

ABINGDON ARCHAEOLOGICAL GEOPHYSICS

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Land east of Wallingford Road, CHOLSEY, Oxon

Short Report no. 2016-12R

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This short report format omits certain aspects which the English Heritage 2008 guidance says should be in reports. This is because these relate to the general description of geophysics techniques and other matters which are repeated in reports and which can be found in better detail on our website.

Survey Details

Name of site: Land east of Wallingford road, Cholsey. Oxfordshire

Purpose of survey:

Magnetometry surveys were carried out to see whether remains could be detected to guide the response by Communities Against Gravel Extraction to plans for the allocation of gravel quarries in the County. The main report was submitted to the County Council in 2012 and this report is an extension to the work on one of the CAGE areas.

The landowner of the proposed gravel extraction area would not consent to this research on their land so this is the nearest available field with similar topography and geology to indicate the relationship between known remains and those which can be detected magnetically.

Client: Initially, Communities Against Gravel Extraction.

County: Oxfordshire **District:** South Oxfordshire **Parish:** Cholsey

NGR grid reference: Area approximately centred on SU 600874

Nearest postcode: OX10 9HA

Start date: 25-06-2012 **End date:** 05-07-2012 **Report date:** 27-10 - 2016.

Geology at site Geology (from the BGS Geology of Britain viewer): River terrace gravels over chalk bedrock.

Topography: On fairly level land at approx 46m OD. Stream on the south of the survey area.

Land use at the time of survey: Grass, long.

Known archaeological sites / monuments covered by the survey

A barrow ring ditch is on the Historic England and County HER record systems. No trace could be found of it in the location they give. The portable antiquities scheme also records mainly Roman coins from this field but the location they give is not that of the settlement revealed by this magnetometry.

Archaeological sites / monument types detected by the survey

A probable Romano- British or Iron Age settlement of approx 3 hectares, several ring ditches - probably barrows. Hundreds of possible pits. Geophysics alone cannot give a definite date to anomalies which are detected.

Surveyor Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics, Roger Ainslie, Sally Ainslie, Chris Oatley.

Location of:

a) Primary archive, i.e. raw data, electronic archive etc

Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics.

b) Full report: ditto

Technical Details

Type of survey

A Magnetometer

Area surveyed: 13.5 hectares

Traverse separation, if regular: 1metre

Reading / sample interval: 8 per metre

Type, make and model of instrumentation: Bartington Grad 601/2 fluxgate gradiometer.

Additional remarks

30 metre grids. First line start SE corner going west zig zag. Grids aligned on National grid using Trimble pro XR GPS with beacon correction - probably accurate to 0.5 metres.

Results (refer to plans below)

Magnetometry

- 1 Probably medieval strip fields.
- 2 Probably a trackway with enclosures.
- 3 Ring ditches - possibly overlapping - see detail area.
- 4 Probably pits or cremations or tree throw holes. An area near 3 above has a higher magnetic response than the rest of the pit area, indicating more heat and burning in that area.
- 5 Probable house enclosures although the houses themselves cannot be seen magnetically.
- 6 Probably hearths or similar.
- 7 Modern steel pipe.
- 8 Ring ditches and barrow.

Conclusions

The magnetometry located a probable Iron Age or Romano British settlement on a trackway. It also located a probable Bronze Age barrow and other ring ditches which could well be smaller barrows, 2 of which appear to overlap. Many pit - like anomalies were found which can best be explained by excavation. The alternatives for these range from a mass of tree throw holes, although they appear to be too magnetically responsive for this, to post medieval and later rubbish pits from Wallingford, to a large cremation cemetery.

