

# Land at The Gables Royal Wootton Bassett Wiltshire

**MAGNETOMETER SURVEY REPORT** 

for

# **Mr Guy Newman**

Kerry Donaldson & David Sabin
April 2022

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#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS LTD

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# **CONTENTS**

5	SUMI	MARY	1
1	INT	RODUCTION	1
	1.1	Survey background	1
	1.2	Survey objectives and techniques	1
	1.3	Standards, guidance and recommendations for the use of this report	1
	1.4	Site location, description and survey conditions	2
	1.5	Site history and archaeological potential	3
	1.6	Geology and soils	3
2	ME	THODOLOGY	3
	2.1	Technical synopsis	3
	2.2	Equipment configuration, data collection and survey detail	4
	2.3	Data processing and presentation	5
3	RES	SULTS	6
	3.1	General assessment of survey results	6
	3.2	Statement of data quality and factors influencing the interpretation of anomalies.	6
	3.3	Data interpretation	7
	3.4	List of anomalies	7
4	СО	NCLUSION	8
5	REI	FERENCES	9
A	Appei	ndix A – basic principles of magnetic survey	.10
P	Appei	ndix B – data processing notes	.10
A	Appei	ndix C – survey and data information	.11
A	Арреі	ndix D – digital archive	.11

Archaeologic	cal Surveys Ltd Land at The Gables, Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire Magnetometer Survey Re	port
Appendi	ix E – CAD layers for abstraction and interpretation plots	.11
Appendi	ix F – copyright and intellectual property	.12
LIST OF	FIGURES	
Fig 01	Map of survey area (1:25 000)	
Fig 02	Referencing information (1:1000)	
Fig 03	Greyscale plot of minimally processed magnetometer data & abstraction & interpretation of magnetic anomalies (1:1000)	
LIST OF	TABLES	
Table 1: L	ist and description of interpretation categories	7
Table 2: A	Archive metadata	.11
Table 3: 0	CAD layering	.12

#### SUMMARY

Detailed magnetometry was carried out by Archaeological Surveys Ltd ahead of a proposed development for a caravan storage area at Ballard's Ash, near Royal Wootton Bassett. The results indicate the presence of a small number of very weakly positive anomalies, with several within the proposed development zone and a U-shaped curvilinear anomaly further south. However, they are weak and lack a clearly defined morphology preventing interpretation as cut features. The eastern part of the site has been subject to ground make-up and much of the remainder of the site also contains patches of magnetic debris and discrete, dipolar responses relating to ferrous objects within the topsoil.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Survey background

1.1.1 Archaeological Surveys Ltd was commissioned by Sam Eachus of Kernon Countryside Consultants Ltd, on behalf of Mr Guy Newman, to undertake a magnetometer survey of an area of land at The Gables, Ballard's Ash, Royal Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire. The site has been outlined for proposed caravan storage under Wiltshire planning application number PL/2022/00826. The survey has been commissioned in order to carry out an archaeological assessment.

#### 1.2 Survey objectives and techniques

- 1.2.1 The objective of the survey was to use magnetometry to locate geophysical anomalies that may be archaeological in origin so that they may be assessed prior to development of the site. The methodology is considered an efficient and effective approach to archaeological prospection.
- 1.2.2 Geophysical survey can provide useful information on the archaeological potential of a site; however, the outcome of any survey relies on a number of factors and as a consequence results can vary. The success in meeting the aims and objectives of a survey is, therefore, often impossible to predetermine.

#### 1.3 Standards, guidance and recommendations for the use of this report

1.3.1 Archaeological Surveys Ltd is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and both company directors are Members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA) and have therefore been assessed for their technical competence and ethical suitability and abide by the CIfA Codes of Conduct. The survey and report follow the

recommendations set out by: European Archaeological Council (2015) Guidelines for the Use of Geophysics in Archaeology; Institute for Archaeologists (2002) The use of Geophysical Techniques in Archaeological Evaluations. The work has been carried out to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2014) (updated 2020) Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey.

