



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological Prospection at High Flyer Farm, Ely, Cambridgeshire 2010 - 2011



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**Northamptonshire
County Council**

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Report 11/201
October 2011



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project name	Archaeological Prospection at High Flyer Farm, Ely, Cambridgeshire	
Short description	Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, to carry out magnetometer survey, on approximately 85ha of land at High Flyer Farm, Ely, Cambridgeshire. The work was conducted over four phases, starting in August 2010 and concluding in March 2011. This report combines the four reports on geophysical survey. The survey revealed a large, double-ditched concentric square enclosure likely to represent a shrine or military site of late Iron Age or Romano-British date in Field 1. Two concentrations of sub-rectangular enclosures (Fields 2 and 9) suggest minor settlement foci of similar date to the previous. A trackway was detected linking the enclosures in Field 2 with the putative temple in Field 1 to the north.	
Project type	Geophysical survey	
Site status		
Previous work	Fieldwalking (Fenland Survey, Hall 1996) Geophysical Survey (Walford 2010a; 2010b; Smith and Walford 2011; and Walford 2011)	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work	Trial Trench Evaluation (NA)	
Monument type/ period	Iron Age and Romano-British settlement and enclosures.	
Significant finds	Possible Iron Age and Romano-British settlement and temple	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address	High Flyer Farm, Ely	
Study area	c 85ha	
OS Easting & Northing	TL 554 824	
Height OD	5 – 20 m AOD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA)	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	NA	
Director/Supervisor	Ian Fisher	
Project Manager	Adrian Butler	
Sponsor or funding body	CgMs Consulting	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	3 August 2010	
End date	31 March 2011	
ARCHIVES		
	Location	Content
Physical	N/A	
Paper	NA	Site survey records
Digital	NA	Geophysical survey & GIS data
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report	
Title	Archaeological Prospection at High Flyer Farm, Ely, Cambridgeshire	
Serial title & volume	Northamptonshire Archaeology Reports 11/201	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROSPECTION AT
HIGH FLYER FARM, ELY, CAMBRIDGESHIRE
2010 - 2011**

Abstract

Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs Consulting, to carry out magnetometer survey, on approximately 85ha of land at High Flyer Farm, Ely, Cambridgeshire. The work was conducted over four phases, starting in August 2010 and concluding in March 2011. This report combines the four reports on geophysical survey. The survey revealed a large, double-ditched concentric square enclosure likely to represent a shrine or military site of late Iron Age or Romano-British date in Field 1. Two concentrations of sub-rectangular enclosures (Fields 2 and 9) suggest minor settlement foci of similar date to the previous. A trackway was detected linking the enclosures in Field 2 with the putative temple in Field 1 to the north.

1 INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by CgMs consulting to conduct successive archaeological geophysical surveys totalling a prospection a campaign of approximately 85ha of land at High Flyer Farm, Ely, Cambridgeshire (centred on NGR TL 554 824; Fig 1). Magnetic gradiometer survey was undertaken following a method statement issued by NA (NA 2010) and aimed to inform strategic development decisions for the site (CgMs 2010). The client commissioned this report to combine the results of all the surveys carried out beginning in August 2010 and concluding in March 2011 (Walford 2010a; 2010b; Smith and Walford 2011; and Walford 2011).

2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

High Flyer Farm lies to the north of Ely, close to the north-eastern edge of the fen island on which the town stands. The farm itself and the survey areas all stand close to or between the 10m and 15m contours. The western survey area (Fields 5-8) is centred upon a small valley which drains northwards towards the fen edge. The central area (Field 1) occupies a plateau at about 15m aOD, and the eastern area (Field 9) stands on a flattish shoulder of land, the edges of which drop northwards and eastwards towards the Fen edge.

The Isle of Ely is largely composed of Jurassic clays, with a capping of Cretaceous Lower Greensand on the higher ground. These deposits are overlain in places by a superficial deposit of boulder clay (BGS 2010).

