

**An Archaeological Watching Brief and Geophysical Survey at
Bexhill High School, Bexhill, East Sussex**

Planning Refs: RR/2709/CC and RR/2008/2010/C

**NGR 572888 109163
TQ72888 09163**

Project No. 3634

Site Code: BGL 08

**ASE Report No. 2008215
OASIS ID: archaeol6-56392**



**Diccon Hart and
Dave Honess**

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Bexhill High School, Bexhill, East Sussex during unexploded ordnance (UXO) mitigation works. A total of 116 potential UXO targets were investigated by combination of machine and hand-excavation.

Natural geology, comprising Hastings Beds, was encountered at a maximum height of 35.79m AOD in the southeast corner of the site to 32.50m to the north. This was overlain by a thin, intermittently present subsoil horizon, in turn overlain by topsoil. The survival of subsoil in the lowest area of the site alone is considered to result from levelling of the site for use as playing fields.

No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundworks and the only artefacts observed comprised modern ferrous objects and ceramic.

A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken on completion of the ordnance clearance works, using a Bartington Grad Fluxgate Gradiometer. Where visible inspection was possible, the anomalies successfully detected were modern in origin, resulting either from ferrous material or installations in the ground related to the previous use of the site as a sports field. The remaining anomalies may be of archaeological origin but further intrusive fieldwork would be required to determine this.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), a division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCLCAA) was commissioned by Longley to undertake a programme of archaeological works at Bexhill High School, East Sussex in advance of the development of the site. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 573155 109163 and its location is shown in Figure 1.

1.2 Planning permission has been granted for the development of the site with the construction of a new school complex with associated landscaping and car parking (Planning Refs: RR/2709/CC and RR/2008/2010/C). A non-intrusive magnetometry survey for unexploded ordnance on the site was undertaken by EOD Contracts Ltd., (ECL 2007). This identified 116 discrete anomalies of sufficient size to warrant further investigation by mechanical and hand excavation. Due to the archaeological potential of the site the ESCC County Archaeological Officer recommended that a condition be placed on planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological works, comprising a watching brief to be maintained during unexploded ordnance mitigations works and followed by an archaeological geophysical survey. As a consequence, Condition 3 of the consent stated that:

No development shall take place on the site until a written scheme of investigation and programme of implementation of archaeological work has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Director of Transport and Environment. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme which shall be implemented in full.

Reason: The development may disturb items of archaeological interest and an investigation provides a reasonable opportunity to record the history of the site in accordance with Policy S1 (j) of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Structure Plan 1991 – 2011 and Policy GD1(viii) of the Rother District Local Plan 2006.

1.3 A *Brief* setting out the scope of the archaeological works was produced by ESCC (ESCC 2008). A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) was subsequently prepared by Archaeology South-East with reference to this document and was submitted and duly approved by the County Planning Authority, following the advice from the County Archaeological Officer, prior to the archaeological works taking place (ASE 2008).

1.4 The site of the proposed development currently comprises a grassed playing field and is bounded on all sides by further playing fields. According to the British Geological Survey Sheet 320/321 Solid and Drift Edition, the site lies on Hastings Beds, comprising interbedded sands, sandstones and clays.

1.5 The fieldwork was undertaken by Diccon Hart, Dave Honess and Clive Meaton between 1st and 11th December 2008. The fieldwork was managed by Giles Dawkes and the post-excavation was managed by Louise Rayner.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of the site has been previously prepared by L-P: Archaeology Ltd (L-P: Archaeology 2008) and is herewith summarised with due acknowledgement.
- 2.2** In essence, no designated archaeological sites or listed buildings are known to exist on the site and that there are few records of archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity, although this may well be the result of a lack of investigation rather than a genuine absence of archaeological evidence. However, the occurrence of finds of Mesolithic and later prehistoric date in the wider vicinity suggests at least some potential for archaeological remains of this date to exist on the site.
- 2.3** The cartographic evidence shows that the site has comprised agricultural land since the late medieval period.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

- 3.1.1 In general, the aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological remains exposed during the groundworks. In addition, all artefacts or ecofacts of archaeological and palaeoenvironmental interest exposed and affected by the excavations, were to be recorded and interpreted to appropriate standards.
- 3.1.2 The watching brief was also to evaluate the past impacts on the site and pay particular attention to the character, height/depth below ground level, condition, date and significance of the deposits.
- 3.1.3 Intrusive groundworks were monitored by an archaeologist, once it was safe to do so, until it became clear beyond reasonable doubt that no further archaeological remains were present (e.g. once excavation reached undisturbed natural subsoils).
- 3.1.4 Machine excavation was undertaken using a tracked mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The spoil from the machine excavations was scanned for the presence of any artefacts, both visually and using a metal detector.
- 3.1.5 All encountered archaeological deposits, features and finds were excavated and recorded in accordance with accepted professional standards (IFA 2000 & 2001, EH 1991), the Recommended Standard Conditions for Archaeological Fieldwork, Recording, and Post-Excavation Work (Development Control) in East Sussex (2008) and the approved ASE Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2007), using pro-forma context record sheets. Archaeological features and deposits were planned at a scale of 1:50, with selected detail drawn at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10. Deposit colours were verified by visual inspection and not by reference to a Munsell Colour chart.
- 3.1.6 A photographic record of the work was kept and will form part of the site archive. The archive is presently held at the Archaeology South-East offices at Portslade, and will in due course be offered to a suitable local museum.
- 3.1.7 Site Archive Quantification

