

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

STRATASCAN™



Project name:
Land at Standlake, Oxfordshire

Client:
CgMs Consulting

Job ref:
J10711

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1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A detailed gradiometry survey was conducted over approximately 2.3 hectares of grassland. A number of ditches, pits, and a possible ring-ditch have been detected. Former field boundaries indicate that the site has a largely agricultural past.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background synopsis

Stratascan were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area outlined for residential development. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by CgMs Consulting.

2.2 Site Details

NGR / Postcode	SP 386 034 / OX29 7QH
Location	The site is located approximately 0.6km north-west of Standlake, Oxfordshire. Abingdon Road forms the northern boundary of the site, with Lancott Lane to the west.
HER/SMR	Oxfordshire
District	West Oxfordshire
Parish	Standlake CP
Topography	Mostly flat
Current Land Use	Grassland (horse pasture)
Weather Conditions	Overcast, dry
Soils	The overlying soils are known as Badsey 1 which are typical brown calcareous earths. These consist of fine loamy soils over gravel (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 6 South East England).
Geology	The underlying geology comprises mudstone of Oxford Clay Formation and West Walton Formation (undifferentiated). Superficial deposits of Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member, Lower Facet – sand and gravel, are recorded across the site (British Geological Survey website).
Archaeology	<p>A search of Oxfordshire HER within a 1km radius of the site identifies a number of undated, prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains.</p> <p>Three undated linear features and two undated pits (HER No. 17141) are recorded c. 100m to the east of the site. It is thought that they may relate to earlier prehistoric settlement or boundary ditches to the medieval tenements lining Abingdon Road.</p> <p>Roman settlement features (HER No. 26171) dating to the 3rd or 4th Century were recorded during an archaeological evaluation approximately 250m to the west. The features comprised ditches, pits and postholes. The features appear to represent two phases of field system, with a realignment in the late 3rd Century.</p>

	<p>Around 500m south-east of the site lies a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of a complex of rectangular enclosures, ring ditches and tracks (Monument No. 1006342).</p> <p>An Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery is recorded to the south-west of the site (HER No. 1589).</p>
Survey Methods	Detailed magnetic survey (gradiometry)
Study Area	c. 2.3 hectares

2.3 Aims and objectives

To locate and characterise any anomalies of possible archaeological interest within the study area.

3 METHODS, PROCESSING & PRESENTATION

3.1 Standards & Guidance

This report and all fieldwork have been conducted in accordance with the latest guidance documents issued by Historic England (2008) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2002 & 2014).

Stratascan Ltd are a Registered Organisation with the CIfA and are committed to upholding its policies and standards.

3.2 Survey methods

Detailed magnetic survey was used as an efficient and effective method of locating archaeological anomalies.

More information regarding this technique is included in Appendix A.

3.3 Processing

The following schedule shows the basic processing carried out on the data used in this report:

1. *De-stripe*
2. *De-stagger*

3.4 Presentation of results and interpretation

The presentation of the data for each site involves a plot of the minimally processed data as a greyscale plot and a colour plot showing extreme magnetic values. Magnetic anomalies have been identified and plotted onto the 'Interpretation of Anomalies' drawing.

When interpreting the results several factors are taken into consideration, including the nature of archaeological features being investigated and the local conditions at the site (geology, pedology, topography etc.). Anomalies are categorised by their potential origin. Where responses can be related to very specific known features documented in other sources, this is done (for example: Abbey Wall, Roman Road). For the generic categories levels of confidence are indicated, for example: probable, or possible archaeology. The former is used for a confident interpretation, based on anomaly definition and/or other corroborative data such as cropmarks. Poor anomaly definition, a lack of clear patterns to the responses and an absence of other supporting data reduces confidence, hence the classification "possible".

4 RESULTS

The detailed magnetic gradiometer survey conducted at Standlake has identified a number of anomalies that have been characterised as being of *probable* or *possible* archaeological origin. The following list of numbered anomalies refers to numerical labels on the interpretation plots.

4.1 *Probable Archaeology*

A number of positive linear anomalies [1] across the south of the site are indicative of former cut features, such as ditches. Given the close proximity of prehistoric and Roman field remains, it is likely that these are associated with a former enclosure ditches or trackways of this date, though an exact date for the responses cannot be determined with confidence.

4.2 *Possible Archaeology*

A weak, positive sub-circular anomaly [3] in the south-east of the site may be related to a former barrow or ring-ditch, though the weak response of the anomaly makes further interpretation difficult. The tentative interpretation as *possible* archaeology is a result of substantial prehistoric remains, including ring-ditches, some 500m to the south-east (SAM. 1006342). A small number of discrete positive responses may relate to former pits or possible hearths, though this interpretation is tentative at best.

Further discrete positive anomalies [4] may be of archaeological interest, i.e. shallow backfilled pits, though they may also be related to the superficial sand and gravel deposits.