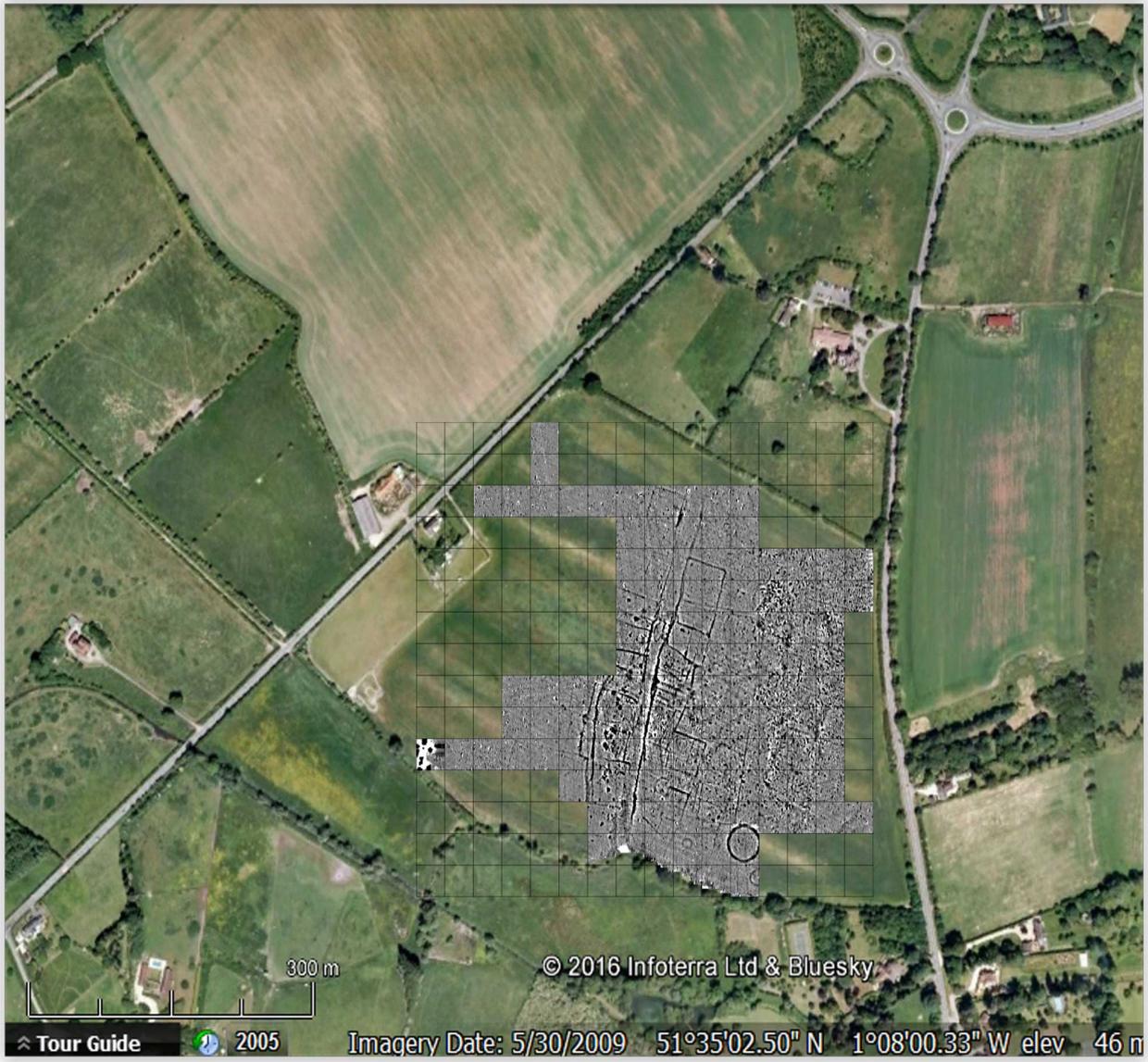
There is some slight striping across the results and this can be best explained as showing the, presumably medieval, field system as the anomalies appear to align very well with the field strips shown on the enclosure award for this area. The lidar plots of this area, particularly to the west, show that the enclosure award strips overlie a, presumably earlier, system of fields.