Number of Contexts	4
No. of files/paper record	3 trench record sheets
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	0
Photographs	Digital
Bulk finds	0
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive

3.2 Geophysical Survey

- 3.2.1 The aim of the geophysical survey, as set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* was to produce a detailed archaeological geophysical survey of the site and to establish the presence/absence, extent, character, and significance of any archaeological remains within the proposed development area.
- 3.2.2 The geophysical survey comprised a detailed magnetometer survey of the site within the area shown on Figure 2.
- 3.2.3 A Bartington Grad 601-2 Fluxgate Gradiometer was used to survey the site. The site was surveyed using 1 metre traverses with samples at every 0.25 metres within a 30 metre grid or part thereof as appropriate. The 30 metre grid was set out using Ordnance Survey co-ordinates derived from a Differential GPS (DGPS) survey system.
- 3.2.4 Any areas of hard-standing were excluded from the survey as they are not conducive to geophysics survey. Other areas excluded from the survey due to interference to the instrumentation include the perimeter of the site, which was fenced with steel fencing panels; the course of a modern service pipe running diagonally across the site; a stockpile of ferrous material towards the centre of the site collected during the previous ordnance clearance exercise and areas of heavily rutted or disturbed ground deemed to cause excessive shake/tilt of the instrumentation.
- 3.2.5 Geophysical survey data processing was carried out using Geoplot V3 published by Geoscan Research.
- 3.2.6 Three stages of processing were applied to the raw data. The first process carried out upon the data was to CLIP it. CLIP can be used to limit data to specified maximum and minimum values for improving graphical presentation. It also has the effect of removing some of the 'iron spikes' that occur with fluxgate gradiometer survey data. ZERO MEAN TRAVERSE was then applied to the survey data. This removes stripe effects within grids and ensures that the survey grid edges match. INTERPOLATE smoothes the data by creating extra data points based upon collected values. INTERPOLATE was carried out upon the survey data in both the X and the Y axis. INTERPOLATE improves the data presentation.

4.0 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS (Fig. 3)

- 4.1** Of the 116 geophysical anomalies targeted during the unexploded ordnance mitigations works a total of 50 merited investigation by mechanical excavation. These excavations were monitored and recorded in detail. The results of this are tabulated in Table 2 below. The remaining 66 anomalies were investigated by means of minimal hand excavation, typically not exceeding c. 0.10m in depth (i.e. wholly within topsoil). These excavations were monitored but given their negligible impact, no specific recording was undertaken.
- 4.2** The earliest recorded deposit on the site comprised mottled light-mid yellow silty clay with occasional pockets of sandstone (003). This constituted the natural geology of the site and was seen to slope down gently to the north from a maximum height of 35.79m AOD in the southeast corner of the site to 32.50m to the north.
- 4.3** The clean natural clay (003) was overlain by a thin layer of mid yellowish brown silty clay (002) that varied in depth from co. 0.05m to 0.15m. This deposit appears to represent a surviving subsoil or interface between the underlying natural clay and the topsoil. The deposit seems to survive only in the northwest (i.e. lowest) corner of the site; its absence elsewhere probably reflects horizontal truncation as a result of levelling the site for use as playing fields.
- 4.4** A layer of mid yellowish brown silty clay topsoil (001) was seen to seal the natural clay and subsoil (002) and (003) across all but the northwest corner of the site. This varied in depth from c. 0.25m to 0.40m. The northwest corner of the site appears to have been previously stripped of topsoil for a site compound. Here, the natural clay (003) was directly sealed by a thick layer of hardcore of recent origin (004), measuring up to 0.40m in depth.

Grid Sq.	Anomaly No.	Context	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Height AOD (m)
1	32	001	0.30 min	1.50	1.50	31.93
2	18	001	0.25	1.50	1.50	32.75
		002	0.15 min	1.50	1.50	32.50
2	20	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	32.75
		002	0.15 min	1.50	1.50	32.45
2	17	001	0.25	1.50	1.00	32.75
		002	0.05 min	1.50	1.00	32.50
2	21	001	0.26	1.50	1.00	32.75
		002	0.02 min	1.50	1.00	32.49
2	23	001	0.10 min	1.50	1.00	33.07
2	29	001	0.10 min	1.50	1.00	32.80
2	35	001	0.25	1.50	1.00	32.80
		002	0.05	1.50	1.00	32.55
		003	n/a	1.50	1.00	32.50
2	37	001	0.25 min	1.50	1.00	33.22
3	8	001	0.20 min	1.50	1.00	32.45
3	18	001	0.16 min	1.50	0.80	32.45
3	19	001	0.25 min	1.50	1.00	32.45
4	12	001	0.30	1.50	2.80	33.63
		002	0.05 min	1.50	2.80	33.33
4	14	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	33.63

