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SUNDON PARK, LOWER SUNDON, BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

Matt Edgeworth and Derwin Gregory



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**SUNDON PARK,
LOWER SUNDON, BEDFORDSHIRE**

Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment

Matt Edgeworth and Derwin Gregory

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SUMMARY

This report describes the results of a desktop assessment of land south of Manor Farm at Lower Sundon, Bedfordshire, commonly known as Sundon Park. The Study Area formed part of the home park of the manor of Sundon during the medieval and post-medieval periods, before the house was demolished in the early 19th century. In medieval times this was joined on to a much larger deer park, the form of which can still be traced on early maps and to some extent observed on the ground. Surviving earthworks include hollow ways, ridge-and-furrow, close boundaries, large house platform, lake or pond, and a large polygonal feature of unknown date and function. Clues to the location of other parts of the manorial complex, such as windmill and dovecote, can be deduced from fieldname evidence. Some features are related to landscaping of the park during the post-medieval period. It is thought that in the early 17th century the area around the house was transformed into a formal landscape garden, while in the following century it was reworked again into a more natural-looking landscape. On demolition of the house, the landscape garden reverted back to farmland.

CONTRIBUTORS

Matt Edgeworth compiled this report, drawing in part from material provided by Derwin Gregory and David McOmish.

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DATE OF RESEARCH

November-December 2012

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Cover image: photo of Sundon Park, looking southeast from churchyard, May 2011

© English Heritage/Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INTRODUCTION

Background to the project

The purpose of this desktop assessment is to investigate an area of historic parkland in Lower Sundon, Bedfordshire - henceforward referred to as the Study Area. It contains many earthwork features associated with the now demolished manor house and manorial park of Sundon, including hollow ways, ponds, landscaped garden areas, patterns of ridge-and-furrow and former close boundaries, as well as being part of or adjacent to a former medieval deer park. A proposed bypass connecting the M1 and the A6 and an associated planned urban extension to the north of Luton make it important to characterise the archaeological aspects of the Study Area, thereby providing an evidence base which could inform plans for development.

Location

The Study Area lies about 6km to the northwest of the centre of Luton, just half a kilometre from the northern urban boundary, and to the south of Lower Sundon village.

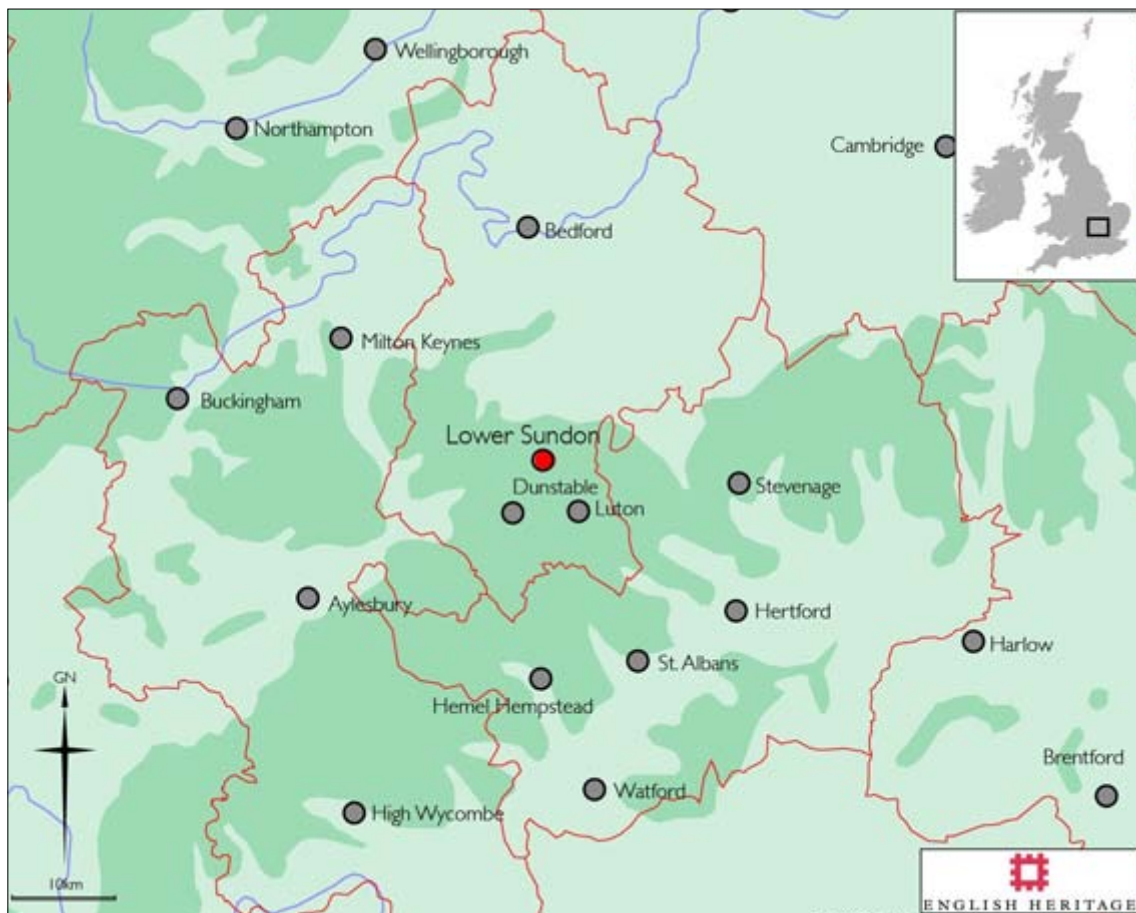


Figure 1. Location map. ©Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088

Dunstable is 5km to the southwest. It comprises about 19ha of land, most of which is currently under pasture. The Study Area is centred on NGR TL 0500 2676, and located within the present Central Bedfordshire Unitary Authority in the historic county of Bedfordshire (Figure 1).

It is useful to consider the location of the Study Area within the historic parish of Sundon. Sundon parish is part of the hundred of Flitt and until recently had an area of 2,160 acres, though boundary changes have taken out the area to the west of the M1, mainly occupied by an electricity substation for the national grid. The M1 now forms the western boundary. The northern boundary is marked by the chalk escarpment of the Chilterns, much of which is now part of Sundon Hills Country Park. The southern boundary is formed by the northern urban boundary of Luton, specifically the built-up area of Sundon Park estate, which was built in the 1930s as a self-contained community around the SKF ball-bearing factory (and is not to be confused with the park of the manor of Sundon and the medieval deer park from which the housing estate took its name). Most of the parish consists of undulating countryside on the dip slope from the escarpment, with a marked general gradient down from north to south. The highest point in the north of the parish is 162m and the lowest point in the south 133m above sea level – a drop of 29m (although there is a significant rise in ground level just to the south of Lower Sundon, which means that the Study Area itself has a general slope down from south to north).

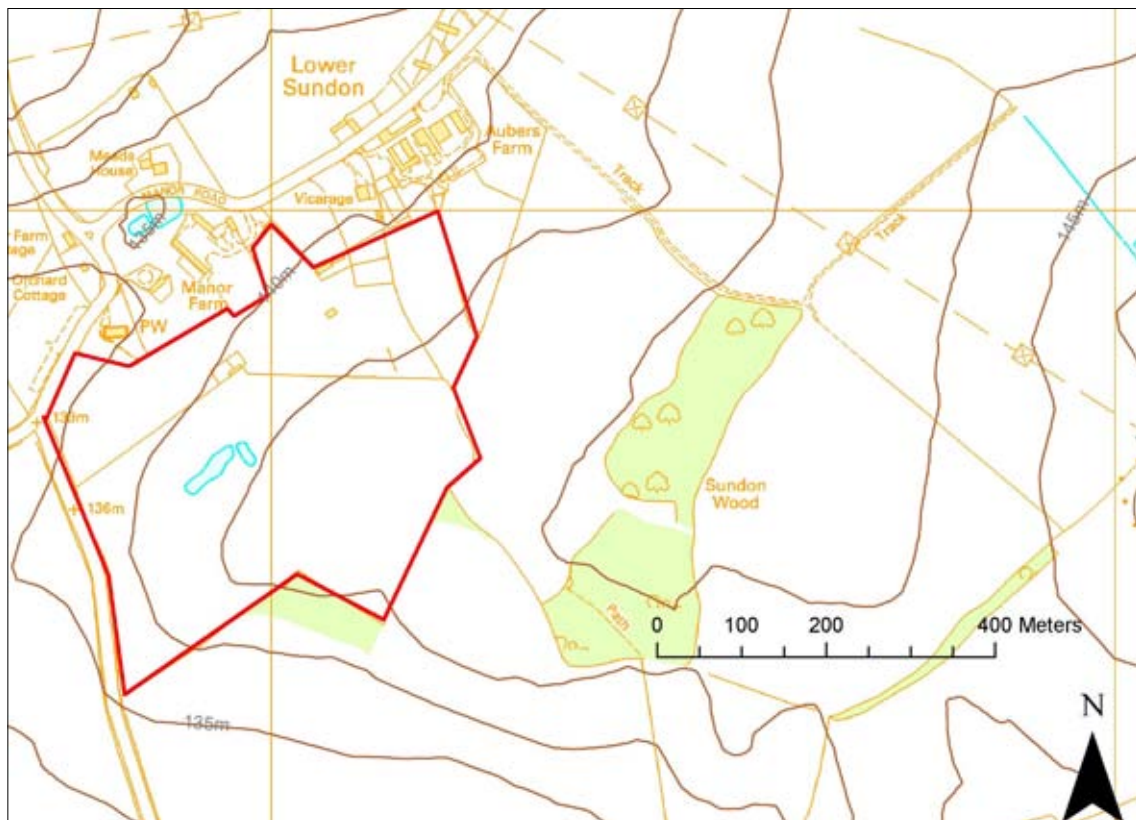


Figure 2. Detailed location map of Study Area (in red), with 5m contours. © Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088

The western side of the parish has been greatly affected by industry in the form of lime kilns, cement works, chalk quarries and landfill. By way of contrast, most of the eastern side has long been in agricultural use, with small areas of medieval woodland set within a post-enclosure pattern of fields. The northeastern part of the parish lies within the Chilterns AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), with the Study Area just outside.

There are two parts to the village in the centre of the parish – Upper Sundon and Lower Sundon – conforming to an irregular pattern of dispersed settlement that is common in Bedfordshire (Baker 1989, Brown and Taylor 1989, Edgeworth 2007a: 100). The Grade I listed church of St Mary is located in Lower Sundon to the south of Manor Road, with Manor Farm just to the east. The Study Area is just to the south of St Mary's Church, Manor Farm and Aubers Farm.

Geology and Topography

The underlying geology of the site is Middle Chalk formed during the Cretaceous period, overlaid by glacial fluvial deposits of sands, gravels, silts and clays of the Lowestoft formation (Digital Geological map of Great Britain 2008). There is a spur of high ground to the east of the Study Area: this was occupied by the medieval deer park.

Figure 2 shows the Study Area with 5m contours. The limits of the Study Area are marked as red lines where shown in figures in this report. Study Area limits have been selected for the purpose of focusing research on a cluster of earthworks, without implying there are no features of archaeological significance outside (the medieval deer park, for example, is almost entirely outside, though an important component of the manorial park). The area north of Luton subject to redevelopment has yet to be precisely defined so no attempt to map it has been made here.

In the Study Area itself the ground slopes down relatively steeply from south to north (contrary to the general slope of parish land from north to south). Substantial terracing has taken place in the past, giving the terrain a somewhat 'stepped' profile. The church, Manor Farm, and the site of the now demolished manor house, are all located on the lowest terrace to the north. Higher ground to the south bears traces of medieval and post-medieval ridge-and-furrow, tracks, lynchets, agricultural enclosure boundaries of various dates, ponds, drainage features, former garden terraces and an as yet unexplained polygonal earthwork. The Study Area is fringed to the south by hedged field boundaries and a small copse of woodland – the topography falls sharply to the south from this.

Parts of the Study Area have been ploughed in post-medieval times, but it is thought that no ploughing has taken place since the 19th century.

Public access

No part of the Study Area is accessible to public rights of way. A public footpath crosses the spur of high ground on which the medieval deer park was located, running for a short distance along part of its eastern boundary.