It is worrying that we failed to locate a barrow in the location given on the Historic England Pastscape system and the Oxfordshire HER's Heritage search system although the latter had not been updated since 2010. As always with geophysics, there is a chance that it was there and we failed to locate it. As other anomalies were located in that area, the likelihood is that it is not where they, based on an item in the Berkshire Archaeological Journal, say it is.

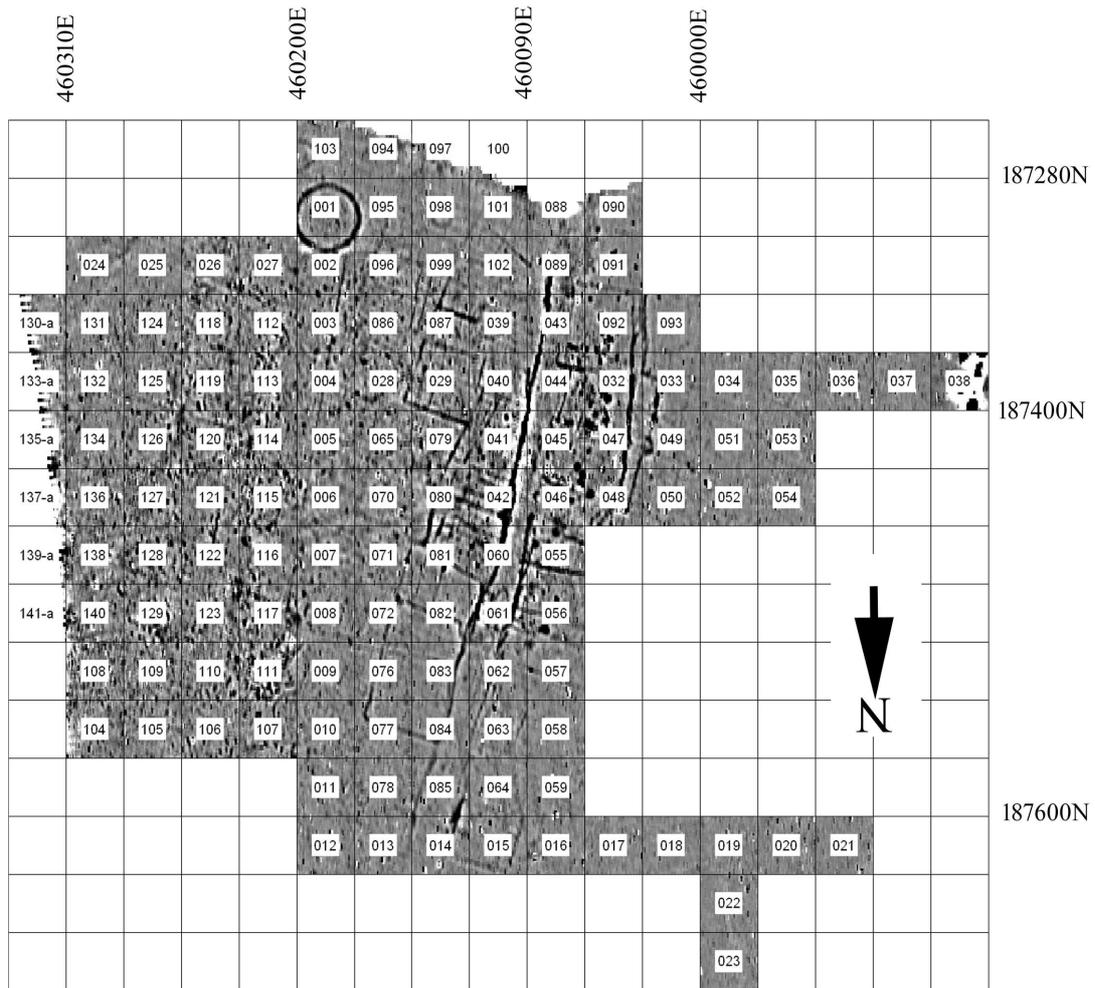
This leads us in this case to conclude that some 90% of remains were not recorded by the Authorities and the remains they did record could not be found. The usefulness of such sources is thus questionable.