- 1.3.2 Archaeological Surveys Ltd provide a detailed geophysical survey report and it is recommended that where possible the contents should be considered in full. The Summary provides a brief overview of the results with more detail available in the Discussion and/or Conclusion. The List of anomalies within the Results provides a detailed assessment of the anomalies within separate categories which can be useful in inferring a level of confidence to the interpretation. Quality and factors influencing the interpretation of anomalies is also set out within the results.
- 1.3.3 It is recommended that the full report should always be considered when using data and interpretation plots; where this is not possible, in the field for example, the abstraction and interpretation plots should retain their colour coding and be used with a corresponding legend.
- 1.3.4 Where targeting of anomalies by excavation is to be carried out, care should be taken to place trenches over solid lines or features visible on the abstraction and interpretation plots. Archaeological Surveys abstraction and interpretation avoids the use of dashed or dotted line formats, and broken or fragmented lines used in interpretive plots may well correspond closely with truncation of archaeological features.

#### 1.4 Site location, description and survey conditions

- The site is located at Ballard's Ash, 900m north west of the edge of Royal Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire. It is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OS NGR) SU 06455 84285, see Figs 01 and 02.
- 1.4.2 The geophysical survey covers approximately 1ha of pasture land, some of which had been previously subject to some landfill during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century (Guy Newman, pers. comm.) The development boundary is a T-shape, with access leading southwards from the north with the main caravan storage area covering approximately 0.3ha in the centre of the field (see Fig 02).
- The area tends to slope down gently towards the south east. The field boundaries consist of a mixture of hedgerows, post and rail fencing and wire fencing. Immediately beyond the site boundary on the northern and eastern sides there were a number of steel objects in the form of vehicles and agricultural machinery; these were identified as sources of high magnitude magnetic disturbance.
- 1.4.4 The ground conditions across the site were generally considered to be

favourable for the collection of magnetometry data. Weather conditions during the survey were fine.

### 1.5 Site history and archaeological potential

1.5.1 The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record indicates that the eastern and northern boundary of the medieval deer park, known as Vastern Great Park, lies on the edge of the site and that the settlement of Ballard's Ash dates to the medieval period. A geophysical survey prior to the Gerard Buxton Sports Ground to the east revealed the presence of a number of archaeological features including an undated enclosure and a Romano-British building, situated c600m to the east.

#### 1.6 Geology and soils

- 1.6.1 The underlying geology is mudstone from the Oxford Clay Formation (BGS, 2017).
- 1.6.2 The overlying soil across the site is from the Denchworth association and is a pelo-stagnogley soil. It consists of a slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged, clayey soil (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).
- 1.6.3 The underlying geology and soils are frequently associated with low magnetic contrast and low levels of magnetic susceptibility. However, cut features of archaeological potential may be located where human activity has altered the magnetic characteristics of the soil sufficiently. The underlying geology and soils are, therefore, considered acceptable for magnetic survey.

#### 2 METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Technical synopsis

- 2.1.1 Magnetometry survey records localised magnetic fields that can be associated with features formed by human activity. Magnetic susceptibility and magnetic thermoremnance (also known as thermoremanence) are factors associated with the formation of localised fields.
- 2.1.2 Iron minerals within the soil may become altered by burning and the break down of biological material; effectively the magnetic susceptibility of the soil is increased, and the iron minerals become magnetic in the presence of the Earth's magnetic field. Accumulations of magnetically enhanced soils within features, such as pits and ditches, may produce magnetic anomalies that can be mapped by magnetic prospection.
- 2.1.3 Magnetic thermoremnance can occur when ferrous minerals have been heated to high temperatures such as in a kiln, hearth, oven etc. On cooling, a permanent

- magnetisation may be acquired due to the presence of the Earth's magnetic field. Certain natural processes associated with the formation of some igneous and metamorphic rock may also result in magnetic thermoremnance.
- 2.1.4 The localised variations in magnetism are measured as sub-units of the Tesla, which is a SI unit of magnetic flux density. These sub-units are nano Teslas (nT), which are equivalent to 10<sup>-9</sup> Tesla (T). Additional details are set out in 2.2 below and within Appendix A.