Designation and planning background

The earthworks in the Study Area were evaluated in 1989-1990 as part of the English Heritage MPP (Monument Protection Programme). The evaluation covered only those aspects of the landscape that fell within monument classes 'SMV' (shrunken medieval village) and 'deer park'. Scorings for both classes were 'adequate' and put Sundon Park on the borderline of being scheduled as a monument of national importance, but scheduling did not take place. There are no scheduled monuments within the parish of Sundon.

In 1990-91 a dispute arose between a landowner and the Conservation Department at Bedfordshire County Council (BCC) with regard to dumping of subsoil, infilling some of the earthwork features on the eastern side of the Study Area (centred on a triangular area called Finches Green, marked on the 1810-20 estate copy of the Enclosure Award map of 1769). A partly retrospective planning application was submitted to dump 8000 cubic meters of subsoil waste on 1.26 ha of land at Aubers Farm, and a Local Enquiry was held in Lower Sundon on January 7th, 1991.

One of the main points at issue was the archaeological significance of the specific area where dumping had taken place, in the context of the landscape and the complex of earthworks of which it was an element. Both sides of the case were argued by different archaeologists, using essentially the same evidence. Angela Simco argued for Bedfordshire County Council that the site was part of an extremely significant medieval landscape, some of the earthworks of which had been damaged and effectively rendered invisible by infilling of hollows (Simco 1991). David Miles of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, on the other hand, argued that as a shrunken or deserted medieval settlement (the MPP class to which it was assigned) the earthwork complex was interesting but unexceptional, and that Finches Green was just a small element in the articulation of a broader medieval landscape. He also questioned whether the covering over and infilling of earthworks had actually damaged them, given that preservation in situ is often used as a preferred archaeological mitigation strategy. According to Miles the best preserved parts of that landscape were close to the church, in the area of the manor park to the southwest, and in the general area of house platforms close to Aubers Farm – away from the specific site of dumping itself (Miles 1991). The Local Enquiry decided against this latter argument and refused planning permission, ordering some remedial work in restoring the former shape of the ancient landscape.

Several planning-related documents recognise Sundon Park as an area of significant archaeological interest. These include the *South Bedfordshire Local Plan* (South Bedfordshire District Council 2004), the *Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan* (Beds and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium 2007a and 2007b), *Sundon and Streatley Chiltern Arc Green Infrastructure and Access Vision Plan* (Central Bedfordshire Council 2013) and *Sundon Park: contributing to a vision for north Luton* (Connelly Homes 2006).

SOURCES

Previous archaeological work

An earthwork survey of the Study Area was carried out by the Manshead Archaeological Society in the early 1970s (Central Bedfordshire Council HER 3558).

A parish field survey of Sundon was conducted by David Hall in 1977-78, published in 1991. Its methodology consisted of recording field boundaries, headlands and ridge-and-furrow patterns so that open field patterns could be reconstructed. Most fields over 100m width were walked and artefact scatters recorded with the aim of discovering new sites. Several sites of Iron Age and Roman date were identified from pottery scatters in the area to the southeastern part of the parish. Hall describes Upper and Lower Sundon as shrunken vills, and points out that Sundon Wood in the Study Area has a linear bank around it, strongly indicating it is medieval in date (Hall 1991). His plan of the open field patterns of Sundon parish, showing dispersed settlements of Upper and Lower Sundon in the context of the agricultural hinterland, is reproduced in Figure 3.

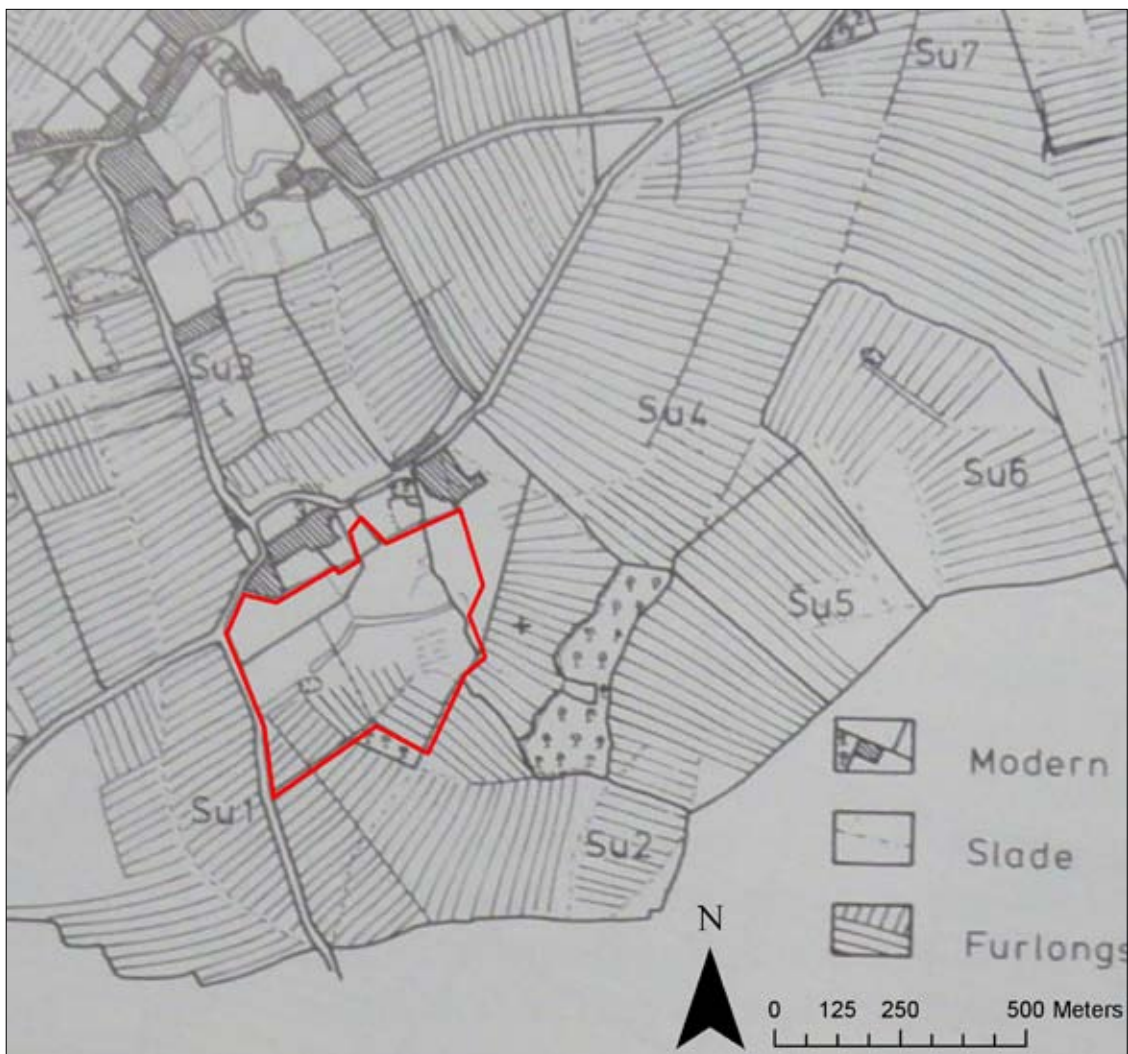


Figure 3. Upper and Lower Sundon, with ridge-and-furrow (Hall 1977/1991). Central Bedfordshire HER

During 1990-91, the Manshead Archaeological Society carried out further fieldwalking work throughout Sundon and neighbouring parishes. The results confirmed the sites of Iron Age and Roman date discovered through field walking and artefact collection by Hall (Manshead Archaeological Society 1992).

In the summer of 1995 the Manshead Archaeological Society again surveyed part of the Study Area and this time noticed parchmarks visible in grassland to the southeast of St Mary's Church, indicating the site of a substantial house (at NGR TL 049 268). One wing of the house was especially evident, with its rear wall running along the line of a modern fence. The area of parchmarks was identified as the site of Sundon House, demolished in the early 19th century. An excavation followed led by R. Hudspith. Seven trial trenches were excavated across the line of suspected walls. Brick floors and walls were found at a shallow depth below the turf as parts of the eastern wing of the building were uncovered, with a worn brick passageway observed running along the inner side of the rear wall. A collapsed brick culvert was recorded running in a southeast direction uphill from the house, presumably bringing water from a water source located at a higher level (the culvert is pointing straight at the smaller of the two ponds further up the slope, but it would originally have drawn water from the larger pond in an earlier elongated form). Finds of medieval pottery suggested that the site may have been the focus of earlier settlement too, although no definite proof was found to show that that this was the site of the earlier medieval house (Hudspith 1997, Manshead Archaeological Society 1998).

A rapid walkover survey of the Study Area was carried out by David McOmish of English Heritage in 2010. The plan and a summary of the description of earthworks from that brief examination of the site are reproduced later in this report.

Archaeological databases

The Central Bedfordshire HER contains 44 entries for Sundon parish, excluding standing buildings. These include several sets of cropmarks thought to date from the Iron Age and Roman periods, as well as pottery scatters indicating occupation of similar date, mostly in the south of the parish. There is a possible Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery to the west of Upper Sundon, and a deserted or shrunken medieval settlement between villages of Upper and Lower Sundon (refer to Central Bedfordshire HER for full list of entries for the whole of Sundon parish).

For the purposes of this study, the Central Bedfordshire HER was searched for all sites, including standing buildings, within or in the immediate vicinity of the Study Area (Figure 4). These are listed in Table 1 opposite..

The manor park and gardens are referred to in the review of Bedfordshire historic parks and gardens (Rutherford 1996) held in Central Bedfordshire HER, which was used to identify possible candidates for designation by English Heritage. It is also recognised as a historic park and garden in the South Bedfordshire Local Plan (South Beds District Council 2004, Policy BE7).

HER no	NGR	Feature	Further notes
1135	TL048 268	St Mary's Church	Mainly 14 th century work but some 13 th century. Medieval wall paintings. Grade I
3132	TL 048 069	moat, Manor Farm	Large pond between Manor farm and road, thought to be the remains of a moated enclosure.
3558	TL 053 268	shrunken village earthworks and park landscaping	Earthworks indicating hollow ways, close boundaries etc, plus some landscaped garden features
5969	TL 051 270	Aubers farmhouse, Manor Road	18 th century house. Grade II listed
6967	TL 051 270	St Mary's Vicarage, Manor Road	House built in 1846, Grade II listed
6968	TL 051 271	Chestnut Cottage, Manor Road	18 th century house, Grade II listed, classed as farm labourers cottage
8758	TL 055 271	deer park	Area of former park can be identified from names of closes and the nature of field boundaries (not shown on Fig 4)
8976	TL 047 268	St Mary's parish churchyard	Medieval/post-medieval
9310	TL 056 270	Iron Age and Roman occupation	North of Sundon Wood, identified from pottery scatters (not shown on Fig 4)
9340	TL 054 266	Sundon Wood	Ancient woodland, enclosed by low medieval banks, (not shown on Fig 4)
12526	TL 045 270	linear earthwork	Northwest of Sundon, probably a medieval headland (not shown on Fig 4)
12532	TL 054 271	linear cropmark	Northeast of Sundon, thought to represent a post medieval field boundary (not shown on Fig 4)
12539	TL 048 269	dovehouse	Site of demolished post-medieval and possibly medieval dovehouse, inferred from a close named as 'Dovehouse Close' on 18 th century map
12552	TL 050 270	Parsonage House	Building marked on 18 th century map in small close described as 'The Parson's'. The building does not survive.