Disclaimer

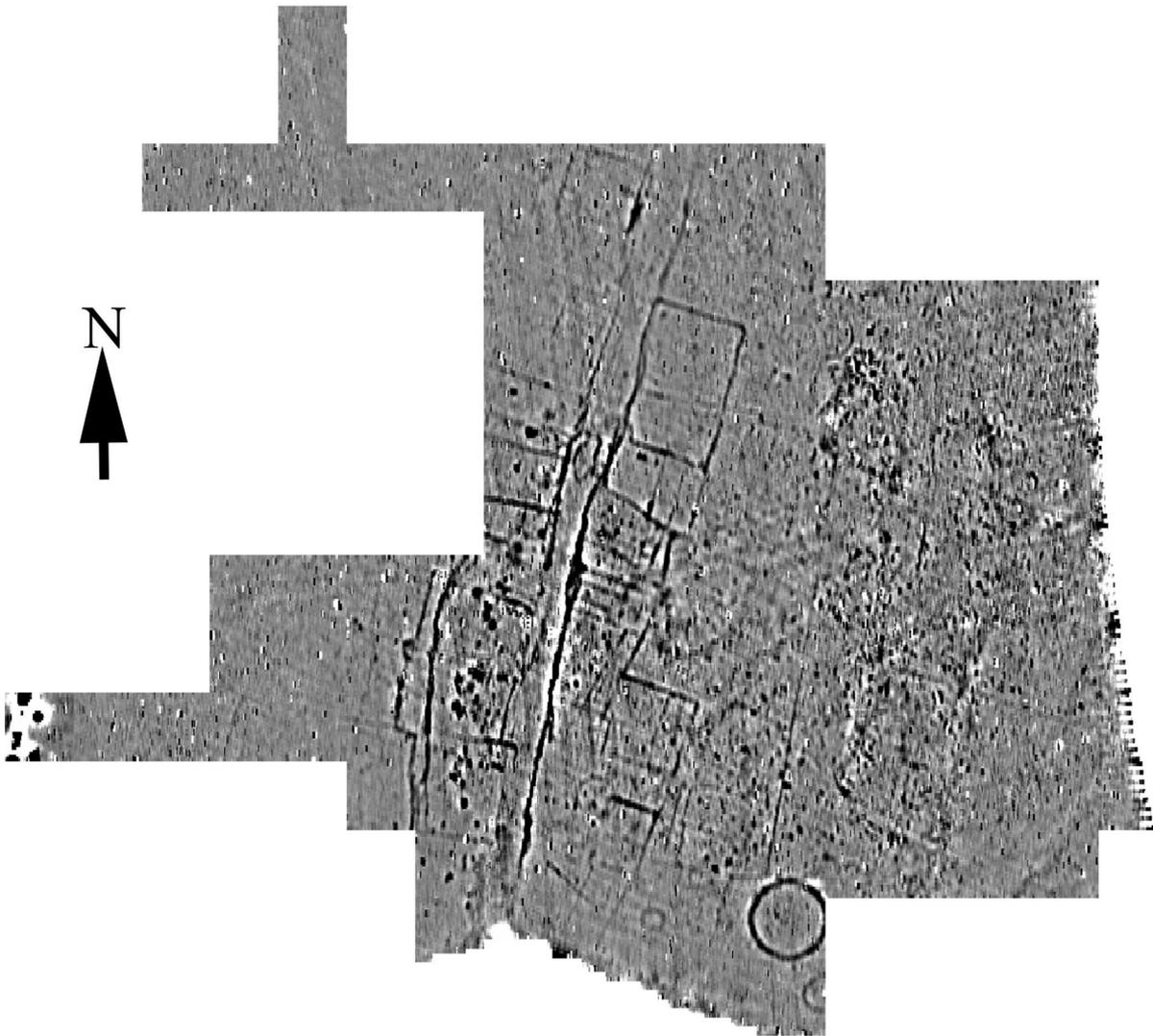
Geophysics is not always successful in locating sites. Whilst we do our reasonable best to locate features we cannot influence ground conditions and the state of preservation of remains. Graves and spreads of material are seldom located. The failure to locate remains does not mean that they are not there.