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Bexhill High School, Bexhill, East Sussex

Grid Sq.	Anomaly No.	Context	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Length (m)	Height AOD (m)
		002	0.05 min	1.50	1.50	33.33
4	17	001	0.10 min	1.50	2.00	33.28
4	18	001	0.30	1.50	3.00	32.99
		003	0.20 min	1.50	3.00	32.69
4	20	001	0.30	1.50	1.00	32.99
		003	0.15 min	1.50	1.00	32.69
4	21	001	0.30	1.50	1.00	33.23
		003	0.15	1.50	1.00	32.93
5	1	001	0.30	2.00	2.00	34.31
		003	n/a	2.00	2.00	34.01
5	2	001	0.25 min	1.50	1.50	34.31
5	3	001	0.40	1.50	2.00	34.27
		003	0.10 min	1.50	2.00	33.87
5	5	001	0.30 min	1.50	1.50	34.24
5	6	001	0.30 min	1.50	1.50	34.24
5	8	001	0.17 min	1.50	1.50	34.24
7	11	001	0.30 min	1.50	1.50	34.53
8	6, 9	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.51
		003	0.10 min	1.50	1.50	35.21
8	13	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.29
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	34.99
8	21	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	34.82
		003	0.15 min	1.50	1.50	34.52
8	22	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	34.82
		003	0.16 min	1.50	1.50	34.52
8	23	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	34.82
		003	0.15 min	1.50	1.50	34.52
11	7, 9, 10, 13	001	0.30	1.50	3.00	36.09
		003	0.40 min	1.50	3.00	35.79
11	19, 30, 31, 32	001	0.40	1.50	3.00	35.82
		003	0.40 min	1.50	3.00	35.42
12	10	004	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.82
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	35.52
12	12	004	0.20	1.50	1.50	35.82
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	35.62
12	13	004	0.40	1.50	1.50	35.82
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	35.42
13	4	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	33.98
		003	0.50 min	1.50	1.50	33.68
13	6	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	33.91
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	33.61
14	1	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	34.78
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	34.48
15	4	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.32
		003	0.60 min	1.50	1.50	35.02
15	5	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.23
		003	0.50 min	1.50	1.50	34.93
15	6	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.23
		003	0.50 min	1.50	1.50	34.93
15	8	001	0.30	1.50	1.50	35.23
		003	0.55min	1.50	1.50	34.93
16	1	004	0.10	1.50	1.50	35.10
		003	0.20 min	1.50	1.50	35.00

Table 2: List of Recorded Contexts

5.0 THE FINDS

- 5.1** No finds were recovered during the excavation; the only artefacts observed during investigative groundworks comprised ferrous objects of modern origin and 19th-20th century pottery, all of which occurred within the topsoil of the site.

6.0 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS (Fig. 4)

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 There are a number of anomalies within the survey area. These anomalies are discussed below and should be viewed in conjunction with Fig. 4. The technique has worked over the geology and some anomalies are present in the grey scale images.

6.2 Interpretation of Fluxgate Gradiometer Results

6.2.1 Fig. 4a presents the results without any overlaid interpretation. The anomalies are categorised and discussed below in relation to the key on Fig. 4b.

6.2.2 Positive Linear Anomalies

One positive linear anomaly (see Fig. 4a) has been identified. This, although very faint, indicates the presence of slightly magnetised material beneath the surface. It may be of an archaeological origin but could equally be a more modern feature such as a land drain.

6.2.3 Discrete Di-polar Anomalies

Numerous discrete di-polar anomalies (see Fig. 4b) have been identified. These may indicate the presence of ferrous objects of possible archaeological and non-archaeological origin. It should be noted that a number of the responses corresponded to recently reinstated excavations on the ground from the ordinance sweep performed by EOA Contractors Ltd. This is certainly true of the di-polar responses at B, C and F. It is likely that EOA backfilled modern material they found in their excavations and this survey has picked up the same objects. The di-polar response at D corresponds to a modern Astroturf cricket pitch / strip set onto a hard standing surface. The hard standing here probably contains some ferrous material. There is also a very strong response at E. This was observed on the ground to be a vertical metal tube of diameter c. 0.15m set just below the grass, most likely a former goal post. If this is the case the positive response just to the south of E is likely explained as the corresponding post. The responses at G (see Fig. 4) are from where the instrument came too close to the Heras fencing. The remaining di-polar responses go unexplained, however it should be borne in mind that the land has been used as a school sports field up until recently. A parochial sweep of the field on foot, prior to the start of the survey, resulted in the collection of numerous metal drinks cans, of varying states of decay and football boot studs. It is therefore probable that the remaining responses are from similarly modern objects, nonetheless there also remains the possibility that they may be of more ancient origin.