12553	TL 052 268	Finches Green	Site of former medieval and post-medieval green. Lane leading into northwest corner. Neither green nor trackway are visible, but marked on 18 th century Enclosure Award map
15816	TL 052 265	Iron Age and Roman occupation	Southwest of Sundon Wood, in form of pottery scatters
16971	TL 049 270	medieval village of Lower Sundon	Described as a deserted medieval settlement, now occupied by post-medieval farms

Table 1. Listing of HER sites (Central Bedfordshire HER)

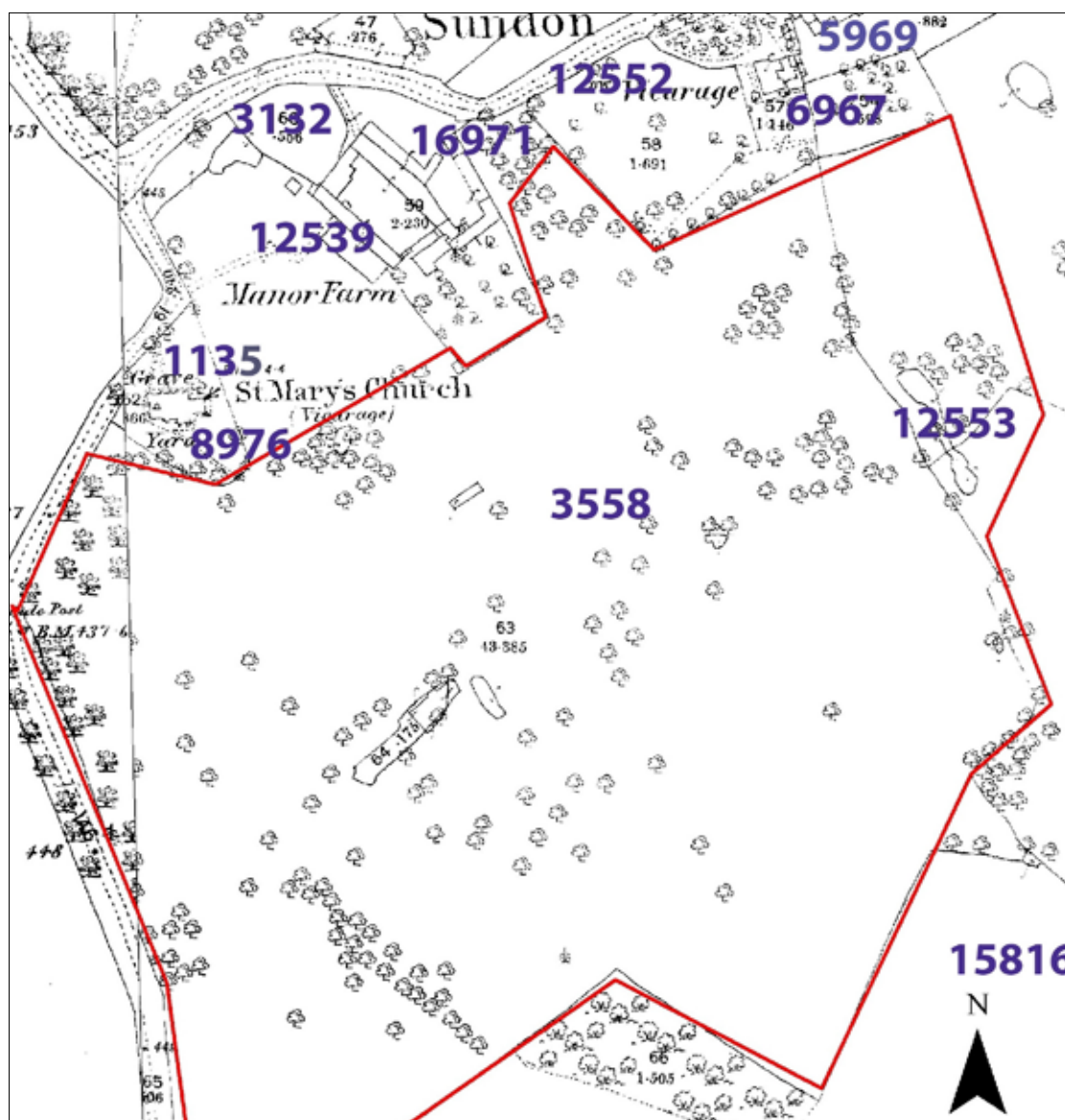


Figure 4. HER sites and monuments (adapted from Central Bedfordshire Council HER map)

The English Heritage AIME archive lists several sites of archaeological interest in the parish of Sundon, but only one – St Mary’s Church (Monument UID 359640) – in the immediate vicinity of the Study Area. This is described in the entry for HER 1135 in Table 1. It also lists one activity – the excavation carried out by the Manshead Archaeological Society (Event UID 1170755).

Listed buildings

There are four listed buildings in Lower Sundon – all located along Manor Road to the north of the Study Area. These are listed in Table 2.

Name	Grade	EH Building ID	NGR	Details
Aubers Farmhouse	II	36089 (HER 5969)	TL0513827086	CI8. Colourwashed brick. Two storeys. Hipped old tile roof.
Chestnut Cottage	II	36091 (HER 6968)	TL0510027097	CI8. Red brick. Two storeys. Clay tile roof. Gable end to road.
St Mary’s Church	I	36088 (HER 1135)	TL0481626853	CI3 arcades of high square piers, but church is mainly CI4.
St Mary’s Vicarage	II	36090 (HER 6967)	TL0510927019	Built in 1846. Listed primarily for its fine geometric latticed windows

Table 2. Listed buildings

Documentary sources

The entry for Sundon in the Domesday Book of 1086 reads:

M. William of Eu holds Sundon. It answers for 10 hides.
 Land for 16 ploughs. In Lordship 4 hides; 4 ploughs there.
 20 villagers have 12 ploughs. 11 smallholders; 12 slaves.
 Meadow for 4 ploughs; woodland, 100 pigs.
 Total value £10; when acquired £8; before 1066 £20.
 Alstan of Boscombe, a thane of King Edward’s, held this manor.
 In the same village 1 man-at-arms has 1 plough.

(Morris 1977: 18. para 1)

The Victoria County History (Page 1908, 2: 384-7) gives an excellent and detailed account of the history of the manor of Sundon, which is summarised here. As the Domesday Book of 1086 reveals, Alstan of Boscombe held it before 1066, with the manor passing to William d'Eu at the conquest. In the 13th century the manor came into possession of Earl Marshall, then to Richard de Clare the earl of Gloucester, then to the Badlesmere family. In the 14th century it was held by the Tipcots and the le Scropes, who kept it in their family by a straight line of father-son descent for two centuries. In the late 16th century the manor was alienated to the Tyrells, who after two generations passed it to Thomas Cheyne.

Other documentary sources record that a licence was granted for a Friday market in Sundon in 1315 (Godber 1969, 50), though this seems to have been short-lived as there is no further mention of it. There is no mention of a watermill in Sundon, but in 1712 there is a record of a windmill on the manor estate (Page 1908, 2: 383). Fieldname evidence for the location of the windmill will be reviewed in the next chapter.

The medieval manor house was altered/rebuilt by Thomas Cheyne in the early-mid 17th century, perhaps also setting out formal gardens. It is not certain whether any of the old buildings were incorporated into the new, or whether the location of the manor house shifted at that time (Godber 1969, 179; BLARS PRO C 205/5/3). A possibility is that the original house site was next to the pond on the higher terrace to the south, which could be the surviving vestiges of a moated enclosure. A second possibility is that an earlier house was next to the ponds between the present Manor Farm and Manor Road: this has also been suggested (in the HER for 3132) as the remains of a former moat. A third possibility is that the earlier house was located on the same site as the later one: this is suggested though by no means proven by the medieval pottery and tiles found by the Manshead Archaeological Society in their excavation of the house platform (Hudspith 1997, Manshead Archaeological Society 1998).

The Cheyne family held Sundon manor until 1716, when it was sold to William Clayton, who in 1735 became Baron Sundon of Ardagh and was henceforth known as Lord Sundon. His wife, Charlotte Clayton, now known as Lady Sundon, rose from Lady in Waiting to Lady of the Bed Chamber to Queen Caroline, and their nieces became maids of honour to children of the royal family. This period of influence and favour appears to have coincided with substantial work on the house (and perhaps corresponding work on the gardens too). On 21 August, 1735, Lady Pomfret wrote to Lady Sundon "I was graciously received, and acquainted her Majesty, to her great sorrow, how ill you had been; and then, to alleviate that sorrow, I informed her how much Sundon was altered for the better, and that it looked like a castle" (Thomson 1847, 297-8).

When Lord Sundon, William Clayton, died childless and intestate in 1752, the manor passed to the Cole family. In 1758 John Wesley stayed at Sundon while giving his well-known Assize sermon at St Paul's Church in Bedford. He wrote "I rode to Sundon. with one to whom a large estate is fallen, by her uncle's dying without a will". The house then passed quickly through a succession of owners, eventually being bought by Archibald Buchanan, who acquired the Sundon estates for £28,000 in 1768. Again there was a succession of owners until the estate was bought by the Page-Turner family in 1813. In



Figure 5. Sundon House – frontal view. Viewed from northwest. Painted by Thomas Fisher between 1812 and 1822. Original in Wardown Park Museum, Luton, Accession 1993/246, ©Luton Culture



Figure 6. Sundon House – rear view. Viewed from southeast. Painted by George Shepherd between 1812 and 1822. Original in Wardown Park Museum, Luton, Accession 1993/249, ©Luton Culture

1827 plans were drawn up for a new house to be built a short distance from the existing one. The old house was demolished, leaving only part of the stable block and rick-yard standing. For unknown reasons, however, the planned new house was never built. The estate remained in the hands of the Page-Turners into the 20th century (Page 1908, 2: 384-7).

Pictorial evidence

Two watercolour paintings of Sundon House by Thomas Fisher and George Shepherd, both of which are in the collections of Luton Culture, provide useful depictions of the post-medieval manor house in the early 19th century, shortly before demolition (Figures 6 and 7).

Both correspond to the plan of the house of 1827 drawn just before it was demolished, and can be taken to be reasonably accurate depictions. Taken together they are especially useful because Fisher's painting shows the frontal north-facing aspect of the house while Shepherd's painting shows the south-facing side to the rear. The latter has been painted from a vantage point just the other side of the large pond, which occupies the foreground of the picture, with line of view going directly across the lawned area. The house has the appearance of an older, possibly medieval, building re-fronted and encased within an 18th century facade. The crenellations probably derive from the 1735 phase of alteration referred to in the letter mentioned above, which made the house look like 'a castle'.

Aerial photographs

Aerial photographs held by Central Bedfordshire Council were examined. Those found to be of particular relevance to the Study Area are listed in the References section. Figure 7 shows the area in an aerial photograph of 1974, looking obliquely towards the northeast. Numerous earthworks are visible, including many linear features (hollow ways, driveways, drainage channels, field boundaries). The partially wooded character of the Study Area is apparent. In the centre of the photo is an enigmatic polygonal feature, up to 45m wide, next to the linear ponds. This feature will be discussed later.

Maps

The earliest map of Sundon manor to survive was surveyed in 1769 as part of a Parliamentary Enclosure Award, though this is only accessible in the form of an estate copy of 1810-20. This is particularly useful for showing the manorial estate as a whole, including the area of the former medieval deer park. It provides valuable fieldname evidence for both deer park and Study Area, and shows the pond prior to its radical foreshortening. It also depicts the house and stables, though rather faintly. A plan of Sundon Park dated to 1827 gives a more detailed picture of house and landscaped park in their later phases of use. Another plan of the same year shows the intended replacement for the then demolished house, though this was never actually built. All maps consulted are listed as primary sources in the References section. Some of the most useful ones are reproduced in the next chapter.



Figure 7. Oblique aerial photo, looking east, showing polygonal feature near centre of image. Copyright reserved Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (BRV23 1974-12-13)

Rapid walkover survey

A rapid walkover survey of the Study Area was carried out in 2010, with permission, and the description of the site obtained from that visit is summarised here. Refer to Figure 8 for a plan of the features described.

The ground rises relatively steeply from north to south but substantial terracing has taken place and so the terrain now has a rather 'stepped' profile. The lower terrace to the north is currently occupied by the church and Manor Farm. To the south, the higher ground bears traces of enclosed open fields and later agricultural compartments as well as ponds, former garden terraces and the polygonal earthwork structure. The area of interest is fringed to the south by hedged field boundaries and a small copse of woodland - the topography falls sharply to the south from this.

Showing clearly in the landscape are patterns of ridge-and-furrow and furlong boundaries. These are particularly well preserved on the upper slopes at the southern and western ends of the park. There is a double lynchet track running northwest to southeast across the southwest corner of the site. Some of the ridge-and-furrow may be ancient but there are also more regular patterns of narrower and lower cultivation ridges that are clearly of more recent date. Within the later ditched paddocks an extensive system of drainage ditches has been inserted, presumably to help manage and improve the pasture within the formergarden landscape.

