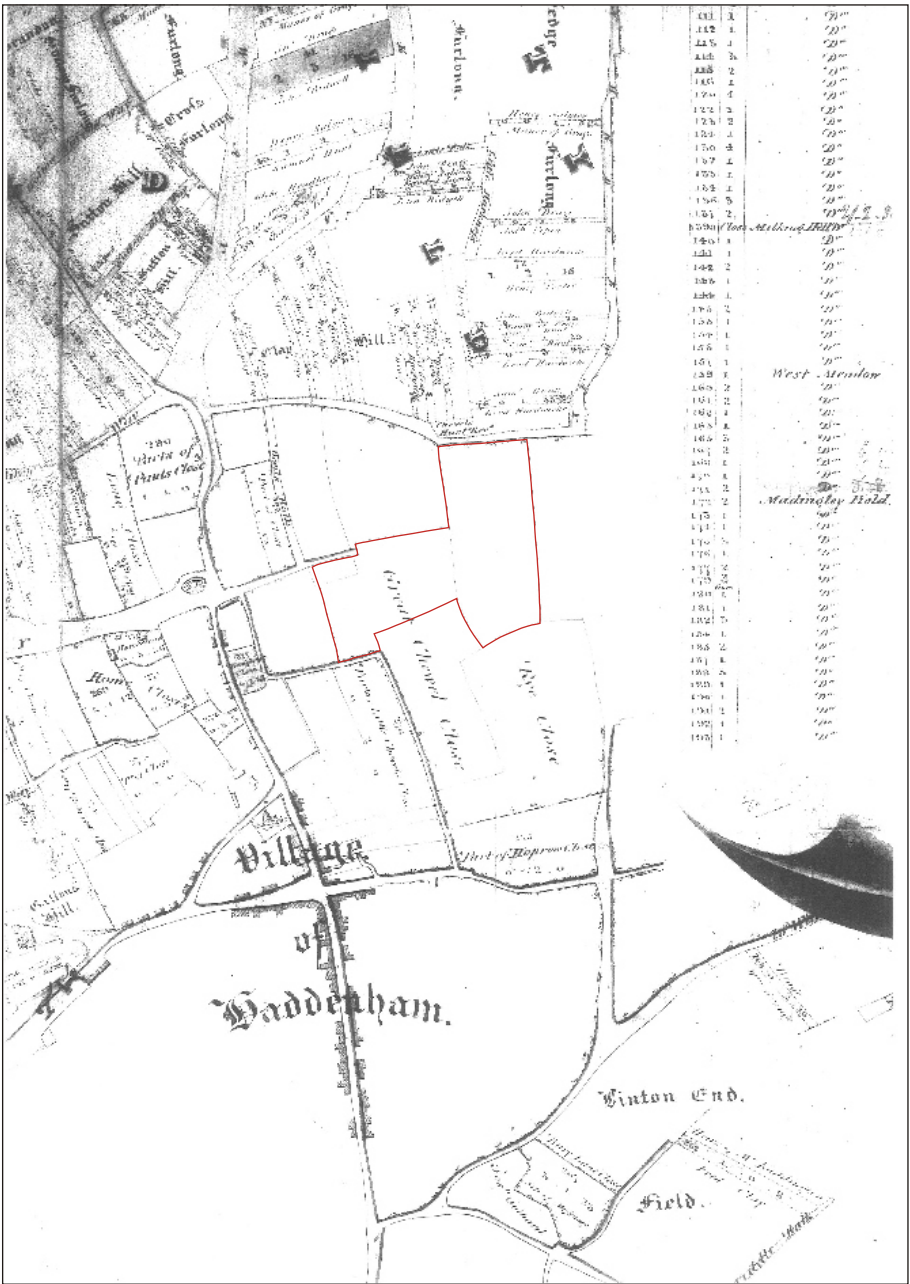


Figure 6.