6.2.4 Background Noise Discrepancy

The black line on Figure 4 demarcates an area of higher background noise to the west compared with that of the east. This is not thought to be a balancing mistake with the instrumentation as the area to either side of the

line was surveyed in the same morning and from a single balance. Therefore what is seen here is probably a genuine response and may be explained by former land use or slight differences in the underlying geology. It is interesting to observe that the majority of the ordinance sweep excavations lie within the area of higher noise to the west. There is also a possibility that the higher level of background noise here may be masking responses that would have otherwise been detected.

6.3 Statement of Indemnity

- 6.3.1 Geophysical survey is the collection of data that relate to subtle variations in the form and nature of soil. Magnetic detail survey may not always detect sub-surface archaeological features. This is particularly true when considering earlier periods of human activity, for example those periods that are not characterised by sedentary social activity. These periods may include but are not necessarily restricted to the earlier Bronze Age, Neolithic, Mesolithic and Palaeolithic.

7.0 DISCUSSION

7.1 Archaeological Watching Brief

7.1.1 No archaeological deposits were observed during the course of the watching brief. Rather, the monitoring of investigative groundworks showed a relatively uniform sequence of natural clay, an intermittently present sequence of subsoil and a horizon of topsoil. No artefacts earlier than 19th century date were observed during the monitoring.

7.1.2 The survival of subsoil in the lowest corner of the site is considered here to reflect partial horizontal truncation across the monitored area as a result of levelling the site for use as playing fields. However, the existing topography of the site does not exhibit any conspicuous signs of terracing and any such levelling is likely to be fairly minimal.

7.1.3 The northwest corner of the site has been previously stripped of topsoil. Here the natural clay was directly sealed by a layer of hardcore of recent origin. There are, however, no obvious signs of truncation of the underlying natural clay.

7.2 Geophysical Survey

7.2.1 In summary, the results are inconclusive. The gradiometer geophysical survey has been successful in identifying a number of anomalies. Some of these have modern explanations however others, whilst possibly also modern, may relate to archaeological activity. Further, intrusive, fieldwork would be required, however, to determine whether any such anomalies are archaeological in origin.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** Neither the watching brief nor the geophysical survey conclusively identified any archaeological features. Further work would be required in order to categorically determine the presence or absence of archaeological features on the site.

REFERENCES

ASE 2008: *Bexhill High School, Bexhill, East Sussex. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief and Geophysical Survey.* Unpub. ASE Report.

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L-P Archaeology, February 2008, *Archaeological Desk based Assessment of land at Gunter's Lane, Bexhill.* Unpub. client report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeology South-East would like to thank Longley for commissioning the work and for their support during the course of the project. The advice and guidance of Greg Chuter of ESCC is also greatly appreciated.

SMR Summary Form

Site Code	BGL 08					
Identification Name and Address	Bexhill high School, Gunters Lane, Bexhill					
County, District &/or Borough	East Sussex					
OS Grid Refs.	NGR 573155 109163					
Geology	Hastings Beds					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3634					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	Watching Brief ✓	Standing Structure	Survey	Other (geophysical survey) ✓
Type of Site	Green✓ Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval.	Excav.	WB. 01-04.12.08	Other (geophysical survey) 07-10.12.08		
Sponsor/Client	Longley					
Project Manager	Giles Dawkes					
Project Supervisor	D Hart					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM	Other Modern✓		
<p>100 Word Summary.</p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Bexhill High School, Bexhill, East Sussex during unexploded ordnance (UXO) mitigation works. A total of 116 potential UXO targets were investigated by means a combination of machine- and hand-excavation.</p> <p>Natural geology, comprising Hastings Beds, was encountered at a maximum height of 35.79m AOD in the southeast corner of the site to 32.50m to the north.. This was overlain by a thin, intermittently present subsoil horizon, in turn overlain by the topsoil of the site. The survival of subsoil in the lowest area of the site alone is considered to result from levelling of the site for use as playing fields.</p> <p>No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundworks and the only artefacts observed comprised modern ferrous objects and ceramic.</p> <p>A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken on completion of the ordnance clearance works, using a Bartington Grad Fluxgate Gradiometer. A number of anomalies were successfully detected but most were modern in origin, resulting either from ferrous material or installations in the ground related to the previous use of the site as a sports field. The remaining anomalies may be of archaeological origin but further intrusive fieldwork would be required to determine this.</p>						