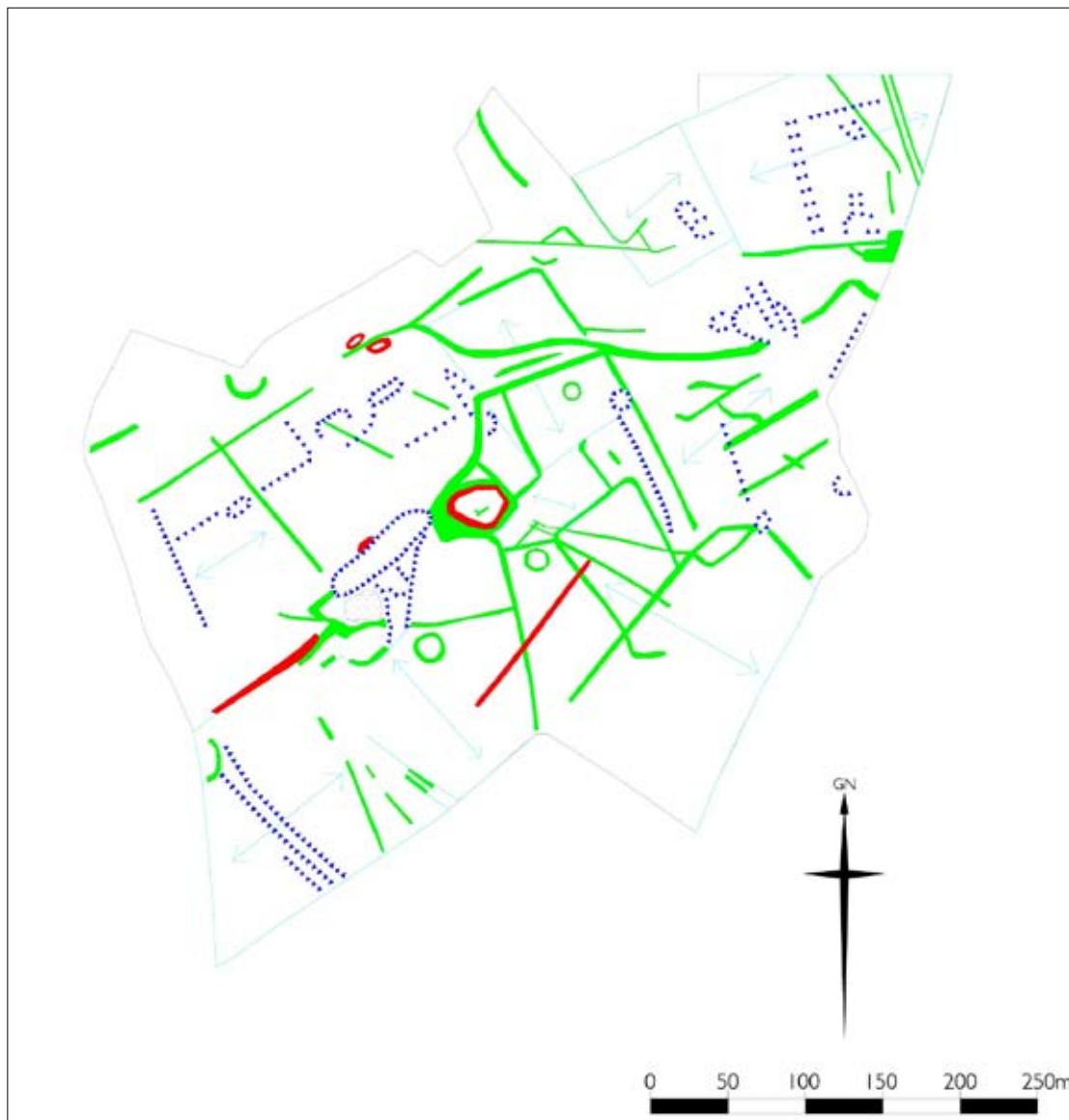


Figure 8 Plan of Study Area from rapid walkover survey in 2010 and aerial photograph interpretation. Red indicates positive features or upstanding earthworks. Green indicates negative features or hollows. Lines of blue hashers represent breaks of slope. The pale blue double headed arrows indicate direction of ridge-and-furrow, with associated field boundaries



Figure 9. Photo looking southeast across former site of manor house towards the pond from churchyard. © English Heritage, December 2012. For a photo of the same scene in summer, see the cover image

The most prominent features in the Study Area are the linear pond and the polygonal earthwork enclosure at the eastern end of it. These are positioned close to the break of slope above the lower terrace and may represent the surviving remains of an earlier 'formal' garden layout. A number of drainage channels feed into the pond. It is possible that the pond extended to the south at both ends and could possibly have formed a more extensive moated enclosure. The polygonal enclosure is about 45m in width. It consists of a low earthen bank 6-8m wide and up to 1m high enclosing a hollow area within: in some aerial photographs and in the LIDAR image this seems to overlie an earlier square earthwork.

Several former tree mounds can be seen on land to the south of the polygonal enclosure, clearly overlying the ridge-and-furrow. The site of the manor house, demolished in the early 19th century, is on the lower ground below the pond/moat and polygonal feature. Its location is marked now by a wide and level terrace with other minor terraces and scarps close by (Figure 10). Ridge-and-furrow cultivation appears in places to pre-date the house terrace. Several smaller square and rectilinear compounds to the east are traces of enclosed gardens associated with the house (worth investigating further for traces of early garden layout). A series of small tracks and paths are evident in this area too.

The photographs in Figures 9 and 10 were taken from the churchyard in December, 2012.



Figure 10. Photo looking east over garden area and towards Sundon Wood, from churchyard. © English Heritage, December 2012

LIDAR survey

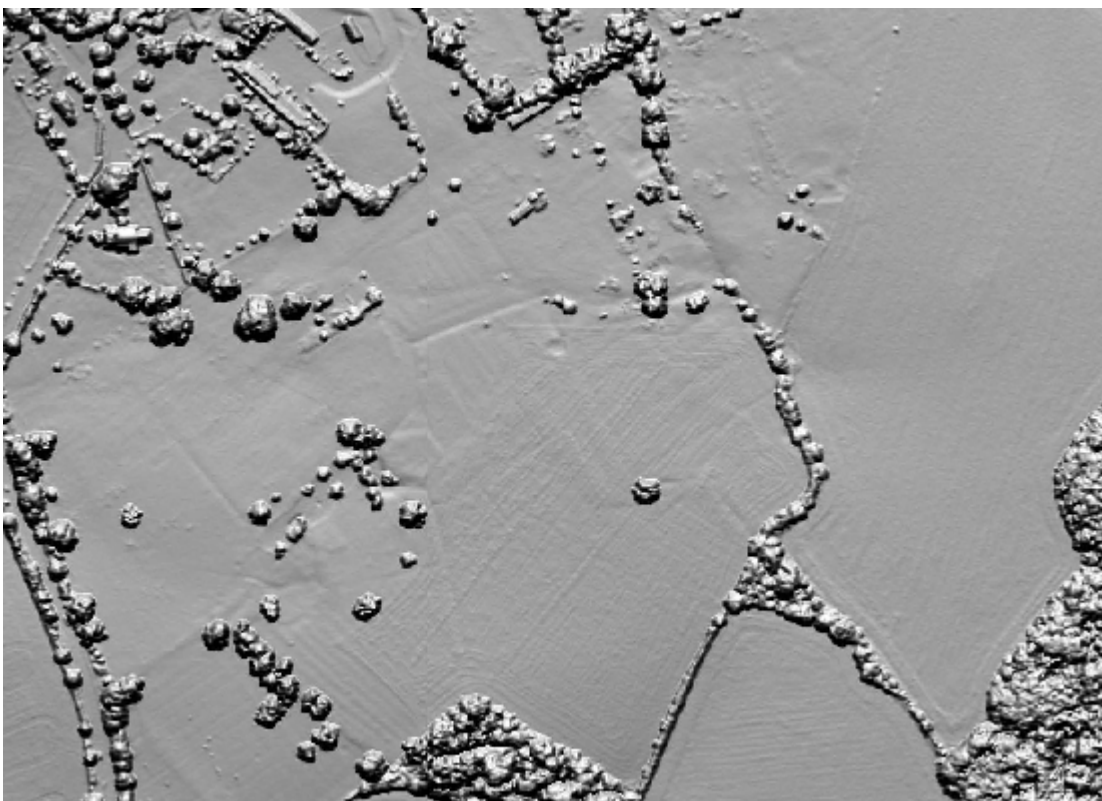


Figure 11. LIDAR image of the Study Area (Licensed to English Heritage for PGA, through Next Perspectives™ 2012)

Figure 11 is an image generated from LIDAR data. LIDAR is a form of optical remote sensing undertaken from the air and is increasingly used by archaeologists to map slight changes in ground height. In this case the survey was undertaken by the Environment Agency.

Some of the linear features (close boundaries, hollow ways, drainage channels) show up especially well. Note how the polygonal feature in the centre of the Study Area seems to overlay an earlier sub-rectangular or square enclosure. Ridge-and-furrow patterns are also visible. On more detailed versions numerous smaller tree mounds can be seen, especially in the area to the south of the pond.

The LIDAR image, taken together with aerial photos and the map from the rapid walkover survey, illustrates the considerable extent of survival of earthworks, thus highlighting the need for a detailed earthwork survey to be carried out.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Prehistoric and Roman (to AD 410)

The Study Area is in a region rich in prehistoric remains. Various branches of the Icknield Way, often said to be the oldest road in Britain, follow the line of the chalk escarpment in the north of the parish (Branigan 1994). The Neolithic causewayed camp and Iron Age hillfort Maiden Bower is only 7km to the southwest, while the large Neolithic henge-like enclosure at Waulud's Bank, on the source of the River Lea, is just 2.5km to the southwest. Some of the cropmarks visible on aerial photographs of the parish of Sundon (HER 9309 9333) are likely to be of Iron Age or Roman date.

Simco's survey of Roman Bedfordshire (1984) lists several sites where Iron Age and Roman pottery has been found. The Central Bedfordshire HER lists several sites in close vicinity to the Study Area but none inside it. These include HER 9310 and I5816 at just on the edge of Sundon Wood at either end: these were occupation areas identified through scatters of pottery in 1977 (Hall 1991).

In general there is little prehistoric activity evident in the Study Area in the form of earthworks, though not much would have survived extensive medieval and post-medieval re-working of the landscape. It cannot be ruled out, however unlikely it may be, that the polygonal feature is prehistoric in origin (see Wilkinson 2008 for results of an excavation of a hexagonal earthwork of similar dimensions, originally thought to be an 18th century garden feature or modern defensive installation, but which proved to be of late Iron Age date) but it is much more probable that it is later in date.

Anglo-Saxon (410-1066)

The manor and associated hamlet of Lower Sundon has its origin in the Anglo-Saxon period. As its listing in the Domesday Book of 1086 indicates, it was an already established estate/settlement by the time of the Norman conquest, described as a manor of mixed arable, meadow and woodland. The basic layout of village and manor would have already been in place by the mid 11th century, when the lord of the manor was Alston of Boscombe and the manor was worth £20. However, it was only deemed to be worth £10 after the conquest, when William d'Eu held the manor (Morris 1977).

Early versions of the placename include 'Sunnandon' (1053) and 'Sonedone' (1086). The name is thought to derive from Sunna's dun or hill (Mawer and Stenton 1926). The dun referred to is probably the higher ground in the north side of the parish, although it could mean the small area of slightly elevated ground on which the church was located.

Although the present church is of later work there may have been, by comparison with other sites, a preceding late Saxon church on the same location. It seems reasonable to suppose that the late Saxon manor attested in Domesday had a chapel as an integral part of the manorial complex, though there is no definite proof of this. Much of the surrounding land may have been cultivated as part of the open field system, and some patterns of ridge-and-furrow visible today may date back to Saxon times (Hall 1998).

Medieval (AD 1066-1540)

Church and nearby features

It was common for principal manors to be to be closely associated with village churches, often sited adjacent to each other. St Mary's Church (HER 1135) and churchyard (HER 8976) are located just 100m northwest of the site of the old manor house, and 100m southwest of the present Manor Farm. The church contains some 13th-14th century work, and medieval paintings were recently discovered on interior walls. In the south transept are brass inscriptions to Lady Sundon (d.1742) and William Clayton or Lord Sundon (d.1752).

The large pond (HER 3132) between Manor Farm and the road, 140m to the north of the church, is thought to be the remains of a moat, and could conceivably represent a former site of the manor house. An alternative interpretation is that it is primarily a pond, perhaps adjacent to a spring. For villages and small towns in South Bedfordshire without a stream or river, spring-fed ponds next to main roads were essential - providing ready water resources for the watering of animals, domestic use and light industry. The nearby town of Dunstable had several roadside ponds, for example, and the rectangular Town Water in Toddington also provides a useful comparison (Albion Archaeology 2003: 17, 28).