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A fieldwalking survey which was conducted around High Flyer Farm as part of the Fenland Project did not recover any finds of particular note (Hall 1996, 30). But other evidence, including archaeological excavations and various chance discoveries, demonstrates that the proposed development area and its immediate environs do have considerable archaeological potential.

Neolithic occupation of the area is suggested by a number of flint scatters and individual finds, although no substantial remains have been discovered thus far

(Dawson 2010, 12-13). Bronze Age finds have also been reported from the vicinity, and a mound associated with a Beaker burial once stood just outside the south-western part of the proposed development area (Hall 1996, 35).

Iron Age and Romano-British burials and settlement remains have been excavated immediately adjacent to the proposed development area, at Prickwillow Road (Atkins & Mudd 2003, Fig 1), and the northern continuation of this site was traced during the first phase of geophysical survey at High Flyer Farm (Walford 2010a; this report Fig 2). Several other sites of Iron Age and Romano-British date have been found within the wider landscape (Hall 1996, 35-6; Dawson 2010, 14).

An early Anglo-Saxon cemetery was encountered to the south-west of the proposed development area in the 1950s, during housing development at High Barns (Dawson 2010, 14). There are, however, no known Late Saxon remains within the area, and no medieval remains except for traces of ridge and furrow cultivation (Dawson 2010, 14-15).

4 METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted with Bartington Grad 601-2, twin sensor array, vertical component fluxgate gradiometers (Bartington and Chapman 2003). These are standard instruments for archaeological survey and can resolve magnetic variations as slight as 0.1 nanoTesla (nT).

Each survey area was manually divided into 30m grid squares by means of a tape measure and optical square. These grids were tied into the National grid by measurements taken with a Leica System 1200 dGPS. The gradiometers were carried at a brisk but steady pace through each grid square, collecting data along 1m spaced traverse lines. Measurements were automatically triggered every 0.25m along the traverses, giving a total of 3600 measurements per grid.

All fieldwork methods complied with the guidelines issued by English Heritage and by the Institute for Archaeologists (EH 2008; Gaffney, Gater and Ovendon 2002). Work also complied with a Method Statement produced by NA (NA 2010).

The survey data was processed using Geoplot 3.00u software. Striping, caused by slight mismatches in sensor balance, was removed using the 'Zero Mean Traverse' function and destaggering of the data was performed as necessary.

The processed data is presented in this report in the form of grey-tone plots, at scales appropriate to the dataset (± 4 nT black/white). The grey-tone plots have been scaled, rotated and resampled (georectified) for display against the Ordnance Survey base mapping (Figs 2, 3, 5, 7 and 9). Interpretative overlays have been produced and are shown in Figures 4, 6, 8 and 10.

5 SURVEY RESULTS

Field 1 (Figs 9 & 10)

Survey of this area revealed a group of positive linear magnetic anomalies which represent a large, double-ditched square enclosure with an eastern annex and an internal T-shaped partition. This site extends beyond the northern edge of the survey area, so that its full extent remains unknown.

Both the inner and outer ditches of the enclosure are square in plan, with rounded corners. Their internal diameters are c 50m and c 70m respectively. The major entrance into the inner enclosure was located mid-way along the north-eastern side, and there appears to be a second, smaller break near its eastern corner. The latter is aligned with a larger entrance in the outer enclosure ditch.

Three parallel ditches extend north-eastwards from the enclosure. Two terminate against a shorter cross-ditch, thus defining an annex approximately 80m long by 20m wide. The third ditch, which extends beyond the edge of the survey area, perhaps forms part of a second annex.

The function of this site is uncertain, but it does not resemble the enclosures found in Fields 2 and 9 and is unlikely to represent a simple settlement site. Its regular square shape is particularly striking and suggests a specialist function of some kind. It may be a small Roman military site or, more probably, an enclosure around an Iron Age or Romano-British shrine. An approximate parallel for the latter is provided by the almost square, double-ditched shrine enclosure discovered in the nearby parish of Haddenham (Frere 1984, 298). However, no direct geophysical evidence of internal banks was identified in this case.