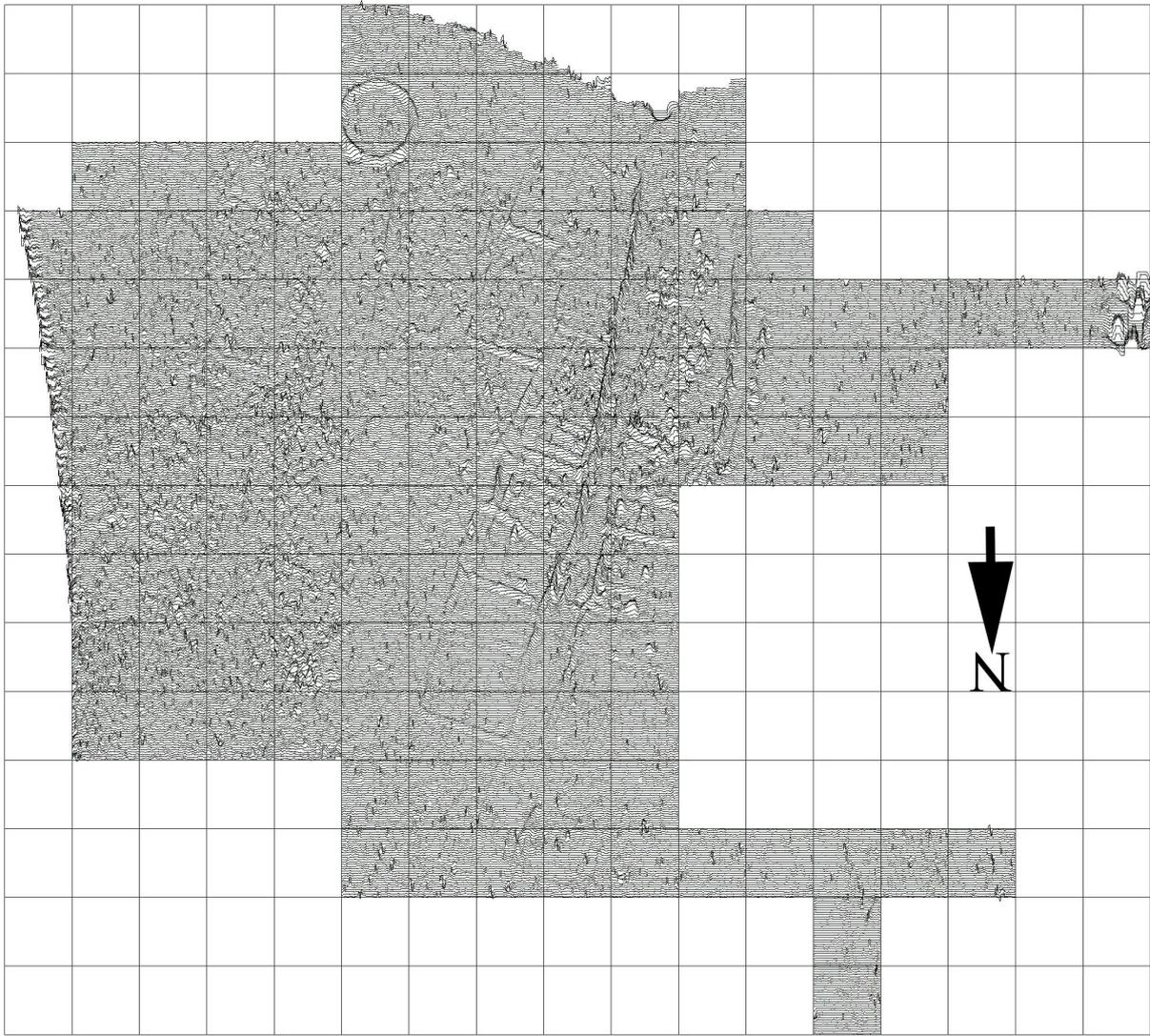
LOCATION on GoogleEarth base.