#### 2.2 Equipment configuration, data collection and survey detail

- The detailed magnetic survey was carried out using a SENSYS MAGNETO®MXPDA 5 channel cart-based system. The instrument has 5 fluxgate gradiometers (FGM650) spaced 0.5m apart with readings recorded at 20Hz. The cart is pushed at walking speed and not towed. Each sensor is not zeroed in the field as the vertical axis alignment is precisely fixed leaving sensor offsets that are removed during data processing. The fixing of the vertical alignment ensures the sensors are not unduly influenced by localised magnetic fields and that the vertical component of a magnetic anomaly is measured. The gradiometers have a measurement range of ±8000nT, although the recorded range is ±3000nT, and resolution is around 0.1nT. They are linked to a Leica GS10 RTK GNSS with data recorded by SENSYS MAGNETO®MXPDA software on a rugged PDA computer system.
- Due to the fixed offsets within the fluxgate sensors, as a result of the manufacturing and tensioning process, the survey data do not provide a visually useful dataset until a zero median traverse algorithm is applied. It is recognised that this has the potential to affect some anomalies detrimentally by removing linear features orientated parallel to survey transects. However, this has not been noted as a particular problem with the system due to the high resolution data collection, generally long length of traverses and variability within the magnetic characteristics of a linear anomaly.
- 2.2.3 Data are collected along a series of parallel survey transects to achieve 100% coverage of the surveyable land. The length of each transect is variable and relates to the size of the survey area and other factors including ground conditions. A visual display allows accurate placing of transects and helps maintain the correct separation between adjacent traverses. Data are not collected within fixed grids and data points are considered to be random even though the data are collected in a systematic manner covering all accessible areas (Aspinall, Gaffney and Schmidt, 2009).
- 2.2.4 Fluxgate sensors are highly sensitive to temperature change and this manifests as drift during the course of a survey. This can be particularly noticeable during the morning as temperatures rise and the equipment warms or cools. Sensor drift within the course of a traverse will appear as a line trending from negative to positive after processing with a zero median traverse algorithm. To remove the potential for temperature drift, data were collected after a 20 minute stabilisation period and

traverses were limited to a time of generally <100s.

## 2.3 Data processing and presentation

- Magnetic data collected by the MAGNETO®MXPDA cart-based system are 2.3.1 initially prepared using SENSYS MAGNETO®DLMGPS software. The software effectively allocates a geographic position for each data point and can compensate for fixed offsets present within the FGM650 sensors. The offsets are positive or negative values present on all fluxgate gradiometer sensors. Some systems use manual or electronic balancing to effectively zero the sensors; however, this is a short term measure that is prone to drift through temperature changes and vibration and can easily be incorrectly set due to localised magnetic fields. The FGM650 sensors are very accurately aligned to the vertical magnetic gradient and are highly stable showing negligible drift on long traverses. The offset values are removed using TerraSurveyor software.
- 2.3.2 Survey tracks are analysed and georeferenced raw data (UTM Z30N) are then exported in ASCII format for further analysis and display within TerraSurveyor. The removal of the offset values (compensation) of the sensors is also carried out in TerraSurveyor using a zero median traverse function. Data are then considered to be minimally processed. Note: without the zero median traverse function it is not possible to create a meaningful data plot as all sensors have a different offset value. Although a zero median traverse algorithm can remove anomalies aligned with the survey tracks, in practice this rarely occurs due to the use of long traverses, high resolution measurement and variability within the magnetic susceptibility of long linear features.
- 2.3.3 The minimally processed data are collected between limits of ±3000nT and clipped for display at ±100nT and ±10nT. Data are interpolated to a resolution of effectively 0.5m between tracks and 0.15m along each survey track.
- Additional data processing has been carried out in the form of high pass filtering. This effectively removes low frequency variation along a traverse that has been caused by large magnetic bodies, cultivation or rapid temperature change. The data has been clipped for display at ±3nT. Data treated to additional processing have been compared to unprocessed data to ensure that no significant anomalies have been removed.
- 2.3.5 Appendix C contains metadata concerning the survey and data attributes and is derived directly from TerraSurveyor. Reference should be made to Appendix B for further information on processing.
- A TIF file is produced by TerraSurveyor software along with an associated world file (.TFW) that allows automatic georeferencing (OSGB36 datum) when using GIS or CAD software. The main form of data display used in the report is the minimally processed greyscale plot. With regard to the Sensys MXPDA, minimally processed data are considered by the manufacturer to be data that

are compensated by SENSYS MAGNETO DLMGPS software, see 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. Note: traceplots are not considered to be appropriate as they do not provide an accurate or useful assessment of the magnetic anomalies due to the very high density of data collection. In addition, traceplots cannot be meaningfully plotted against base mapping and in areas of complexity traces may be lost or highly confused. Traceplots may be used to demonstrate characteristic magnetic profiles across discrete features where it is considered beneficial.