OASIS SUMMARY FORM

OASIS ID: archaeol6-56392

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief and Geophysical Survey at
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken at Bexhill High School, Bexhill, East Sussex during unexploded ordnance (UXO) mitigation works. A total of 116 potential UXO targets were investigated by means a combination of machine- and hand-excavation. Natural geology, comprising Hastings Beds, was encountered at a maximum height of 35.79m AOD in the southeast corner of the site to 32.50m to the north.. This was overlain by a thin, intermittently present subsoil horizon, in turn overlain by the topsoil of the site. The survival of subsoil in the lowest area of the site alone is considered to result from levelling of the site for use as playing fields. No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the groundworks and the only artefacts observed comprised modern ferrous objects and ceramic. A geophysical survey of the site was undertaken on completion of the ordnance clearance works, using a Bartington Grad Fluxgate Gradiometer. A number of anomalies were successfully detected but most were modern in origin, resulting either from ferrous material or installations in the ground related to the previous use of the site as a sports field. The remaining anomalies may be of archaeological origin but further intrusive fieldwork would be required to determine this.
Project dates	Start: 01-12-2008 End: 11-12-2008
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	2634 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	BGL 08 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	'Geophysical Survey','Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Solid geology	HASTINGS BEDS
Drift geology	Unknown
Techniques	Magnetometry

Project location

Country	England
---------	---------

Site location	EAST SUSSEX ROTHER BEXHILL Bexhill School
Study area	2.60 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 728 090 50.8540638738 0.455302662022 50 51 14 N 000 27 19 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 32.50m Max: 35.79m

Project creators


Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	East Sussex County Council
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Giles Dawkes
Project supervisor	Diccon Hart
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Longley Kier

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Digital Contents	'Survey'
Digital Media available	'Geophysics','Images raster / digital photography','Images vector'
Paper Archive recipient	Hastings Museum
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Report','Survey '