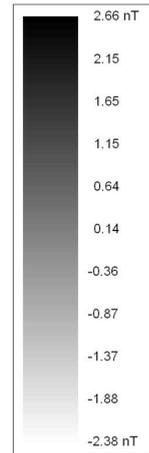
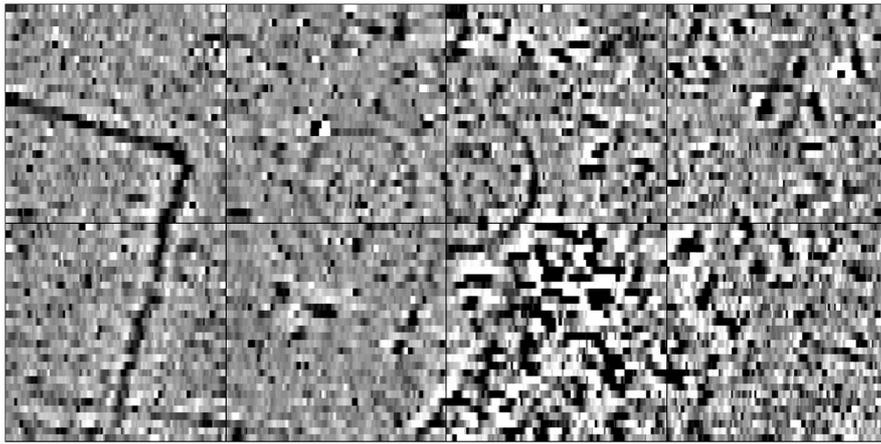
Grid order



Greyscale without grid lines



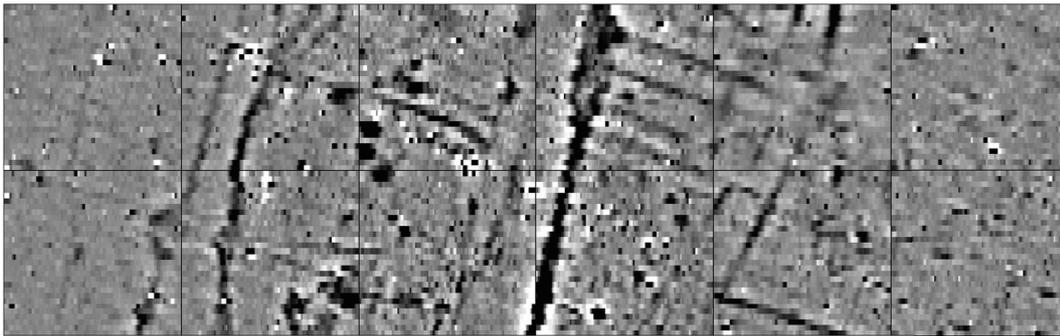
Trace plot



0 metres 60



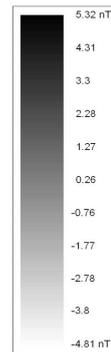
Detail of grids 110, 111, 009, 076
106, 107, 010, 077