Deer park

The deer park (HER 8758) attached to the manor house was located on the higher spur of ground to the east. There is no documentary reference to when it was created, and it is not mentioned in the Domesday Book. Although it could have originated in the middle-late Anglo-Saxon period, emparkment in the 12th-13th centuries is perhaps more likely. Only the richest families had deer parks, and there are about 40 currently known in Bedfordshire (Edgeworth 2007a, 102). Hunting of deer was the primary purpose but the park would have served a multitude of other functions too. As well as deer, other grazing animals such as cattle and horses would have been pastured there and game birds such as pheasants and grouse stocked. Trees provided timber for building and fuel. There was a strong relationship between park-making and a desire to express high social standing (Liddiard 2007, 15), and a royal licence would have been required. The park was most probably bounded by a linear ditch and bank topped by a timber palisade or 'pale', with the ditch on the inner side of the bank to allow deer to enter but not to escape from the park.

The boundaries of the Sundon deer park and thus almost its full extent and area can be discerned on the 1810-20 estate copy of Enclosure Award map of 1769, although there was probably at least one phase of contraction, and the location of the southwest boundary in particular is a matter of some conjecture. At its largest extent, it could possibly have contained part of the modern housing estate of Sundon Park, now an urban district of Luton. Figure 12 shows the most obvious area of the deer park as evident from field names and boundaries marked on the map (green line), while also showing a possible earlier and broader extent (dashed line). Subsequent phases of enclosure would have taken place inside the deer park from the middle of the medieval

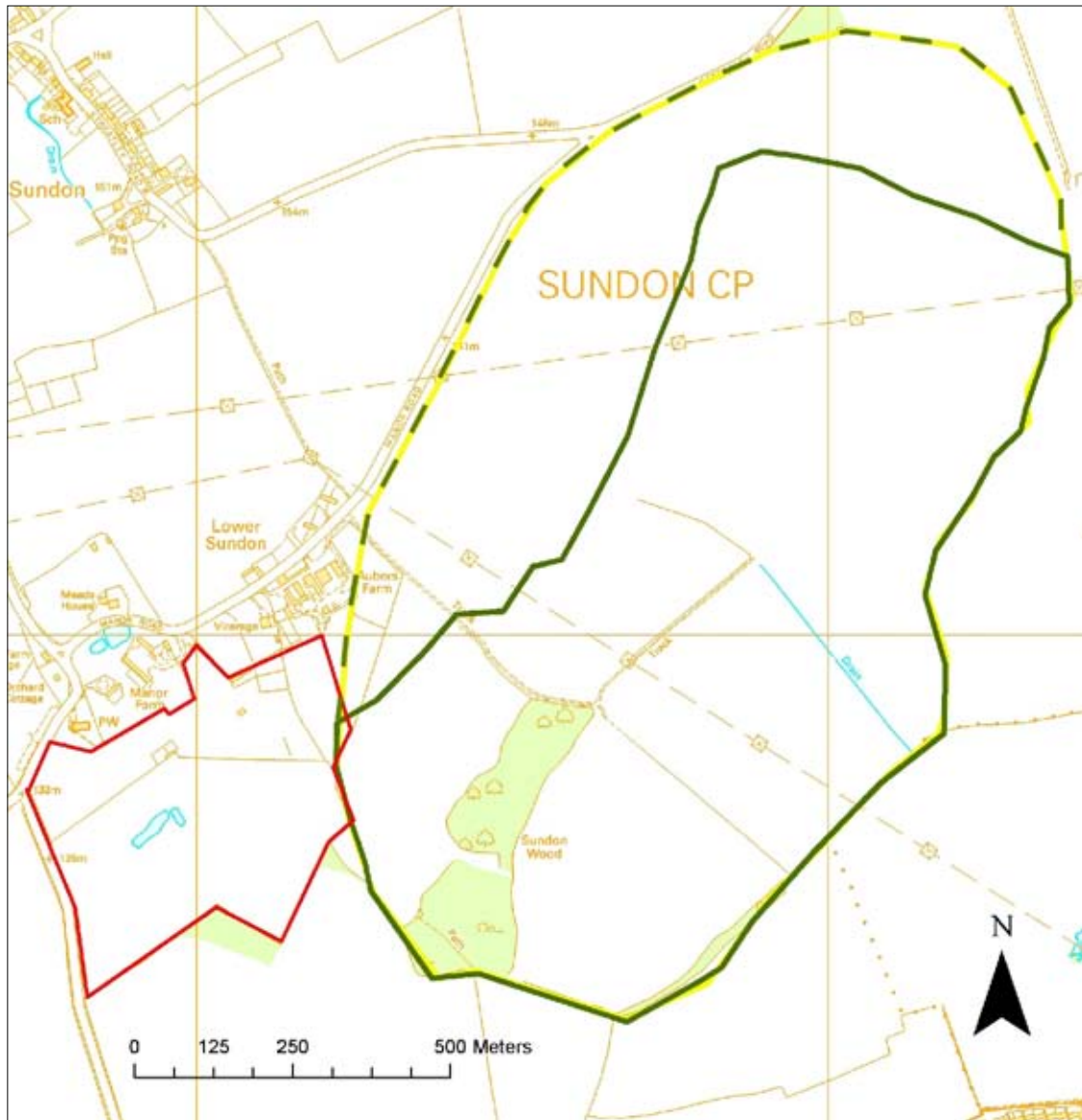


Figure 12. Area of former medieval deer park with suggested earlier (dashed green and yellow) and later (green) phases shown. The Study Area is shown in red. ©Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088

period on (though many of the more rectangular fields date from parliamentary enclosure in the 18th century). Field names that retain the 'park' element include Matthew's Park, Perlieu Lane Park, Little Park, Great Park, Bank Park, Plowed Park, Outer Park, Middle Park, Upper Park, Lower Park, Stocking Park and Robinson's Park. Park Close lies outside the later but within the probable extent of the earlier park (Figure 13).

The total estimated area of the later deer park is 85ha or 210 acres (112ha or 276 acres for the proposed earlier park), as mapped on Figure 12 and 13. Sundon deer park is a fairly small example compared with the more extensive deer parks of larger estates, such as the 3000 acre deer park at Woburn. The rounded edges are typical of medieval deer parks in general.

between the church and the present Manor House Farm. Other types of structures that were part of the manorial living larder would have included bee hives, as suggested by 'Bee Close', and rabbit warrens (Williamson 2007), as suggested by 'Coney Close', the locations of which are marked on Figure 13.

Mill

'Millers Close' is of particular interest with regard to the question of where a mill could have been located. The mill referred to by the field-name was most probably a windmill, especially with regard to the 1712 documentary reference to a windmill (Page 1908, 2: 383). When it is considered that Millers Close slopes up from 145m AOD in the northwest to 150m AOD in the southeast, where it reaches the high spur of land currently occupied by Sundon Wood, the higher southeastern part of the close is the obvious place to look for a windmill mound (possibly now hidden within the present wood). This position would be ideal for taking advantage of prevailing westerly winds.

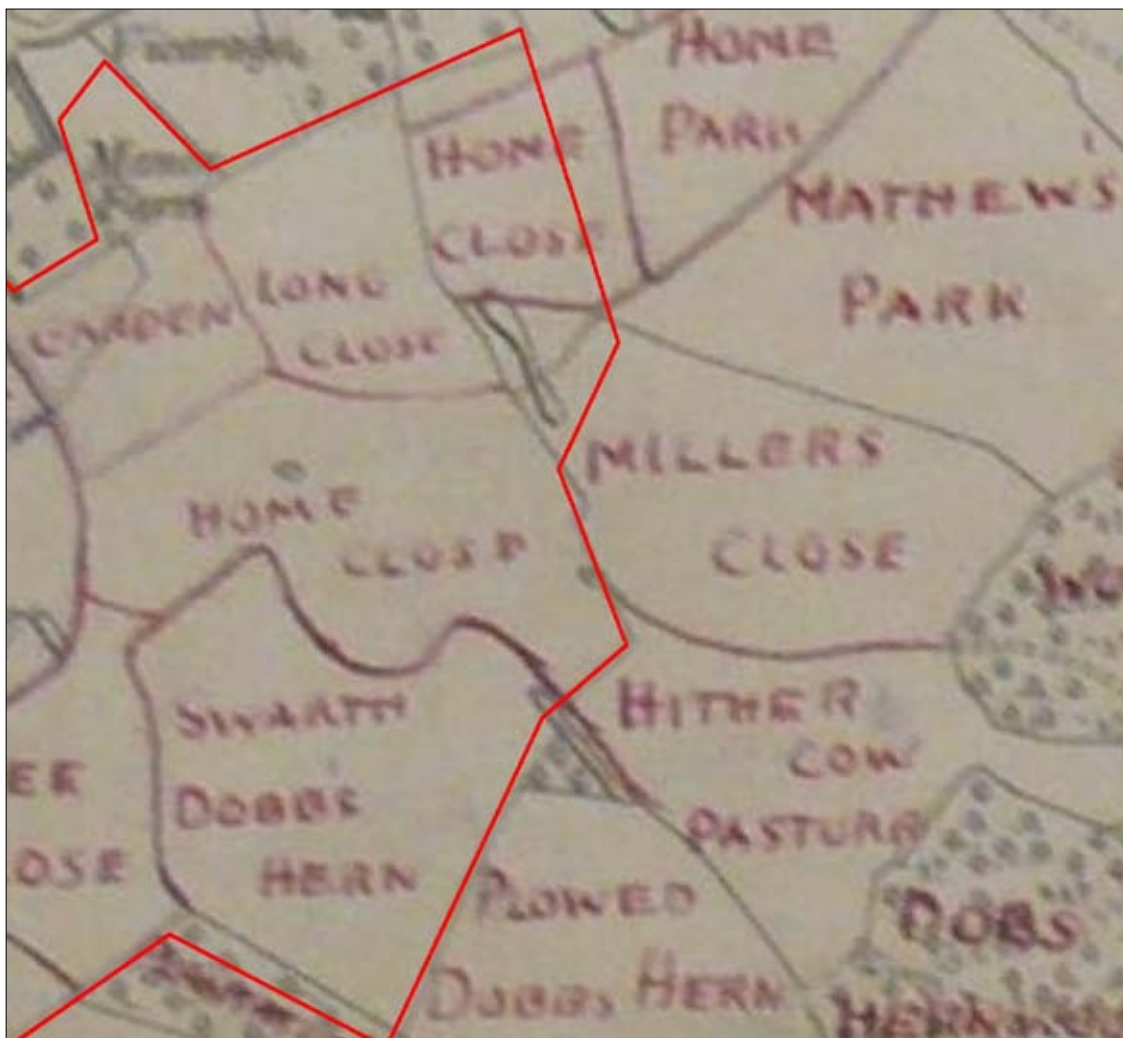


Figure 14. Millers Close on detail of fieldname map (transcribed from 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 Enclosure Award map by Angela Simco, Central Bedfordshire Council HER), with Study Area in red

However, the possibility of an earlier water-management system which included a watermill in the lower part of Millers Close should not be dismissed out of hand. One theory which needs further investigation on the ground is the idea that a former stream was channelled along the western boundary of the deer park, which (on the map at least) has a more or less continuous gradient and a total fall in height of several metres from northeast to southwest. A dam across the path of the stream in the vicinity of Finches Green (roughly along the line of the linear pond that forms one side of the triangular green) might have enabled the water to be diverted in controlled fashion along the higher terrace through the Study Area without losing its continuous downwards gradient, making the existence of a mill feasible. More detailed study of topography on the ground would be needed to verify or refute this hypothesis.

House platform

The house platform for the post-medieval house is likely - though not certain - to be the site of the preceding medieval manor house. Medieval pottery and tile fragments were found here in excavations by the Manshead Archaeological Society in 1995 (Hudspith 1997, Manshead Archaeological Society 1998).

Ponds

Two ponds are located on the higher terrace overlooking the house platform. The larger one is 60m long and 12m wide, running in a southwest to northeast direction, roughly parallel to and 60m away from the former house. It is labelled a 'fishpond' on the Plan of Sundon Park of 1827. The pond is shown as a much larger water feature on the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 Enclosure Award map. Though roughly the same width as now, it is 150m in length (40m longer than the present pond at the southwest end, 50m longer at the northeast end). At some time between 1769 and 1817, then, the pond was greatly foreshortened.