Project bibliography 1

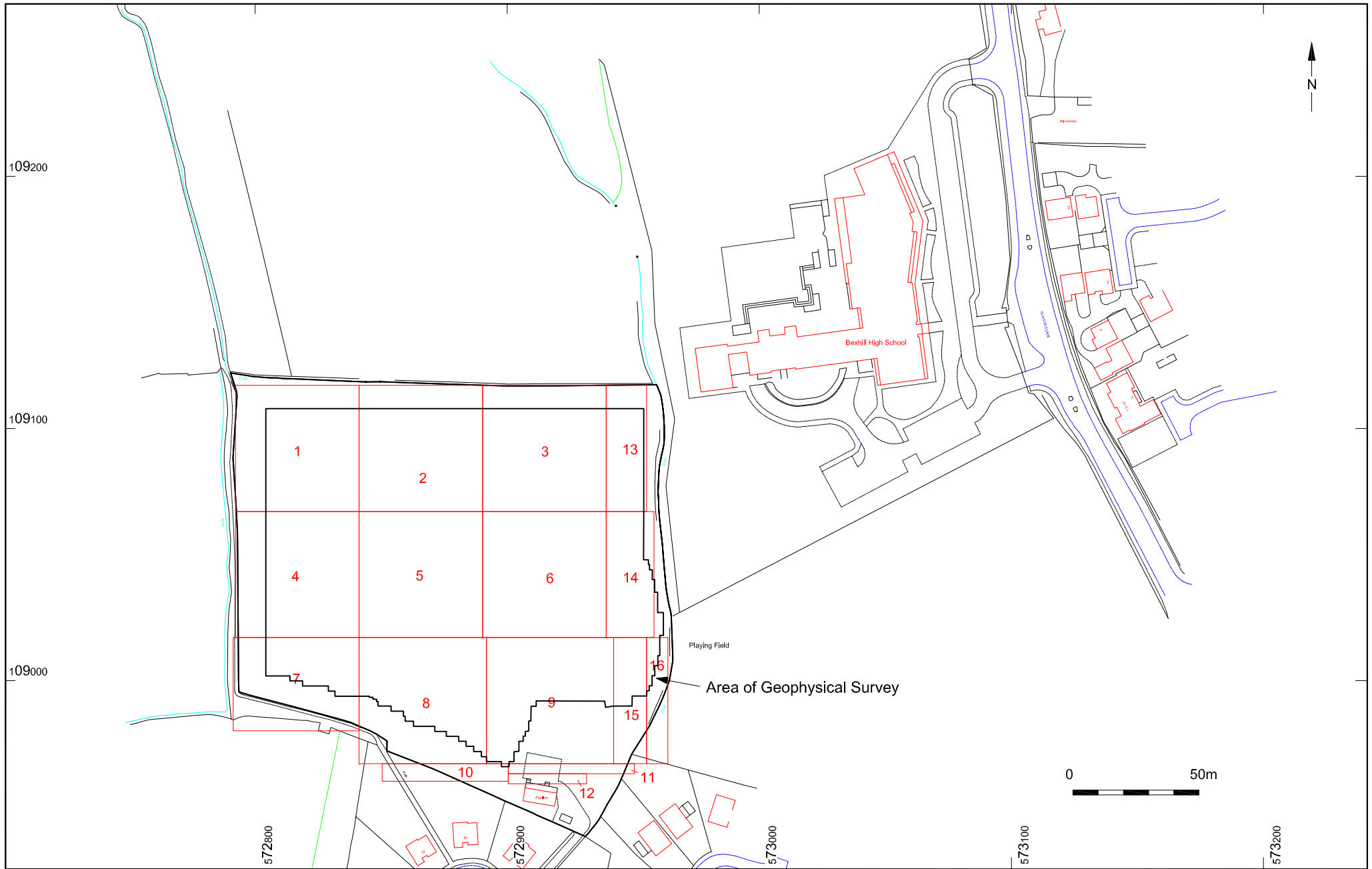
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Title	An Archaeological Watching Brief and Geophysical Survey at
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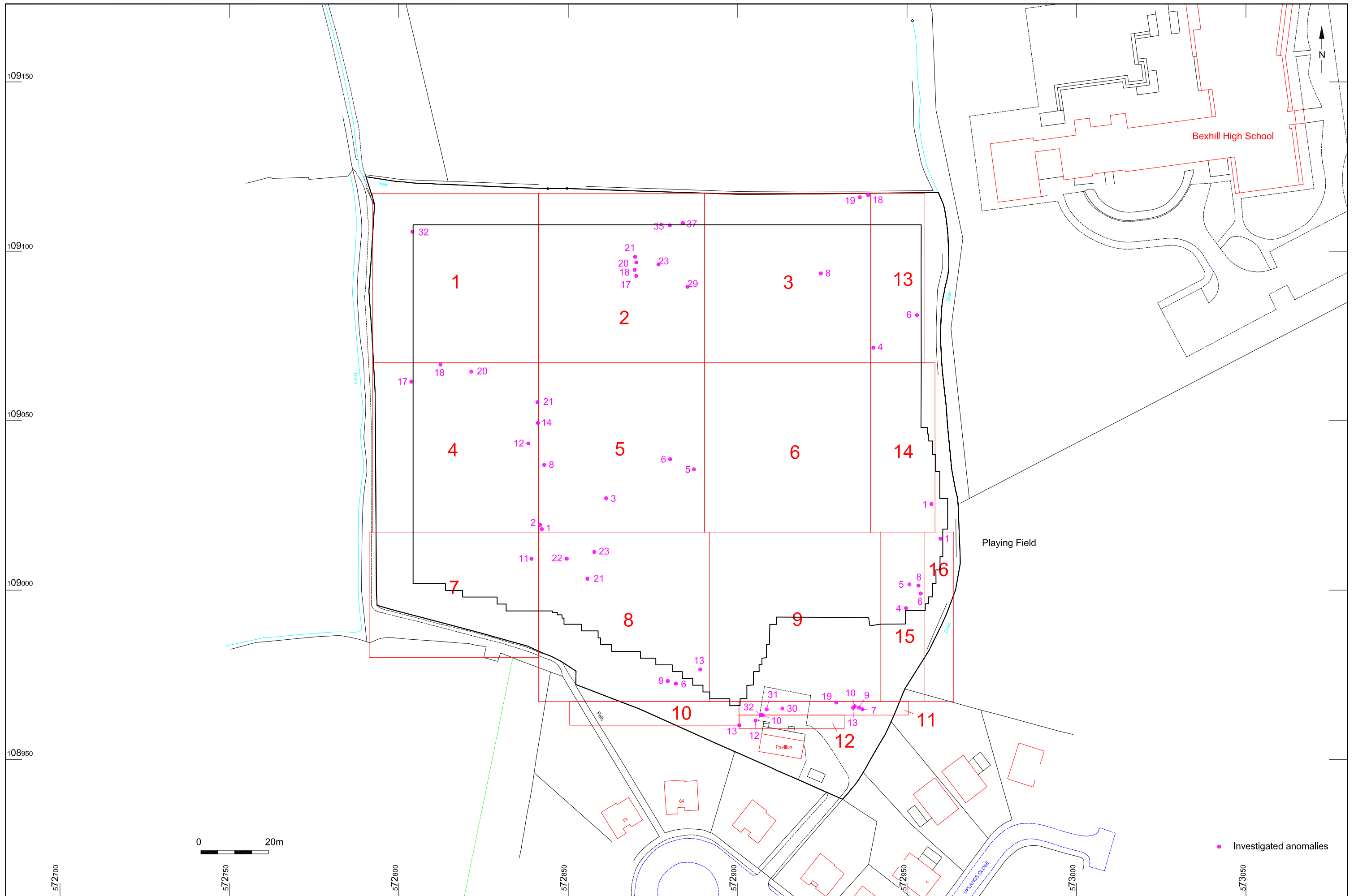