To the south of the enclosure there are a number of discrete positive anomalies, some of which perhaps represent infilled pits. In the same area is a weak positive linear anomaly, aligned towards the south-west, which may be a continuation of one of the similarly aligned anomalies detected in Field 2 (Fig 2). These are thought to represent the side ditches of a trackway that connected the double-ditched enclosure with the Romano-British settlement site to the south.

The discontinuous linear anomaly running north-east to south-west across the centre of the field indicates the location of a former field boundary which is recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. There is a small subcircular patch of weak magnetic noise along its line, which may indicate a spread of bonfire debris. A negative linear anomaly along the western edge of the field relates to the modern cultivation regime and may be disregarded. A linear anomaly orientated north-west to south-east in the eastern half of the field is also the remnant of a field boundary. At the south-eastern end of this boundary there are a number of ferrous anomalies which may represent the infilling of an old pond. There is another collection of ferrous anomalies in the south-east of the field. The concentration of dipolar anomalies in the south-eastern corner of the field indicates an area of ceramic debris.

Fields 2 & 4 (Figs 7 & 8)

A dense concentration of archaeological anomalies was located in the south-west of this field. These indicate a large and organised complex of rectilinear ditched enclosures which are likely to represent a settlement site of Iron Age to Romano-British date.

In the extreme south-western corner there is a complex of intersecting linear anomalies which appear to define a palimpsest of sub-rectangular enclosures. To the north of

these are a number of disjointed anomalies which cannot be interpreted in detail. Continuing north again is a curvilinear anomaly which forms an arc approximately 34m across and is best interpreted as representing another enclosure ditch. To the north of, and slightly overlapping the circular feature, sub-square enclosures form a square almost 1ha in area. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that these enclosures surrounded a Roman villa or other similar building, now lost beneath the adjacent modern housing. A limb of the sub-rectangular enclosures extends to the south-east, whereas a group of more curvilinear enclosures were identified on the north side.

A pair of linear positive anomalies was located aligned south-west to north-east from the enclosure complex across the remainder of Field 2. These may indicate the side ditches of a trackway, likely to continue to the north.

A linear anomaly bisects the field from east to west, indicating the location of a former field boundary. Several ferrous anomalies are associated with this, indicating the presence of buried scrap iron along its line. Other anomalies branch off to the north and south, indicating other removed boundaries.

Towards the centre of the field is a single large ferrous anomaly with a surrounding zone of magnetic noise. This broadly coincides with a damp hollow on the site of a former pond, the noisy data possibly indicating brick hardcore deposited to firm-up the ground.

Two areas of intense magnetic disturbance occur in this field. One, which lies along the southern boundary, comprises halos from adjacent buildings and other modern features. The other occurs on the western edge of the field and was caused by a large water tower.

Field 3 (Figs 7 & 8)

The data from this field contains a single linear anomaly, which probably indicates a ditch, and one large discrete dipolar anomaly. The latter has a peak height of 59nT and a very subdued negative halo. It is of indeterminate origin and could represent either a large and deeply buried ferrous object or an intensely burnt archaeological feature such as a kiln or oven.

Nothing else of archaeological significance was detected. A large area of magnetic disturbance at the southern end of the field was caused by the adjacent water tower, and narrow band of magnetic noise along the western boundary was caused by a wire fence.

Field 5 (Figs 5 & 6)

The survey of this field has identified three main groups of archaeological anomalies and several other anomalies of potential archaeological interest. Further anomalies relate to former field boundaries, field drains and various ferrous objects and structures.

Towards the north-west of the field there is an irregular sub-oval positive anomaly, measuring c 20m x 25m across, which appears to represent a small ditched enclosure. Immediately to the east of this is an irregularly-shaped positive anomaly (typical amplitude of 5-10nT), which may indicate a kiln, a hearth or some other concentration of burnt sediment. The fact that the enclosure ditch anomaly is at its strongest adjacent to this feature suggest that the two were roughly contemporary, and that some fired material has become incorporated into the fill of the ditch.