- The raster images are combined with base mapping using ProgeCAD Professional 2021, creating DWG (2018) file formats. All images are externally referenced to the CAD drawing in order to maintain good graphical quality. The CAD plots are effectively georeferenced facilitating relocation of features using GNSS, resection method, etc.
- 2.3.8 An abstraction and interpretation is drawn and plotted for all geophysical anomalies located by the survey. Anomalies are abstracted using colour coded points, lines and polygons. All plots are scaled to landscape A3 for paper printing. Appendix E sets out CAD layer names with colour and graphic content for each interpretation category, see 3.3.
- 2.3.9 A brief summary of each anomaly, with an appropriate reference number, is set out in list form within the results (Section 3) to allow a rapid and objective assessment of features within the survey area.
- 2.3.10 A digital archive is produced with this report, see Appendix D below. The main archive is held at the offices of Archaeological Surveys Ltd.

#### 3 RESULTS

#### 3.1 General assessment of survey results

- 3.1.1 The detailed magnetic survey was carried out over 1ha within a single land parcel.
- 3.1.2 Magnetic anomalies located can be generally classified as positive anomalies of an uncertain origin, areas of magnetic debris and disturbance and strong discrete dipolar anomalies relating to ferrous objects. Anomalies located within each survey area have been numbered and are described in 3.4 below.
- 3.2 Statement of data quality and factors influencing the interpretation of anomalies
- Data are considered representative of the magnetic anomalies present within the site. The eastern part of the survey area contains numerous high magnitude anomalies related to ground make-up with soil that contains modern ferrous debris. The high magnitude data recorded has resulted in visible banding after sensor compensation and this has been removed by

- additional high pass filtering. Both filtered and unfiltered data are compared to ensure that no significant anomalies have been removed by the data processing.
- 3.2.2 The survey has located numerous dipolar anomalies, particularly around the periphery of the survey area. It is likely that these anomalies are caused by relatively modern ferrous objects spread during manuring, or are associated with modern burning and subsequent spreading of material. A linear zone of magnetic debris along the western side of the survey area is likely to be related to ground consolidation and make-up along a former agricultural track.

#### 3.3 Data interpretation

The list of sub-headings below attempts to define a number of separate categories that reflect the range and type of features located during the survey. A general explanation of the characteristics of the magnetic anomalies is set out for each category in order to justify interpretation, see Table 1.

Interpretation category	Description and origin of anomalies
Anomalies with an uncertain origin	The category applies to a range of anomalies where there is not enough evidence to confidently suggest an origin. Anomalies in this category may well be related to archaeologically significant features, but equally relatively modern features, geological/pedological features and agricultural features should be considered. Morphology may be unclear or uncharacteristic and there may be a lack of additional supporting information. Positive anomalies are indicative of magnetically enhanced soils that may form the fill of 'cut' features or may be produced by accumulation within layers or 'earthwork' features; soils subject to burning may also produce positive anomalies. Negative anomalies are produced by material of comparatively low magnetic susceptibility such as stone and subsoil.
Anomalies associated with magnetic debris	Magnetic debris often appears as areas containing many small dipolar anomalies that may range from weak to very strong in magnitude. They often occur where there has been dumping or ground make-up and are related to magnetically thermoremnant materials such as brick or tile or other small fragments of ferrous material. This type of response is occasionally associated with kilns, furnace structures, hearths and nail spreads from former wooden structures or rooves and may, therefore, be archaeologically significant. It is also possible that the response may be caused by natural material such as certain gravels and fragments of igneous or metamorphic rock. Strong discrete dipolar anomalies are responses to ferrous objects within the topsoil.
Anomalies with a modern origin	The magnetic response is often strong and dipolar indicative of ferrous material and may be associated with extant above surface features such as wire fencing, cables, pylons etc. Often a significant area around these features has a strong magnetic flux which may create magnetic disturbance; such disturbance can effectively obscure low magnitude anomalies if they are present. Fluxgate sensors may respond erratically adjacent to strong magnetic sources.