4.3 *Medieval/Post-Medieval Agriculture*

A number of positive linear anomalies [4-7] are related to former field boundaries, visible on available historic OS mapping. Anomalies 4-6 are visible from 1876 to 1960, and Anomaly 7 is visible from 1921 to 1960.

4.4 *Other Anomalies*

An area of magnetic debris at the north of the site are likely to be modern in origin, and relate to modern disturbance in the topsoil.

Areas of magnetic disturbance are the result of substantial nearby ferrous metal objects such as fences and underground services. These effects can mask weaker archaeological anomalies, but on this site have not affected a significant proportion of the area.

A number of magnetic 'spikes' indicate ferrous metal objects. These are likely to be modern rubbish.

5 DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

Underlying mudstone geologies can generally provide average results for magnetic survey, while superficial deposits of sand and gravel can provide variable results. In this instance, a number of probable and possible archaeological anomalies have been detected and it can be determined that the survey has been effective.

6 CONCLUSION

The survey at Standlake has identified a number of archaeological anomalies. The responses are indicative of former ditches, and likely relate to an area of former settlement activity. A possible ring-ditch has been detected, along with several possible backfilled pits. Given the proximity of prehistoric and Roman remains it is possible that the areas of settlement activity extended into the site. The remaining features include former field boundaries and magnetic disturbance and debris.

7 REFERENCES

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Appendix A - Technical Information: Magnetometer Survey Method

Grid Positioning

For hand held gradiometers the location of the survey grids has been plotted together with the referencing information. Grids were set out using a Trimble R8 Real Time Kinematic (RTK) VRS Now GNSS GPS system.

An RTK GPS (Real-time Kinematic Global Positioning System) can locate a point on the ground to a far greater accuracy than a standard GPS unit. A standard GPS suffers from errors created by satellite orbit errors, clock errors and atmospheric interference, resulting in an accuracy of 5m-10m. An RTK system uses a single base station receiver and a number of mobile units. The base station re-broadcasts the phase of the carrier it measured, and the mobile units compare their own phase measurements with those they received from the base station. This results in an accuracy of around 0.01m.

Technique	Instrument	Traverse Interval	Sample Interval
Magnetometer	Bartington Grad 601-2	1m	0.25m

Instrumentation: Bartington *Grad601-2*

Bartington instruments operate in a gradiometer configuration which comprises fluxgate sensors mounted vertically, set 1.0m apart. The fluxgate gradiometer suppresses any diurnal or regional effects. The instruments are carried, or cart mounted, with the bottom sensor approximately 0.1-0.3m from the ground surface. At each survey station, the difference in the magnetic field between the two fluxgates is measured in nanoTesla (nT). The sensitivity of the instrument can be adjusted; for most archaeological surveys the most sensitive range (0.1nT) is used. Generally, features up to 1m deep may be detected by this method, though strongly magnetic objects may be visible at greater depths. The Bartington instrument can collect two lines of data per traverse with gradiometer units mounted laterally with a separation of 1.0m.

The readings are logged consecutively into the data logger which in turn is daily down-loaded into a portable computer whilst on site. At the end of each site survey, data is transferred to the office for processing and presentation.

Data Processing

Zero Mean Traverse This process sets the background mean of each traverse within each grid to zero. The operation removes striping effects and edge discontinuities over the whole of the data set.

Step Correction (Destagger) When gradiometer data are collected in 'zig-zag' fashion, stepping errors can sometimes arise. These occur because of a slight difference in the speed of walking on the forward and reverse traverses. The result is a staggered effect in the data, which is particularly noticeable on linear anomalies. This process corrects these errors.

Display

Greyscale/ Colourscale Plot This format divides a given range of readings into a set number of classes. Each class is represented by a specific shade of grey, the intensity increasing with value. All values above the given range are allocated the same shade (maximum intensity); similarly all values below the given range are represented by the minimum intensity shade. Similar plots can be produced in colour, either using a wide range of colours or by selecting two or three colours to represent positive and negative values. The assigned range (plotting levels) can be adjusted to emphasise different anomalies in the data-set.

Interpretation Categories

In certain circumstances (usually when there is corroborative evidence from desk based or excavation data) very specific interpretations can be assigned to magnetic anomalies (for example, *Roman Road, Wall*, etc.) and where appropriate, such interpretations will be applied. The list below outlines the generic categories commonly used in the interpretation of the results.