Approximately 120m to the south of these anomalies there is a semicircular positive anomaly, about 20m across, which extends beyond the edge of the survey area. This represents an infilled ditch, which could be part of either an enclosure or a round barrow. Slightly further to the south is a localised positive anomaly which probably represents a large infilled pit. Two less certain 'pit' anomalies occur approximately 80m to the north-east of the enclosure.

The third group of possible archaeological features occurs in the eastern half of the survey area, just to the south-east of the northern pond. There is one strongly magnetic anomaly, of broadly rectangular form, which probably indicates a kiln, oven or furnace. To the south of this is a very slight penannular anomaly, about 8m across. This is too indistinct to be interpreted with confidence, but it could conceivably indicate the site of a small roundhouse. To the north and east of these anomalies is a sharply angled linear anomaly which perhaps represents part of a ditched enclosure. Once again, it is notable that the anomaly is at its most magnetically enhanced adjacent to the suspected kiln, suggesting backfilling of the ditch with fired kiln material and therefore a causal link between the two features.

Elsewhere in the field there are a variety of other linear anomalies. A few of these have been highlighted on the interpretation plot as ditches of possible archaeological interest, but the remainder can be attributed to other causes. Some of these correlate with former field boundaries recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping (www.old-maps.co.uk) and others appear to indicate two directions of ridge and furrow cultivation. Others again have a distinctive form, comprising alternating chains of very weak magnetic dipoles, which is diagnostic of modern field drains.

The data contains a large number of dipolar anomalies, indicating ferrous objects of various types. Most are quite small, and represent insignificant pieces of debris within the ploughsoil, but a number of larger examples are located towards the centre of the field, along the mapped line of a storm water drain. Two of these correspond with man-hole covers noted by the survey team and the others probably have a similar cause.

Along the southern edge of the survey area there is a magnetic halo, arising from the adjacent fence and buildings.

Field 5a (Figs 5 & 6)

There are two large positive magnetic anomalies against the western edge of this field, each with a peak value of c 100nT. The breadth of these anomalies, and their moderate peaks, suggests that they are not of ferrous origin. It is more probable that they represent kilns or similar small industrial features. They are comparable in form to a similar anomaly which was found c 160m to the south, in Field 5, during the previous phase of survey.

To the west of these anomalies is an area of subdued magnetic noise, the significance of which is uncertain. It perhaps indicates a scatter of hardcore, bonfire debris, or other weakly magnetic material.

Two linear anomalies occur towards the south of this survey area. One, which is aligned from north-west to south-east, coincides with the location of a former field boundary shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. The other, which runs north-eastwards from the small pond, probably represents a modern drainage pipe. To the west of the latter is an amorphous positive anomaly which is of uncertain origin but seems unlikely to be of archaeological significance.

Field 6 (Figs 3 & 4)

A series of parallel positive linear anomalies, aligned north-west to south-east, cover the whole of the area surveyed in Field 6. This indicates the presence of a ridge and furrow ploughing system of medieval or post-medieval date. Four linear anomalies, aligned south-west to north-east also occur, indicating the presence of field drains. A dipolar anomaly in the south-east of the area represents a large ferrous object.

The data from the north of Field 6 contains one discrete positive anomaly, probably indicating a pit. There are also some areas of magnetic noise, probably caused by a scatter of modern hardcore carried onto the field from the adjacent farm track.

Field 7 (Figs 3 & 4)

The magnetic data from this field contains a group of positive linear anomalies which seem to define part of a ditched enclosure of uncertain date. Otherwise the data is dominated by parallel linear anomalies which represent the remains of ploughed-out ridge and furrow. Two furrow directions occur; north to south in the northern part of the field and south-east to north-west elsewhere. There is also a small area of magnetic noise in the south-eastern corner of the field which probably represents a concentration of modern brick hardcore.

Field 8 (Figs 3 & 4)

Towards the southern end of this field is a small zone of disturbed data, containing one anomaly which reaches a peak of c 60nT and several smaller anomalies with a typical strength of 5-10nT. These would be consistent with a small kiln, or other industrial feature, surrounded by a scatter of intensely burnt sediment or ceramic debris. An ill-defined linear anomaly, which extends north-westwards from this area, may represent a ditch.