On the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 map, the pond looks as though it has watercourses feeding into and out of it at either end, raising the possibility of there once being a relict water management system running through the Study Area, hidden by later landscape changes. Flowing water is an element that is missing from the landscape today, but some linear features interpreted as hollow ways could in fact have been channels for water flow (an aspect of the site that needs further investigation, through more detailed study of topography and gradient). The pond also appears to be fed by a small spring at its southwestern end.

The smaller pond measures about 30m long and 9m wide, oriented at right angles to the other pond. It runs along one side of the polygonal earthwork (the larger pond, in its original extent, ran along another side), suggesting that the earthwork might once have been bounded by water on all sides.

Whether the larger pond started off as a natural watercourse or not (it could be argued that it is more likely to be an artificial feature, because of the way it follows the higher rather than the lower terrace), it probably has a complex history of use. In medieval

times it may well have served as a fishpond - or a chain of fishponds linked together and later made into a single water feature - providing a valuable source of food. But it would have had many other functions, not least as a convenient source of water for the manor house. The difference in height between pond and house platform would have meant that water could be conveyed easily by gravity from one to the other, and this may have been a consideration in the layout of manorial components within the landscape, with existing natural topography modified to take full advantage of the slope of land.

Running roughly parallel to the house, the linear pond could also have served as an important visual element in the ornamental landscape of the manorial park, especially during the 17th and 18th centuries. Typically such features were incorporated into formal landscapes which were later 'naturalised', according to the changing fashion of the times. Somewhat paradoxically, garden features which look the most natural can often turn out to be the most artificial, in the sense of having gone through multiple phases of shaping and re-shaping.

Medieval closes

Just to the south of the ponds on the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 map is a distinct group of closes which appears to be neither earlier open fields that were emparked nor later parliamentary enclosures of disparked land, and both Simco (1991) and Miles (1991) suggest that they are most probably of medieval date. These closes (Swarth Dobb's Hern, Plowed Dobb's Hern, Dobb's Hern Wood, Hither Cow Pasture, Home Close, Bee Close and Miller's Close) together form an oval piece of land that occupies the intermediate area between the home park and deer park, with the polygonal feature at the eastern end.

Sundon Wood

Sundon Wood (HER 9340) – marked on the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 map as Six Acres Wood and Dobbs Hern Wood - is just outside the Study Area but of some relevance to the understanding of closes within it. It is partially enclosed by low banks thought to be of medieval date. Even so, parts of it are clearly later in date than the oval of medieval closes discussed above, in the sense that continuations of close boundaries are overlaid by later woodland boundaries.

Shrunken medieval village

Despite the many earthworks visible in the Study Area, no house platforms of the kind characteristic of deserted medieval villages are apparent (apart from the levelled area for the manor house itself). Of course this may be because they have not yet been noticed. But it is also likely to be because the medieval village was mainly to the north in the hamlet of Lower Sundon, either side of Manor Road and just outside of the Study Area. In the 18th century the village extended southwards along a small north-south running lane, leading down to a location known as Finches Green, which is on the eastern side of the Study Area. It can be speculated that this layout came into existence during the medieval period. In the period between 1769 and 1827, the village shrunk back to something like its present size.

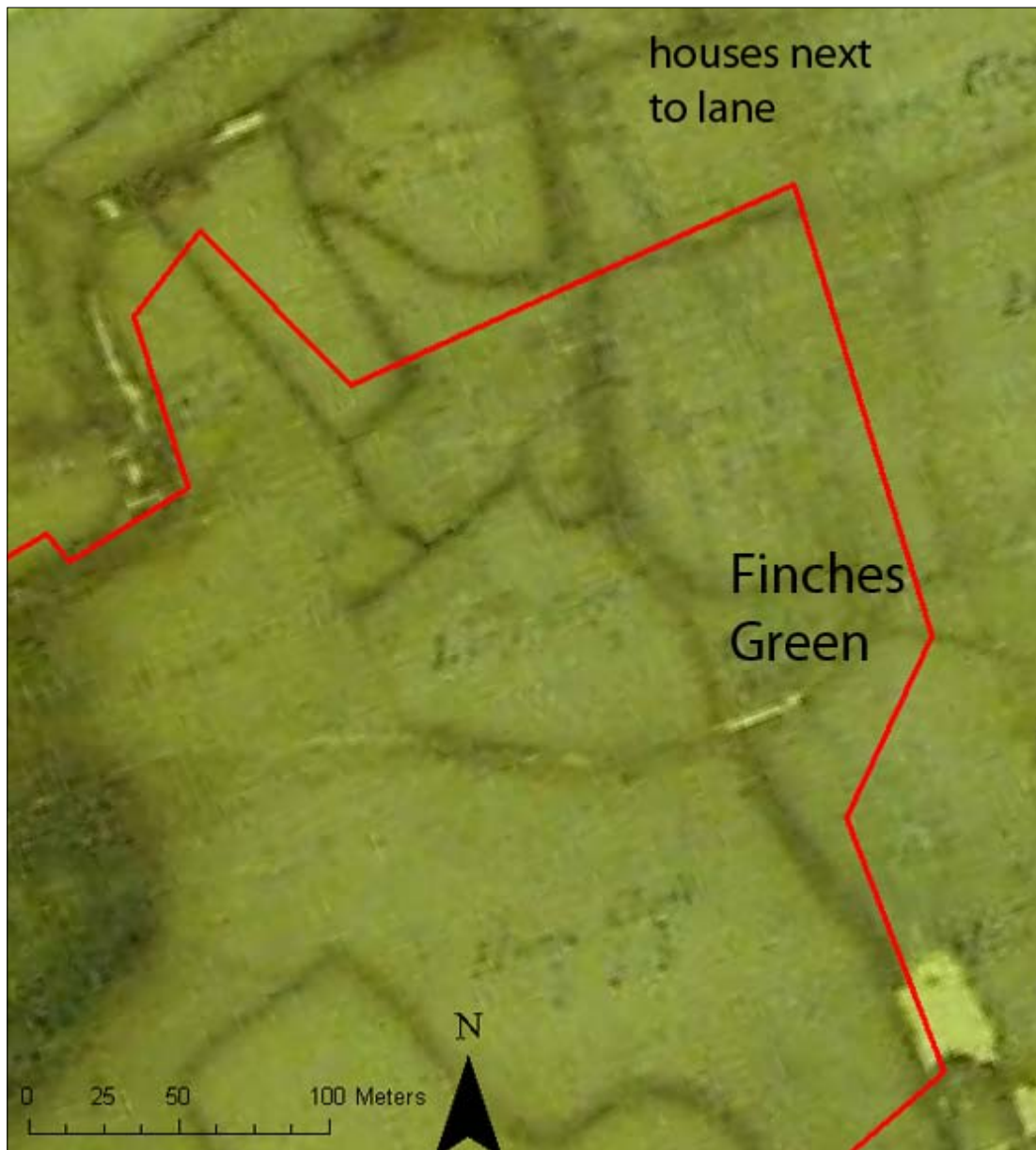


Figure 15. Finches Green and the settlement along lane to the north, as shown on the early nineteenth century estate copy of the Enclosure Award map of 1769 (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service T42/608B). Sides of Study Area shown in red

Finches Green (HER 12553) is marked on the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 map as a triangular area with sides measuring roughly 50 x 70 x 70m. A linear pond runs along one side of the triangle. David Miles describes it as a “crossroads of hollow ways” – most of which were no longer extant on the 1827 map – and “a natural hollow up to 4m deep” (Miles 1991). It remains a difficult feature to interpret, and the possibility that it could have been associated with a relict system of water-management has already been suggested, with the implication that some of the linear features interpreted as hollow ways could have been channels for flowing water.

Neither Finches Green nor the north-south hollow lane survive as landscape features today, having been partially infilled with subsoil in the early 1990s.



Figure 16. Sketch plan by Angela Simco (1991), showing patterns of ridge and furrow and other earthworks (Central Bedfordshire Council HER) with modern Ordnance Survey map as base. Study Area shown in red. ©Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088

Ridge-and-furrow

There is much surviving ridge-and-furrow in the Study Area, relatively undamaged due to the land not being ploughed much since the 19th century, and best visible on aerial photography and LIDAR. Some of the ridge-and-furrow appears to be medieval in date, underlying later close boundaries. But in most cases ridges are relatively flat and regularly spaced, indicating that they were probably the outcome of steam ploughing carried out since disparkment, often within medieval closes or post-enclosure field boundaries. The task of disentangling ridge-and-furrow that has formed since parliamentary enclosure,

from remnants of open fields that predate the establishment of the deer park and landscaped park, has not been attempted in this study, but is identified as an avenue for further research.

Patterns of ridge and furrow with associated headlands are shown on Hall's map of 1977/91, the map by Miles in his 1991 proof of evidence, and Simco's map from her proof of evidence of the same year (Figure 16).

Linear features

There are numerous linear features throughout the Study Area surviving as earthworks or visible on aerial photos and LIDAR. These are a mixture of hollow ways, close boundaries and drainage features (HER 3558) – many of which are difficult to date, but some almost certainly originate in the medieval period and carried on in use through to more recent times. In the southwest of the Study Area is a double-lynchet trackway which may once have formed a continuation of the road from Sundon to Luton. As already noted, some of the hollow ways could possibly have functioned as water channels in a relict water management system.

Polygonal feature

The polygonal feature is located at the centre of the Study Area, at the northeastern end of the present fishpond. One side of it is flanked by a small linear pond running northeast to southwest, and the original extent of the larger pond would have run southwest to northeast along another side. It therefore seems probable that at one time the feature was enclosed on all sides by a surrounding ditch or moat.

The feature takes the form of a denuded polygonal bank up to 1m high and 6-8m wide, with a hollow in the interior. The banked enclosure as a whole is about 45m long and 35m wide, though there has clearly been some spreading of the bank. On some aerial photographs and on the LIDAR image it appears as though the polygonal enclosure may be overlying an earlier rectangular enclosure. The most useful plan of it is was drawn in the 1970s by the Manshead Archaeological Society (Figure 17).

The function and date of the earthwork is unknown. It is discussed in this section only because it could be of medieval date – on the grounds that adjacent medieval closes appear to respect its shape, as if formed around an existing feature. Its function may be connected with the nearby manor house and adjacent fishponds, and any interpretation will have to take account of its context and perhaps later use within the manorial home park. In the absence of excavated or geophysical evidence it is only possible to speculate on function, but it is possible that there was a building connected in some way with the management of the deer park and the activities that took place there. For example, it could be an earthen enclosure within which a kennels for hunting dogs was located (see Liddiard 2007, 116, for a 15th century print of a kennels set within a polygonal enclosure of roughly comparable dimensions). However, an early post-medieval date and an ornamental function for the earthwork must also be considered.



Figure 17. Detail of earthwork survey plan by Manshead Archaeological Society in 1970s, showing the polygonal feature (Central Bedfordshire Council HER)

Post-Medieval period (1540-1901)

Sundon House and Park

By the 17th/18th centuries the house of Sundon manor had effectively become a country house with associated landscaped park. In line with wider trends, increased emphasis was placed on the display of wealth and status through the building of great houses and associated gardens (Kennett 1987). The deer park gradually lost some of its former importance in the manorial economy. From this time on, when Sundon Park is mentioned, it is generally the smaller landscaped park in the vicinity of the house that is being referred to.

Sundon House was not one of the larger country houses with huge parks like those at Woburn, Southill and Wrest (there were 34 houses of 15 hearths or more listed in 1671 Hearth Tax records for Bedfordshire). It was rather one of the 125 houses or so smaller country houses occupied by people who could be called 'gentry', many of which have since been demolished (Kennett 1990). Examples from central Bedfordshire include those at Battlesden, Moggerhanger, Houghton, Ampthill, Hazells, and Flitwick Manor. The park at Moggerhanger makes an especially interesting comparison because the original

parkland predates the current house, and there are several surviving early parkland and medieval landscape features (Hannah Firth, pers. comm). The possibility of 'forgotten gardens', partially hidden by later landscape transformations, is briefly discussed in Edgeworth (2007b, 125).

Earthworks at Sundon Park which have clearly been constructed as components of a designed ornamental landscape include carriage drives and tree mounds. The pond too was modified to serve as an ornamental feature, whatever its more utilitarian functions may have been. It has also been suggested that the polygonal earthwork near the centre of the Study Area might represent the remains of a banqueting house, folly, or other type of garden structure - easily seen and accessible from the main house. Its position on the higher terrace suggests it was designed to be viewed from the house or, conversely, that it provided a viewing platform from which the house could be viewed, perhaps both.