Table 1: List and description of interpretation categories

#### 3.4 List of anomalies

Area centred on OS NGR 406455 184285, see Fig 03.

Anomalies with an uncertain origin

(1) – A positive curvilinear anomaly is situated in the southern part of the site, outside of the development area. It appears as an oval, or a U-shaped feature with dimensions of 4.8m by 4.5m and with a gap at the southern end. It is located in a shallow, natural depression that extends towards the valley to the south. It is not

possible to determine its origin.

(2) – A small number of weakly positive linear and curvilinear anomalies are located in the central part of the site within the area outlined for the caravan storage area. They lack a coherent morphology and it is not possible to determine their origin.

#### Anomalies associated with magnetic debris

- (3) A large zone of very strongly magnetic debris is located in the eastern part of the site and relates to ferrous and other magnetically thermoremnant material, such as brick/tile within an area of former landfill.
- (4) Patches of magnetic debris can be seen around the margins of the site, this relates to dumped material and ground make-up.
- (5) The site contains widespread and numerous strong, discrete dipolar anomalies which are responses to ferrous objects and items such as brick/tile within the topsoil.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

The geophysical survey located an area of magnetic debris in the eastern part of the site which relates to ferrous material within made ground. Smaller patches of magnetic debris and strong, discrete, dipolar responses are distributed throughout the site and relate to dumped and discarded ferrous and other magnetically thermoremnant objects within the topsoil. A U-shaped positive anomaly has been located in the southern part of the site within a shallow, natural depression, but its origin is uncertain. In the central part of the site are a small number of positive anomalies that are weak and poorly defined, and it is not possible to determine their origin.

#### 5 REFERENCES

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### Appendix A – basic principles of magnetic survey

Iron minerals are always present to some degree within the topsoil and enhancement associated with human activity is related to increases in the level of magnetic susceptibility and thermoremnant material. Magnetic susceptibility is an induced magnetism within a material when it is in the presence of a magnetic field. This can be thought of as effectively permanent due to the presence of the Earth's magnetic field. Thermoremnant magnetism occurs when ferrous material is heated beyond a specific temperature known as the Curie Point. Demagnetisation occurs at this temperature with re-magnetisation by the Earth's magnetic field upon cooling.

Enhancement of magnetic susceptibility can occur in areas subject to burning and complex fermentation processes on biological material; these are frequently associated with human settlement. Thermoremnant features include ovens, hearths, and kilns. In addition thermoremnant material such as tile and brick may also be associated with human activity and settlement.

Silting and deliberate infilling of ditches and pits with magnetically enhanced soil can create an area of enhancement compared with surrounding soils and subsoils into which the feature is cut. Mapping enhanced areas will produce linear and discrete anomalies allowing an assessment and characterisation of hidden subsurface features.

It should be noted that areas of negative enhancement can be produced from material having lower magnetic properties compared to the topsoil. This is common for many sedimentary bedrocks and subsoils which were often used in the construction of banks and walls etc. Mapping these 'negative' anomalies may also reveal archaeological features.

Magnetic survey or magnetometry can be carried out using a fluxgate gradiometer and may be referred to as gradiometry. The SENSYS gradiometer is a passive instrument consisting of two fluxgate sensors mounted vertically 65cm apart. The instrument is carried about 10-20cm above the ground surface and the upper sensor measures the Earth's magnetic field as does the lower sensor but this is influenced to a greater degree by any localised buried magnetic field. The difference between the two sensors will relate to the strength of the magnetic field created by the buried feature.

There are a number of factors that may affect the magnetic survey and these include soil type, local geology and previous human activity. Situations arise where magnetic disturbance associated with modern services, metal fencing, dumped waste material etc., obscures low magnitude fields associated with archaeological features.

# Appendix B – data processing notes

#### Clipping

Minimum and maximum values are set and replace data outside of the range with those values. Extreme values are removed improving colour or greyscale contrast associated with data values that may be archaeologically significant. Different ranges are applied to data in order to determine the most suitable for anomaly abstraction and display.

