

## *Historic Environment Character Zone*

### **NFE Newbury Fringe East**

#### **Historic Character**

This zone on the southeast side of Newbury is almost entirely within Greenham parish. Its northern boundary is the Great Western railway line and Bury's Bank road runs along most of its southern side. Two very small western parts of the zone lies within the study area of the *Newbury Historic Character Study*, a project undertaken by Oxford Archaeology and West Berkshire Council in 2006. This should be referenced for more a detailed description of the origins and development of this part of Newbury's suburbs.

Leisure landscapes dominate this zone. The northern half is occupied by Newbury Racecourse (started in 1905) and the south-east section by a large golf course, Newbury and Crookham Golf Club. The course was established on this site in the 1920s, laid out across much of the estate of Greenham Lodge, a country house built by the architect Norman Shaw in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for the Baxendale family. Following expansion in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the park around Greenham Lodge occupied most of the southern part of the zone. The house itself is now in use as a school, given the new name of Mill Hall.

Prior to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, settlement was dispersed across the zone in individual buildings and farmsteads. Settlement at Greenham itself consisted of the church and Chapel Farm within the park, and a small group of houses at the junction of Bury's Bank Road and Greenham Road. It is unclear whether occupation at Greenham had been more extensive in the medieval period. Both the present church and Greenham Lodge were constructed to replace earlier buildings, and it remains possible that the construction of the park was at the expense of a medieval settlement around the original chapel and graveyard. A small housing estate has developed immediately north and west of Greenham Lodge. The core of this housing was built in the early 1960s to house service personnel and their families for the adjacent American airbase at RAF Greenham Common. Following decommissioning of the airbase in the 1990s, it was sold off to private householders and in recent years more new housing has been built onto the fringe of this development. This has created a nucleated settlement at Greenham in contrast to the previous pattern.

The central portion of this zone is occupied by a small piece of rural landscape. It is a much truncated mixture of irregularly-shaped early enclosure fields, cultivated stubs of Greenham Lodge's parkland and small blocks of ancient woodland. The land closest to the edge of Newbury is showing signs of degradation and has been used for informal recreation and unofficial and activities.

#### **Historic Environment**

Although activity of all periods has been documented in neighbouring zones, archaeological evidence here is more meagre. There has been almost no archaeological survey or fieldwork work carried out in this zone, apart from work by the National Mapping Programme and a watching brief at the racecourse. Prehistoric evidence is confined to a single Palaeolithic find; Roman occupation however is suggested from the finds of several artefacts and cropmarks. This zone also probably contains the northern extent of Bury's Bank, an earthwork which formerly ran across Greenham Common and may survive as a sub-surface feature. A chapel, manor house and Hospitaller's preceptory are documented at Greenham in the medieval period but there appears to be no above ground remains of them. The approximate location of the chapel is known and the other two buildings are presumed to have existed close by, although Pigeon's Farm has also been suggested as a location for the preceptory (a subordinate

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community of the Knights of the Order of the Hospital of St John). Little else is known of these structures.

Several cropmarks and earthworks on the north facing slopes below Greenham Common have been interpreted as evidence of medieval or later cultivation, although many are of unknown date. Modern era features include cropmark evidence for probable Second World War railway sidings at the racecourse and a pillbox by the Kennet and Avon canal. The site of one of the Greenham Common peace camps (Blue Gate) lies in the *NFE* zone.

There are 7 listed buildings, mostly associated with the Victorian era of the Greenham Lodge estate although much older buildings at Pigeon's Farm are included. A very small part of the Stroud Green Conservation Area falls inside this zone.

### **Historic Environment Potential**

The nature and condition of any below-ground archaeology is almost entirely unknown. Archaeological observation and investigation on areas in a similar topographic location on the sides of the Kennet Valley have produced significant evidence of later prehistoric and Romano-British activity and it is possible that sites of a similar nature await discovery in and around Greenham.

### **Historic Environment Action Plan**

#### Conservation Issues

- There is continued development pressure in the zone, much of it unsympathetic in scale and design. This could lead to further erosion of the historic character.
- Management of woodlands, conservation of surviving ancient woodlands and replacement of plantations with more mixed tree coverage.
- Anti-social activities leading to further degradation of the landscape.
- Poorly understood archaeological resource.

#### Research Priorities

- Do unrecorded archaeological sites/features survive within this zone?
- Where was the historic core of Greenham? Does evidence survive on the nature and origins of the medieval settlement?
- Does archaeological evidence for the Knights Hospitaller's preceptory survive?
- What evidence for the Greenham peace camps survives? Can this resource be used to understand the protest movement?