<i>Archaeology/Probable Archaeology</i>	This term is used when the form, nature and pattern of the response are clearly or very probably archaeological and /or if corroborative evidence is available. These anomalies, whilst considered anthropogenic, could be of any age.
<i>Possible Archaeology</i>	These anomalies exhibit either weak signal strength and / or poor definition, or form incomplete archaeological patterns, thereby reducing the level of confidence in the interpretation. Although the archaeological interpretation is favoured, they may be the result of variable soil depth, plough damage or even aliasing as a result of data collection orientation.
<i>Industrial / Burnt-Fired</i>	Strong magnetic anomalies that, due to their shape and form or the context in which they are found, suggest the presence of kilns, ovens, corn dryers, metal- working areas or hearths. It should be noted that in many instances modern ferrous material can produce similar magnetic anomalies.
<i>Former Field Boundary (probable & possible)</i>	Anomalies that correspond to former boundaries indicated on historic mapping, or which are clearly a continuation of existing land divisions. Possible denotes less confidence where the anomaly may not be shown on historic mapping but nevertheless the anomaly displays all the characteristics of a field boundary.
<i>Ridge & Furrow</i>	Parallel linear anomalies whose broad spacing suggests ridge and furrow cultivation. In some cases the response may be the result of more recent agricultural activity.
<i>Agriculture (ploughing)</i>	Parallel linear anomalies or trends with a narrower spacing, sometimes aligned with existing boundaries, indicating more recent cultivation regimes.
<i>Land Drain</i>	Weakly magnetic linear anomalies, quite often appearing in series forming parallel and herringbone patterns. Smaller drains will often lead and empty into larger diameter pipes and which in turn usually lead to local streams and ponds. These are indicative of clay fired land drains.
<i>Natural</i>	These responses form clear patterns in geographical zones where natural variations are known to produce significant magnetic distortions.
<i>Magnetic Disturbance</i>	Broad zones of strong dipolar anomalies, commonly found in places where modern ferrous or fired materials (e.g. brick rubble) are present. They are presumed to be modern.
<i>Service</i>	Magnetically strong anomalies usually forming linear features indicative of ferrous pipes/cables. Sometimes other materials (e.g. pvc) cause weaker magnetic responses and can be identified from their uniform linearity crossing large expanses.
<i>Ferrous</i>	This type of response is associated with ferrous material and may result from small items in the topsoil, larger buried objects such as pipes, or above ground features such as fence lines or pylons. Ferrous responses are usually regarded as modern. Individual burnt stones, fired bricks or igneous rocks can produce responses similar to ferrous material.
<i>Uncertain Origin</i>	Anomalies which stand out from the background magnetic variation, yet whose form and lack of patterning gives little clue as to their origin. Often the characteristics and distribution of the responses straddle the categories of <i>Possible Archaeology</i> and <i>Possible Natural</i> or (in the case of linear responses) <i>Possible Archaeology</i> and <i>Possible Agriculture</i> ; occasionally they are simply of an unusual form.

Where appropriate some anomalies will be further classified according to their form (positive or negative) and relative strength and coherence (trend: weak and poorly defined).

Appendix B - Technical Information: Magnetic Theory

Detailed magnetic survey can be used to effectively define areas of past human activity by mapping spatial variation and contrast in the magnetic properties of soil, subsoil and bedrock. Although the changes in the magnetic field resulting from differing features in the soil are usually weak, changes as small as 0.2 nanoTeslas (nT) in an overall field strength of 48,000nT, can be accurately detected.

Weakly magnetic iron minerals are always present within the soil and areas of enhancement relate to increases in *magnetic susceptibility* and permanently magnetised *thermoremanent* material.

Magnetic susceptibility relates to the induced magnetism of a material when in the presence of a magnetic field. This magnetism can be considered as effectively permanent as it exists within the Earth's magnetic field. Magnetic susceptibility can become enhanced due to burning and complex biological or fermentation processes.

Thermoremanence is a permanent magnetism acquired by iron minerals that, after heating to a specific temperature known as the Curie Point, are effectively demagnetised followed by re-magnetisation by the Earth's magnetic field on cooling. Thermoremanent archaeological features can include hearths and kilns and material such as brick and tile may be magnetised through the same process.

Silting and deliberate infilling of ditches and pits with magnetically enhanced soil creates a relative contrast against the much lower levels of magnetism within the subsoil into which the feature is cut. Systematic mapping of magnetic anomalies will produce linear and discrete areas of enhancement allowing assessment and characterisation of subsurface features. Material such as subsoil and non-magnetic bedrock used to create former earthworks and walls may be mapped as areas of lower enhancement compared to surrounding soils.

Magnetic survey is carried out using a fluxgate gradiometer which is a passive instrument consisting of two sensors mounted vertically 1m apart. The instrument is carried about 30cm above the ground surface and the top sensor measures the Earth's magnetic field whilst the lower sensor measures the same field but is also more affected by any localised buried field. The difference between the two sensors will relate to the strength of a magnetic field created by a buried feature, if no field is present the difference will be close to zero as the magnetic field measured by both sensors will be the same.

Factors affecting the magnetic survey may include soil type, local geology, previous human activity, disturbance from modern services etc.

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