Map analysis

There are no maps dating from the early part of the post-medieval period, but much can be gleaned from the (1810-1820 estate copy of the) Enclosure Award map of 1769 (Figure 18a and 18b overleaf).

The map shows that by the late 18th century the deer park had been compartmentalised into numerous closes and fields. The more rectangular fields with straight boundaries and right-angled corners date mostly from parliamentary enclosure in 1769, while some of the more rounded closes are likely to be earlier in date. Hidden within the pattern of fields may be older medieval closes perhaps related to the organisation of the deer park itself, with the various areas utilised for different functions, or for the keeping of different types of deer. Refer back to Figures 12-15 for more detailed analysis of parts of this map and the fieldname evidence it provides.

Just to the north of the Study Area and the east of the church is Dove House Close, giving a clear indication of where the manorial dovecote was located in the post-medieval period. The complex of farm buildings called Manor Farm is also depicted, and it seems probable that manorial farm buildings were located here from medieval times on as part of the manorial complex.

Figure 18b zooms in to focus on the Study Area part of the map. The polygonal feature is not marked, though some of the close boundaries which surrounded it are. If the surviving earthwork represents an early post-medieval feature (such as a banqueting house, folly, or viewing platform), it must have gone out of use and been taken down by the late 18th century.

The (1810-20 estate copy of the) 1769 map is also notable for giving the earliest cartographic representation of Sundon House, built by Thomas Cheyne in the early 17th century (perhaps on the site of or incorporating parts of the earlier medieval house) and extensively altered in 1735. Driveways leading up to the front of the house (facing northwards away from the park and fishpond) are also depicted, as is the drive or track leading from the manor house to Finches Green. Land in front of the house and to the



Figure 18a. Study Area on the 1810-20 estate copy of the Enclosure Award map of 1769 (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service T42/608B), with modern OS map as base. ©Crown Copyright and database right 2009. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100019088

rear, between the house and the pond, is labelled 'lawn'. To the east of the house is a rectangular area, measuring approximately 90m x 80m, labelled 'garden'.

Although only faintly visible, the house shown clearly corresponds to the footings revealed by the Manshead Archaeology excavations. It is useful to lay the plan of the excavation over the 1769 map, showing that it was the northeast corner of the house that the excavators located (Figure 19). Also apparent from this map overlay is that the brick-lined culvert found to lead up the slope from the house is heading straight towards the pond (in its original extended form, before it was foreshortened) – no doubt drawing water from that source, making good use of the downhill gradient from the pond on the higher level. As already noted, the pond depicted here is about 150m long, over twice its present length. It must have been partially filled in shortly after the map was surveyed.

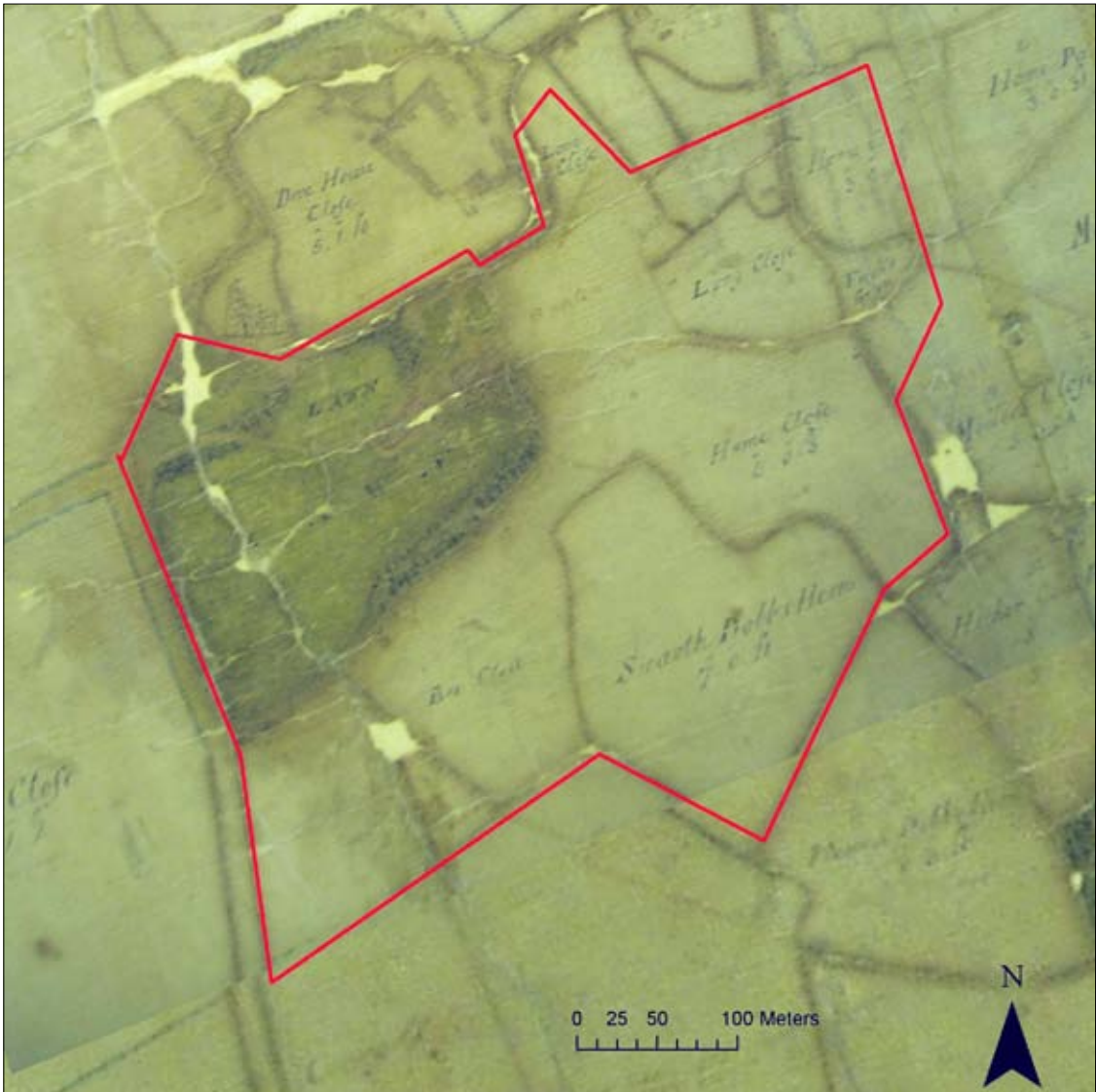


Figure 18b. Study Area on detail of the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 Enclosure Award map (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service T42/608B).

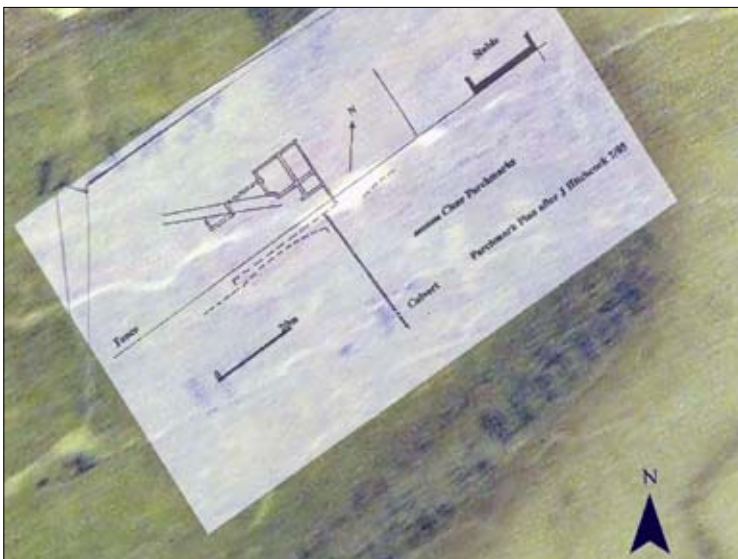


Figure 19. Overlay of excavation results (Hudspith 1997), showing house foundations and brick-lined culvert heading uphill towards the pond, over the 1810-20 estate copy of the 1769 Enclosure Award map (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service T42/608B)

The same house (slightly extended towards the southwest) and much the same layout of driveways is shown on the 1827 plan of Sundon Park, surveyed immediately prior to its demolition (Figure 20).

By this time the pond has been foreshortened to half its former length. Finches Green and the houses along the north-south lane are not marked. Positions of house and nearby stable block along with associated drives and paths are accurately shown.



Figure 20. Study Area on 1827 Plan of Sundon Park, prior to demolition of house (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service T42/605)

The rectangular area to the east of the house, approximately 80 x 70m, is still clearly labelled as 'garden'. The plan of the house can be taken together with the frontal and rear views depicted in the paintings by Fisher and Shepherd in Figures 5 and 6 to give an all-round perspective on the house and its landscaped grounds at this time.

A second plan of 1827 (Figure 21) shows the old house and most of the stable block now demolished, together with the design for a new and smaller house just to the south.



Figure 21. Study Area on a second 1827 Plan of Sundon Park, showing proposed new house (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service T42/606)

Although this was never built, and the proposed re-configuration of carriage-drives never laid out, the plan still gives a good impression of the broader layout of Sundon Park at the time of house demolition - at least once the planned but unstated features have been subtracted from the scene.

The 1st Edition OS map of 1881 (Figure 22), by way of contrast, shows the Study Area without a manor house, and with only the small part of the stable block remaining of the standing buildings. The only inhabited building within the area is now Manor Farm to the north. The garden, along with the rest of of the Study Area, has reverted back to land for pasture. Some steam ploughing has taken place within former medieval close boundaries, but this activity has probably largely ceased by the time the first OS map is surveyed.

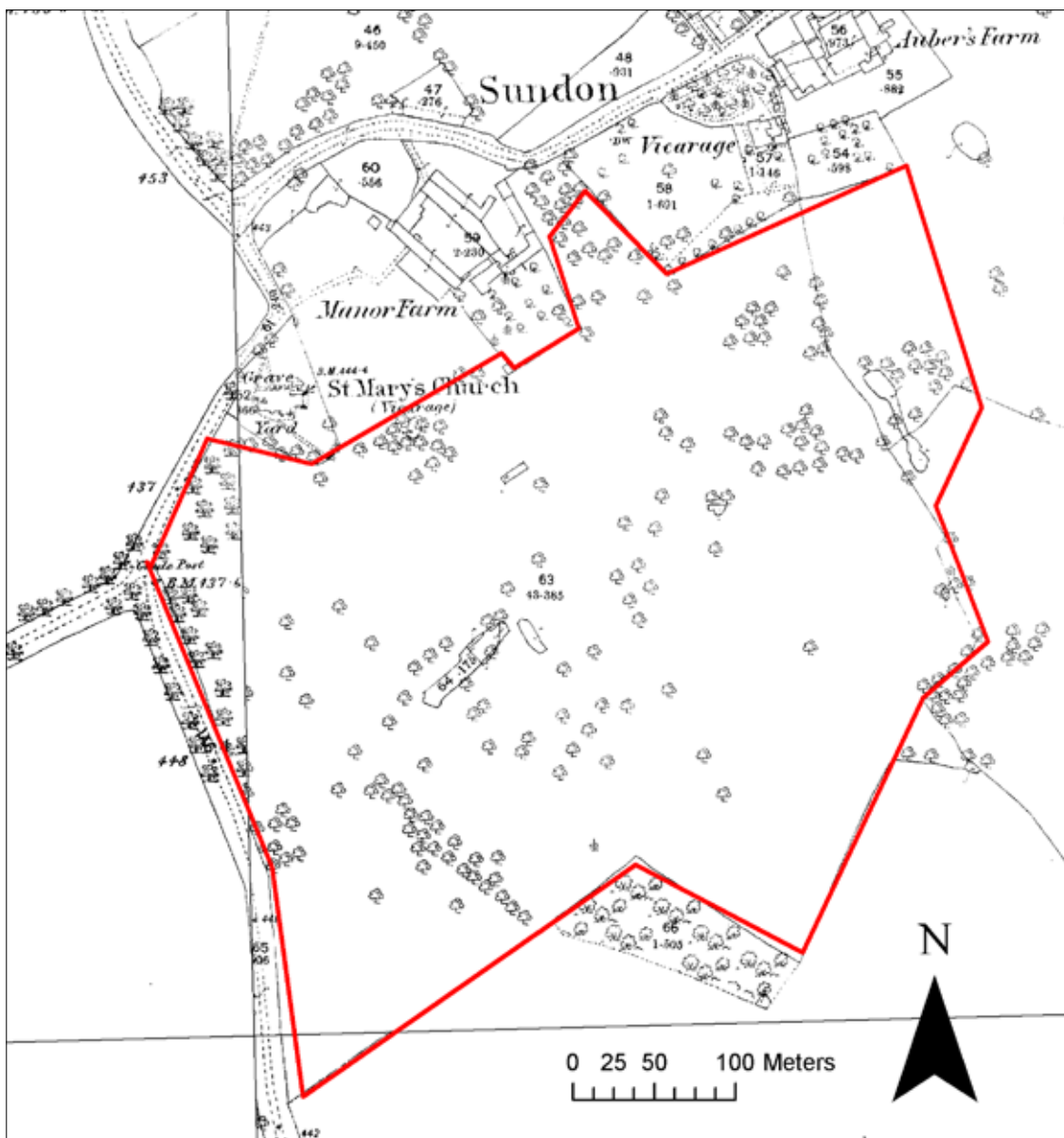


Figure 22. 1881 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (Bedfordshire and Luton Archive and Record Service, OS sheet XXIX 7-8, 6" to 1mile)