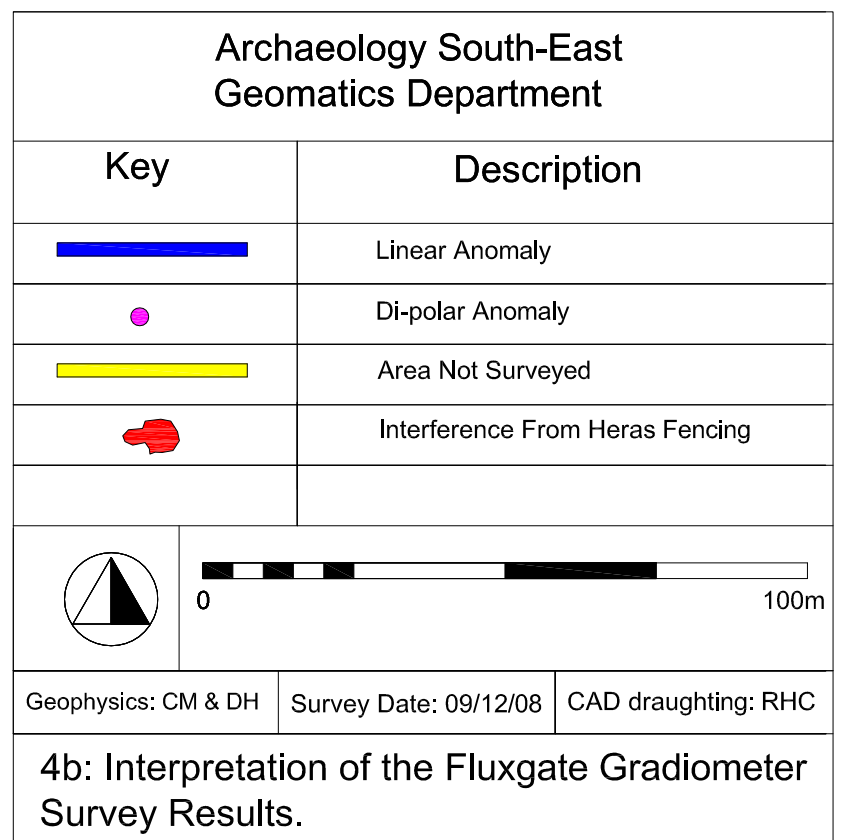
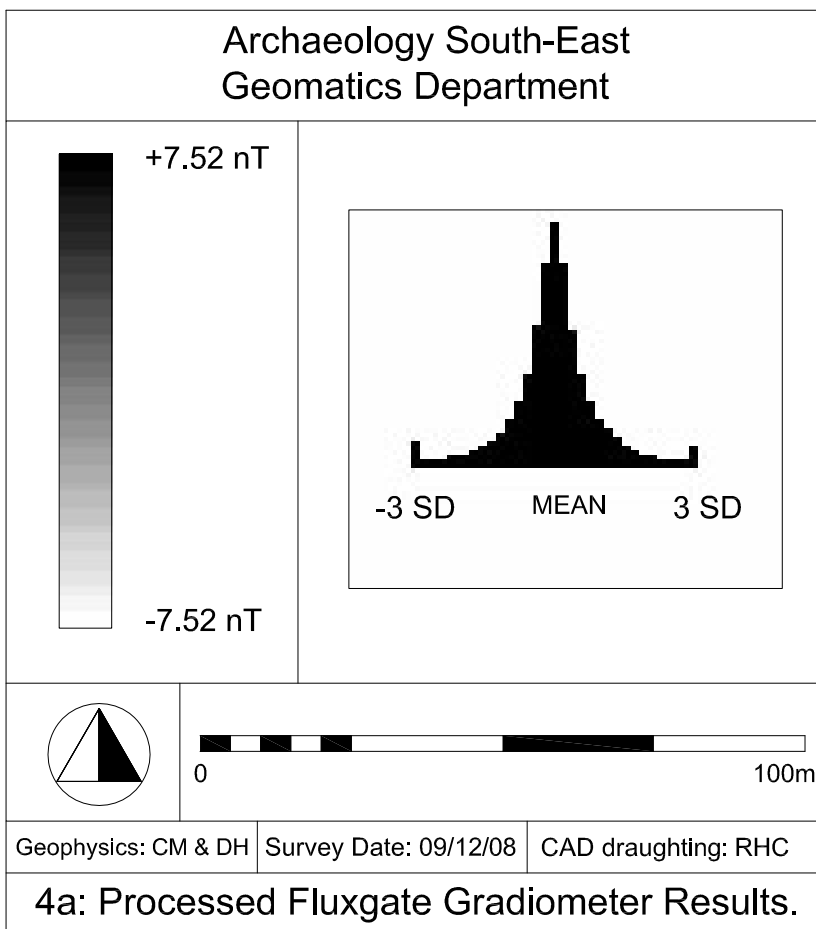
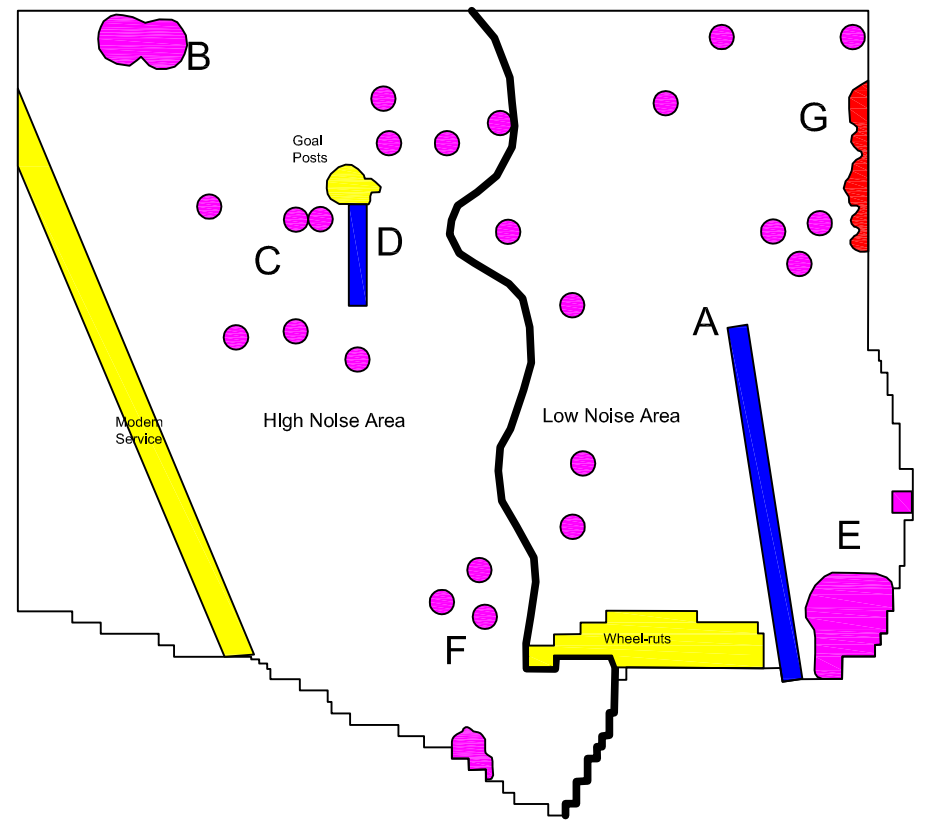
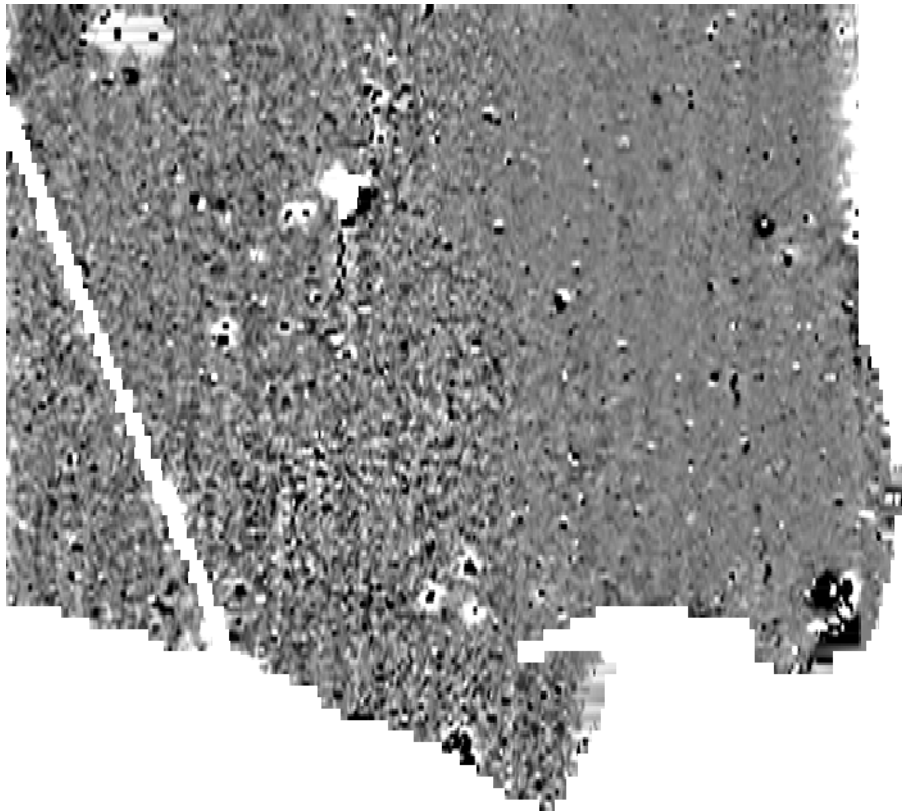
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Project Ref: 3634	March 2009	Site Location Plan	
Report Ref: 2008015	Drawn by: JLR		

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Project Ref: 3634	March 2009	Site plan showing survey grid	
Report Ref: 2008215	Drawn by: JR/RC		





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