#### High Pass Filter

Removes low frequency anomalies within the data that are not considered to be archaeologically significant and may be natural in origin. A window passes over the data, the mean of all the data within the window is subtracted from the centre value. The size of the window is adjusted as is the weighting which may be uniform or Gaussian. The process is used to improve the visibility of anomalies of interest.

#### Zero Median/Mean Traverse

The median (or mean) of data from each traverse is calculated ignoring data outside a threshold value, the median (or mean) is then subtracted from the traverse. The process is used to equalise differences between the offset values of the gradiometer sensors. The process can remove archaeological features that run along a traverse but with the high resolution datasets created by the Sensys FGM650 sensors and the method of data collection this has not been a notable problem. In fact, the removal of offsets using software avoids carrying out a balancing procedure on site, which inevitably can never be done in magnetically clean

conditions and results in improperly aligned fluxgate sensors and/or electronic adjustment values.

# Appendix C – survey and data information

4 Clip from -100.00 to 100.00 Filename: J916-mag.xcp Description: Imported as Composite from: 110.50 J916-mag.asc Max: Instrument Type: Sensys DLMGPS -110.00 Units: Std Dev: 19.03 Max: 3.32 -3.30 1.65 UTM Zone 0.35 Survey corner coordinates (X/Y):OSGB36 Std Dev: Median: 0.03 Northwest corner: Southeast corner: 406391.87, 184353.28m 406514.72, 184234.63m 1.4576 ha Mean: Median: Composite Area: 1.0209 ha Surveyed Area: Collection Method: Randomised PROGRAM GPS based Proce6 TerraSurveyorPre Name: Dummy Value: Dimensions Base Layer.
Unit Conversion Layer (Lat/Long to UTM). 32702 Version: 3.0.36.24 GPS based Proce4 123 m x 119 m Survey Size (meters): DeStripe Median Traverse 0.15 m Base Layer. High pass Uniform (median) filter: Window dia: 150 Source GPS Points: Active: 272300, Recorded: Unit Conversion Layer (Lat/Long to UTM). Clip from -10.00 to 10.00 DeStripe Median Traverse: Clip from -3.00 to 3.00

## Appendix D – digital archive

Archaeological Surveys Ltd hold the primary digital archive at their offices in Wiltshire. Data are backed-up onto an on-site data storage drive and at the earliest opportunity data are copied to CD ROM for storage onsite and off-site.

A PDF copy will be supplied to the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record with greyscale images and abstraction layers made available on request. The report will also be uploaded to the Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS).

#### Archive contents:

File type	Naming scheme	Description
Data	J916-mag-[area number/name].asc J916-mag-[area number/name].xcp J916-mag-[area number/name]-proc.xcp	Raw data as ASCII CSV TerraSurveyor raw data TerraSurveyor minimally processed data
Graphics	J916-mag-[area number/name]-proc.tif	Image in TIF format
Drawing	J916-[version number].dwg	CAD file in 2018 dwg format
Report	J916 report.odt	Report text in LibreOffice odt format

Table 2: Archive metadata

# Appendix E – CAD layers for abstraction and interpretation plots

The table below sets out Archaeological Surveys Ltd CAD layer names with associated colours and graphical content. Where CAD files are available layers may be extracted for further CAD/GIS use. Note: hatched polygon boundaries are contained within layers with the RGB colour code 254, 255, 255 (near white) in order to prevent their visibility.

Report sub-heading and associated CAD layer names	Colour with RGB index	Layer content		
Anomalies with archaeological potential				
Anomalies with an uncertain origin				
AS-ABST MAG POS LINEAR UNCERTAIN	255,127,0	Line, polyline or polygon (solid)		
AS-ABST MAG POS UNCERTAIN	255,127,0	Polygon (cross hatched ANSI37)		
Anomalies relating to land management				

Anomalies associated with magnetic debris					
AS-ABST MAG DEBRIS		132, 132, 132	Polygon (cross hatched ANSI37)		
AS-ABST MAG STRONG DIPOLAR		132, 132, 132	Solid donut, point or polygon (solid)		
Anomalies with a modern origin					
AS-ABST MAG DISTURBANCE		132, 132, 132	Polygon (hatched ANSI31)		

Table 3: CAD layering

## Appendix F – copyright and intellectual property

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