The Study Area has remained largely unchanged since that date, with no significant ploughing, building or landscaping activity taking place, although some of the many drainage features visible have been cut during the last hundred years.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This desk-based assessment has looked at the Study Area as part of a broader landscape of historic and archaeological interest. Investigation into the development of the manor and home park of Sundon has been linked to that of the medieval deer park that adjoined it and which extended along the high spur of land on the eastern side of the manor. Just as consideration of the deer park refers us back to the manorial centre to which it was connected, so any attempt to understand the manor itself has to take account of the activities that took place in the manorial estate as a whole.

Within the Study Area is a wide range of earthworks. These are multi-period remains comprised of a mixture of ridge-and-furrow, headlands, lynchets, close boundaries, hollow ways, ditches, terracing, ponds, tree-mounds, drives, other garden features, as well as the level platform of the house itself cutting into the slope of the ground. Some but not all of these are of medieval date. Land close to the house has also been greatly modified in the creation of the ornamental landscape of Sundon Park during the post-medieval period, and several existing trees may date from this phase. To complicate interpretation, a later phase of naturalisation has obscured some of the traces of previous phases of landscaping.

There is evidence of a shrunken post-medieval village in the smaller house platforms visible just to the north of the Study Area on the former north-south lane that once led to Finches Green, with several buildings marked on the (later copy of) the 1769 map. This could be the remnant of a medieval settlement, though there is no definite proof it is as old as that. Finches Green is a difficult area to interpret, apart from as a semi-natural hollow which served as a junction of several hollow ways. Its possible role as an element in a relict water-management system has been hinted at, but there is simply not enough evidence to verify this, especially as this area was largely filled in with imported subsoil in 1990, obscuring earthwork forms.

The interconnectedness of landscape features both inside and outside the Study Area is illustrated by interpretation of the as yet unidentified polygonal earthwork. If medieval in date, its position between house and deer park makes it possible that its function was to do with the deer park as well as with the manor house - perhaps a kennel enclosure or lodge. If post-medieval, it is likely to have been an element of a formal garden layout, part of vistas to and from the house. Interpretations put forward of this feature include banqueting house, folly, viewing platform, but at present there is insufficient evidence to say exactly what it was with any certainty. This is one of several components of the site that need further investigation, perhaps in the form of excavation or geophysical survey.

The ponds to the south of the former house are of interest, and not just for their inferred role in supplying fish to the lord of the manor in medieval times. It is possible that these were part of a more extensive system of ponds, perhaps forming moats enclosing buildings or areas of land. It seems for example that the polygonal banked enclosure was surrounded by water on at least two and possibly more of its sides, and also that (up to the end of the 18th century) the larger pond was over twice as long as it is now. Running roughly parallel to the house, the linear pond would have been a major

element in the ornamental landscape of Sundon Park during the post-medieval period.

The brick culvert that leads downhill to the house from the direction of the pond demonstrates that the pond provided a convenient reservoir of water for the house in post-medieval times. The question might be asked: was a similar system in place in medieval times too? Indeed, was the whole arrangement (of pond on higher terrace relative to the house on lower terrace) engineered in part to facilitate water supply?

What seems to be missing from the landscape that might be expected is open running water, but that is not to say that it was not there in late Anglo-Saxon and medieval times. It was common for deer parks to incorporate streams into their boundary ditches, to provide drinking water for deer and other grazing animals, and one may have been channelled into the home park, with terracing used to achieve desired gradients. The 150m long pond shown on the 1769 map has the appearance of a modified former stream, with traces of inlet and outlet channels. An interesting comparison might be the lake at Flitwick Manor (Hannah Firth, pers. comm), where the River Flit has been widened out to form a similar though slightly longer water feature. For detailed analysis of the water-related features at Flitwick Manor - including fishpond, dam, sluice and associated channels - see Simco 2005. However, it is not clear at present whether the gradient of land at Sundon would permit a watercourse to be channelled along the park boundary and into the home park from higher ground on the northeast side. Could the pond and the terracing in fact be surviving vestiges of a relict water management system, elements of which have been formalised through later garden landscaping into a canal-like ornamental feature, then 'naturalised' in subsequent landscaping work?

Much about the earthworks is little understood, in need of more detailed investigation, and there are limits to the level of understanding that a desk-based study can achieve. Avenues for further work include topographic survey of earthworks (no detailed survey has yet been carried out), investigation through survey and walkover of a possible relict water management system and later formal gardens, geophysical survey of target areas such as the polygonal feature and the house platform, more work on disentangling medieval from later ridge-and-furrow, along with trial excavation to evaluate earthworks and buried archaeological evidence. The excavation of a small trench through the bank of the polygonal feature might be especially productive in terms of providing useful information. An archaeological evaluation of the site could shed light on many of the questions raised in this report.

In sum, the Study Area contains, or is associated with, a variety of monument types, including medieval deer park, ridge-and-furrow fields, SMV (shrunken medieval/post-medieval village) and post-medieval landscape park. It is postulated that in the early 17th century the landscape around the house was transformed into a formal landscape garden, while in the following century it was reworked again into a more natural-looking landscape (with both phases of work probably coinciding with renovations of the house). On demolition of the house in the early 19th century, the landscape garden reverted back to farmland. Some ploughing took place since then, perhaps with steam ploughs, but the land has mostly been used for pasture up to the present day.

ABBREVIATIONS AND TECHNICAL TERMS USED IN THE TEXT

Abbreviations

AMIE – Archive Monument Information England
AOD – Above Ordnance Datum (sea-level)
AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BCC – Bedfordshire County Council (now split into several unitary authorities)
BGS – British Geological Survey
BLARS – Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service
CBC – Central Bedfordshire Council
CUCAP – Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photography
DMV – Deserted Medieval Village
EH – English Heritage
HER – Historic Environment Record
LIDAR – Light Detection and Ranging (a remote optical sensing technology)
MPP – Monument Protection Programme
NGR – National Grid Reference
OD – Ordnance Datum (sea-level)
OS – Ordnance Survey
SAM – Scheduled Ancient Monument
SMV – Shrunken Medieval Village

Technical Terms

Ridge-and-furrow – a pattern of ridges and troughs created by a method of ploughing used from Anglo-Saxon to post-medieval times, characteristic of the open-field system of agriculture. A system of drainage as well as cultivation, the ridges and furrows generally run in the direction of slope.

Headland – a strip of unploughed land at the end of furrows, where the plough turned around

Lynchet – a bank of earth that has accumulated on the downslope of a ploughed field: disturbed soil slips down the slope to form a positive lynchet, while a corresponding negative lynchet is formed in the area higher up from which soil was displaced.

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Maps

Survey Date	Reference	BLARS Catalogue Description	Notes
1610	-	John Speed's map of Bedfordshire	small-scale, little detail
1765	-	Jeffery's map of Bedfordshire	small-scale, little detail
1810-1820	BLARS T42/608B	Plan of the Manor and Parish of Sundon in the county of Bedford'. Estate Copy of 1769 Enclosure Award map.	can be taken as a direct copy of the 1769 enclosure award map. Shows entire area of former deer park, now divided into closes
1818	BLARS T42/50.	'Release and Appointment. Rbt Hopkins to Jos Howell of Markyate Cell. The Manor, Rectory with Advowson of Sundon'. Shows several allotments made upon enclosure. Ink on parchment.	does not add much of interest to enclosure award map
1826	-	Bryant's map of Bedfordshire	small-scale, shows several areas of woodland not depicted on other maps.
1827	BLARS T42/605	'Plan of Sundon Park'. Watercolour on paper. Gives acreage of homestead, garden, plantations and Park Meadow.	useful and detailed map of the Study Area, showing manor house, gardens, fishpond and tree plantations

1827	BLARS T42/606	'Plan of Sundon Park, the Property of Sir George Osborn Page-Turner bart, situated near Luton in the County of Bedford, showing the site of proposed new mansion, stables and other offices'. Scale: 40" to 1 mile.	the old manor was demolished but the proposed new one, marked on this plan, never built.
1881	OS Beds sheet XXIX.7 and XXIX.8	1 st Edition. 6" to 1mile	
1901-27	BLARS MCI/3/3/14-15	Map of field names. 2 nd edition OS map annotated with field names from enclosure awards and tithe apportionments.	
1925	OS Beds sheet XXIX.7 and XXIX.8	3 rd Edition. 6" to 1mile	
1939-47	BLARS WW2/ AC3/91	Map of land-use.	
1970s	Central Bedfordshire Council HER 3558.	Earthwork survey by the Manshead Archaeological Society. Scale 1:2500. Copy of original field plan.	Quality of survey work not great, but useful annotations by A. Simco
1991	Central Bedfordshire Council HER 12553	Various plans by A. Simco used as proof for Local Public Inquiry	
1991	Central Bedfordshire Council HER 12553	Plan by D. Miles used as proof for Local Public Inquiry.	
2008	BGS website	Digital Geological map of Great Britain 1:10,000.	

Aerial photos

Cambridge/BRV/23 (oblique, looking East, b & w, Nov 1974)
NSL/UK/86/80/Run 15/2070 (1:10.000, b & w, vertical, 1986)
Aerofilms/91/col/125/Run 11/5104 (1:10.000, vertical, 1991)
Google Earth vertical images for 1945, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2010

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ADDENDUM

It is always good when research gets the benefit of feedback from those with expert local knowledge, and I am grateful for the comments by Alan Campbell on the original report.

Two items of evidence indicate that the house was not actually demolished in 1827, as suggested in the report, but about two decades later.

The first is the 1831 map of the County of Bedfordshire published by Greenwood & Co from an engraving by J & C Walker (1/4" to 1 mile), which has a small depiction of Sundon House.

The second is a series of newspaper articles of 1881 by R.A. Blaydes, who states that he last saw Sundon House in September 1846. He also writes that it was demolished in 1848 by Mr. Williams of Luton, who used some of the material in the construction of nearby Parsonage House.

(The author R.A. Blaydes could be related to or even be the same person as the local historian F.A. Blaydes, who inherited the Sundon Estate from Page-Turner in 1903)

For more detail on the house before it was demolished, there is a surviving Sale Catalogue for the Sundon Estate dating from 1803 (BLARS AD534/3 & AD534/11), which describes an Estate worth £45,000 exclusive of timber, and lists all the farms, tenants, field names and acreage.

In the possession of Alan Cambell is a copy of the Sale Catalogue of 1752, just after Lord Sundon died and just before the estate passed to the Cole family. The Estate has 2000 acres of arable and pasture lands with a rent income of £1000 per annum. The house and grounds are described in some detail.

The Manor House consists of a large hall, two parlours, a drawing room, six good Bed-Chambers over them, a Kitchen, Servants Hall, Brewhouse, Laundry, and other convenient Offices, good dry Cellars, a large Garden well planted with Wall and other Fruit-Trees, a Fish Pond well stocked, Stabling for 14 Horses, Coach Houses, Dove House.

There is also a Rent Roll listing the tenants (BLARS BS 1165-116).

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Matt Edgeworth, 1st June 2013



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