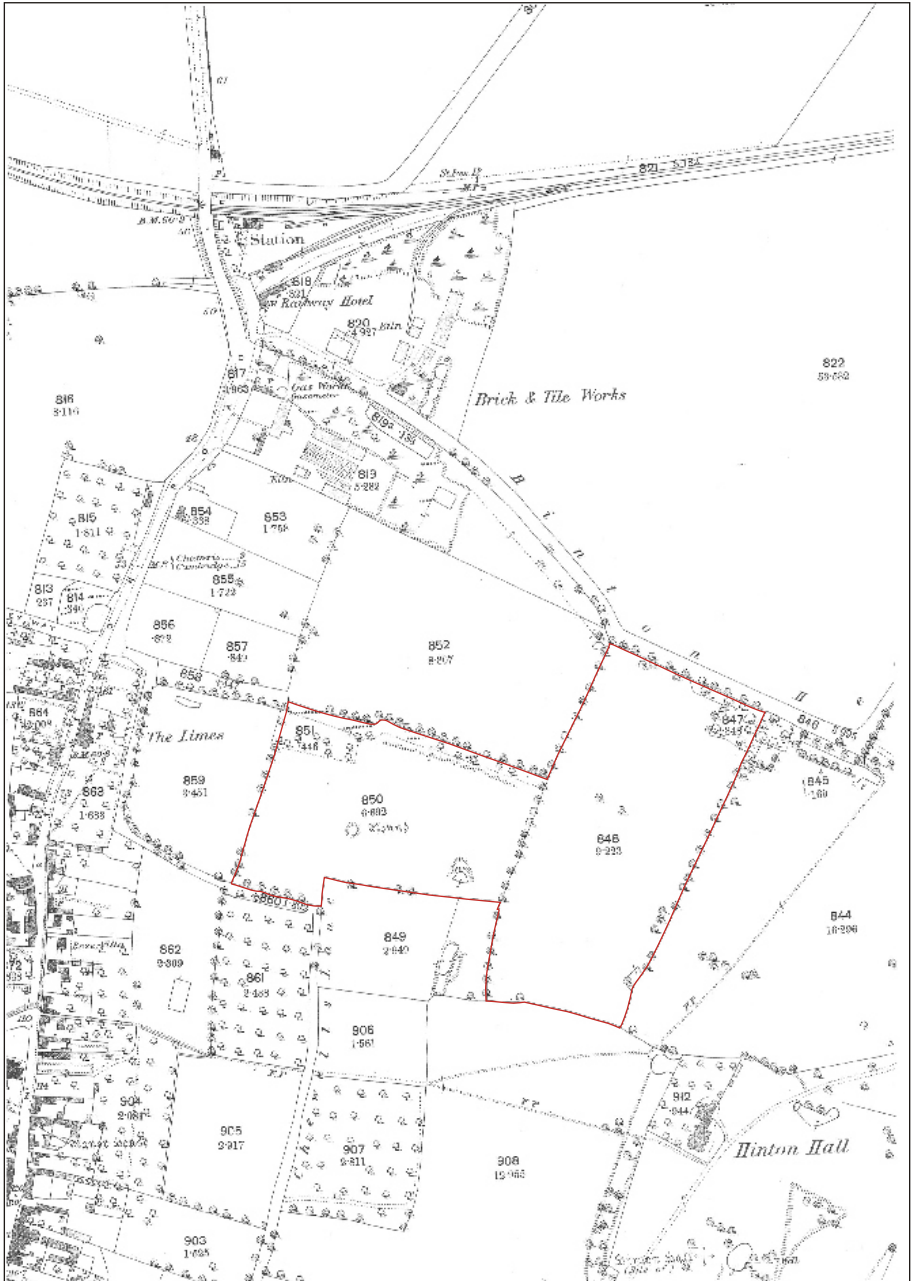


Figure 7. 1st Edition OS map (1887-8)