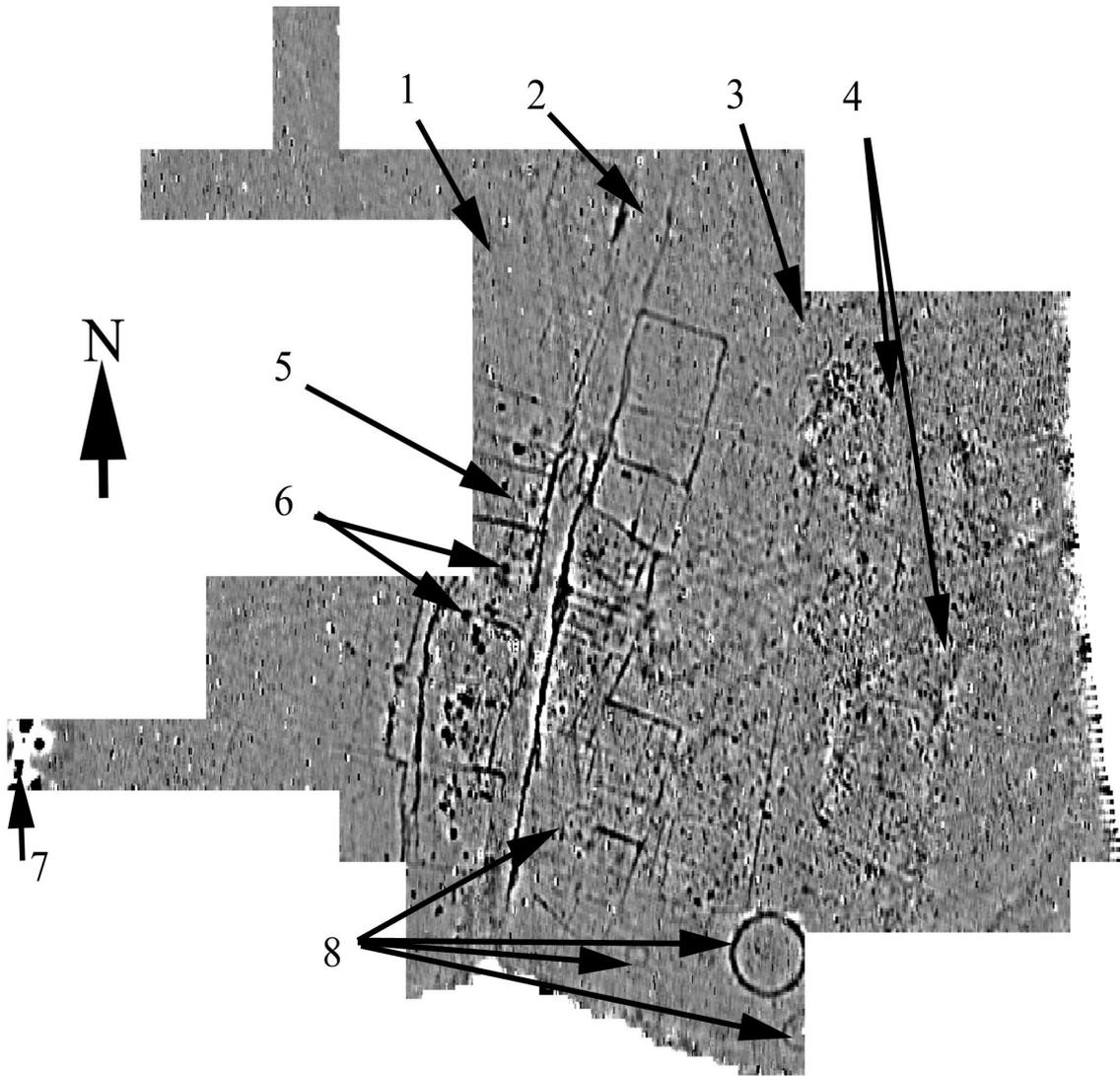


0 metres 60



Detail of grids 65, 79, 41, 45, 47, 49
70, 80, 42, 46, 48, 50





Interpretation