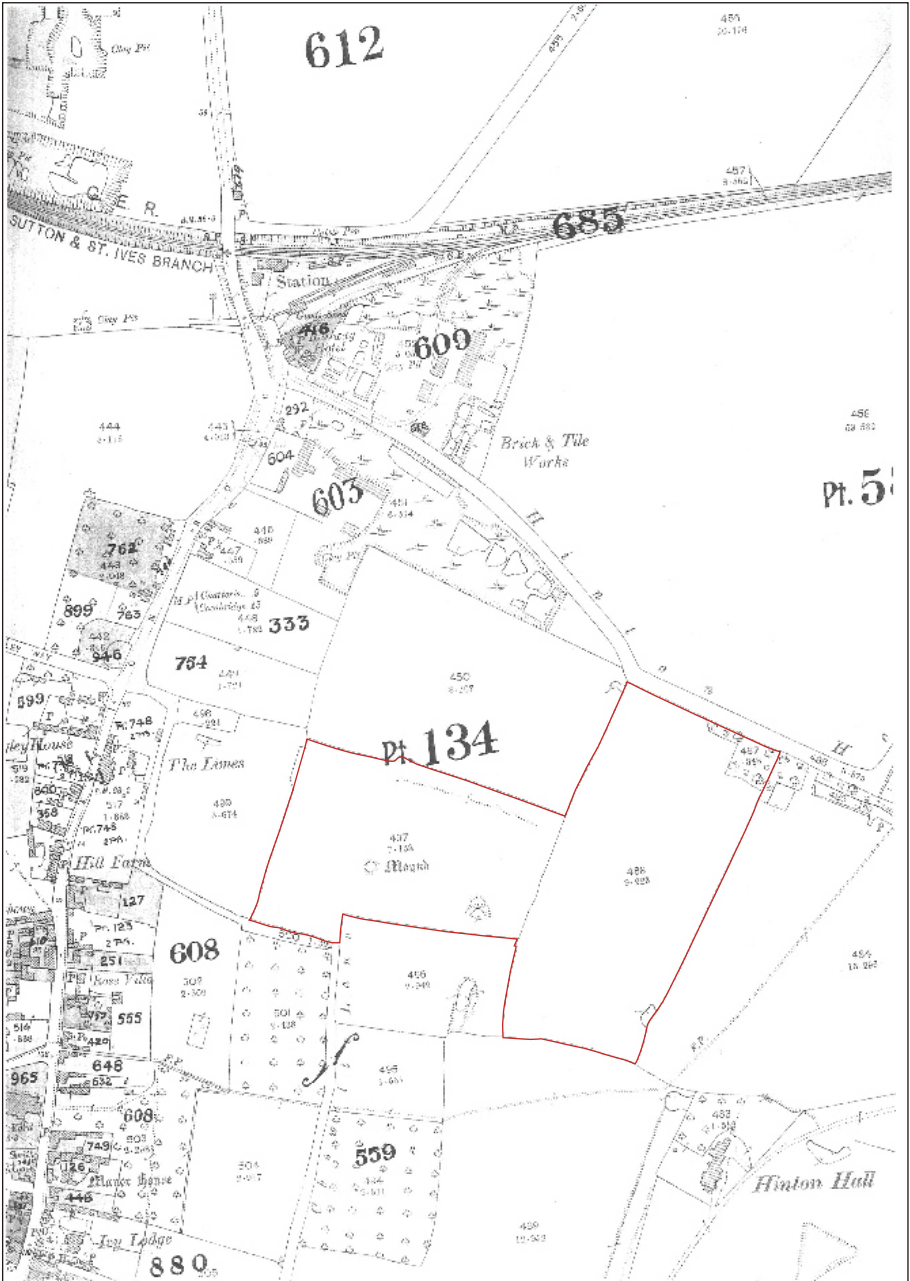


Figure 8. 1st Revision OS map (1902)