The other anomalies in this field are not of archaeological interest. The parallel linear anomalies of alternating polarity (north-west to south-east and north-east to south-west in the north) represent field drains, and the area of noise along the western field edge probably indicates a spread of modern hardcore or similar material.

Field 9 (Figs 9 & 10)

Survey of this field has detected a dense network of positive linear anomalies which extend across an area of c 2.75ha and represent a complex of ditched enclosures. The fact that there are many rectilinear elements within the complex suggests it to be of Romano-British date, and this suggestion is reinforced by the observation of Romano-British pottery on the field surface (pers obs).

At the southern end of the complex is a D-shaped enclosure of slightly irregular form. This has three breaks in its perimeter, perhaps representing entrances. On its western side, a second ditch runs parallel with the main enclosure, thus defining a small and elongated annex approximately 4m wide but nearly 30m long. There are a number of internal anomalies, suggesting the presence of small pits and gullies

A broad but diffuse positive linear anomaly intersects the D-shaped enclosure, passing between two of the possible entrance gaps before continuing towards the south-east. It seems likely that this represents the silted course of a hollow-way. Further to the west is a more strongly magnetic anomaly which shares the same alignment and may represent a continuation of the same feature

Immediately to the north-east of the D-shaped enclosure is a concentration of discrete positive anomalies, probably representing a pit cluster. Three weakly positive linear

anomalies occur in the same area, and seem to define fragments a sub-circular enclosure measuring c 30m across.

The main group of enclosures is situated to the north, again, consisting of a large, approximately wedge-shaped outer ditch encompassing a mass of smaller conjoined enclosures. Most of the latter are rectangular or sub-rectangular in form. The overall dimensions of the complex are c 225m along its main axis, from north-east to south-west, and c 75m along its short axis.

The outer, wedge-shaped enclosure tapers towards the north-east but, so far as can be told from the data, it does not come to a properly defined end. Instead it appears to merge with a geological anomaly, which may indicate a small natural gully or hollow leading down towards the Fen edge.

Projecting from the east side of the main enclosure group is a square enclosure which measures c 50m across. It is subdivided into two square units and a larger rectangular one. It appears to belong to a separate phase from the main enclosure, as the two features intersect each other.

Away from these enclosures, towards the north-west of the survey area, there are several short positive linear anomalies and one discrete anomaly which probably represent ditches and a large pit or hollow. They are of uncertain date.

The remaining anomalies in Field 9 are all of more recent date. There are some very weak traces of ridge and furrow, most conspicuously where it cuts through the magnetically enhanced soil of the enclosure complex, and also two parallel linear anomalies which relate to former field boundaries recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. The latter are poorly defined, and are represented in places by a linear trend of magnetic noise rather than a distinct anomaly.

There are several different alignments of field drain apparent in the data, indicated by groups of parallel linear anomalies with weakly alternating magnetic polarities. There are also two short but strongly magnetic linear anomalies which most probably represent lengths of iron pipe.

A very pronounced negative linear anomaly cuts through the middle of the enclosure complex on a north-easterly to south-westerly heading. This was caused by a modern furrow at the boundary between two separate areas of cultivation. Many other weak positive anomalies on the same alignment also relate to the modern ploughing regime.

6 CONCLUSION

Magnetometer prospection of c 85ha of land surrounding High Flyer Farm, Ely has revealed evidence for a considerable quantity of archaeological features, concentrated mostly in the north-east, centre and south of the survey area. A feature consisting of two concentric square ditched enclosures was identified in Field 1 as a possible shrine of Late Iron Age or Romano-British date or equally possibly a military structure of the same periods. This feature was on a north-east to south-west orientation, similar to that of a wedge-shaped series of sub-rectangular enclosures, assumed to be of Romano-British date, to the north-east in Field 9. In this location earlier and later phases may be represented by a large D-shaped enclosure crossed by a possible hollow-way.

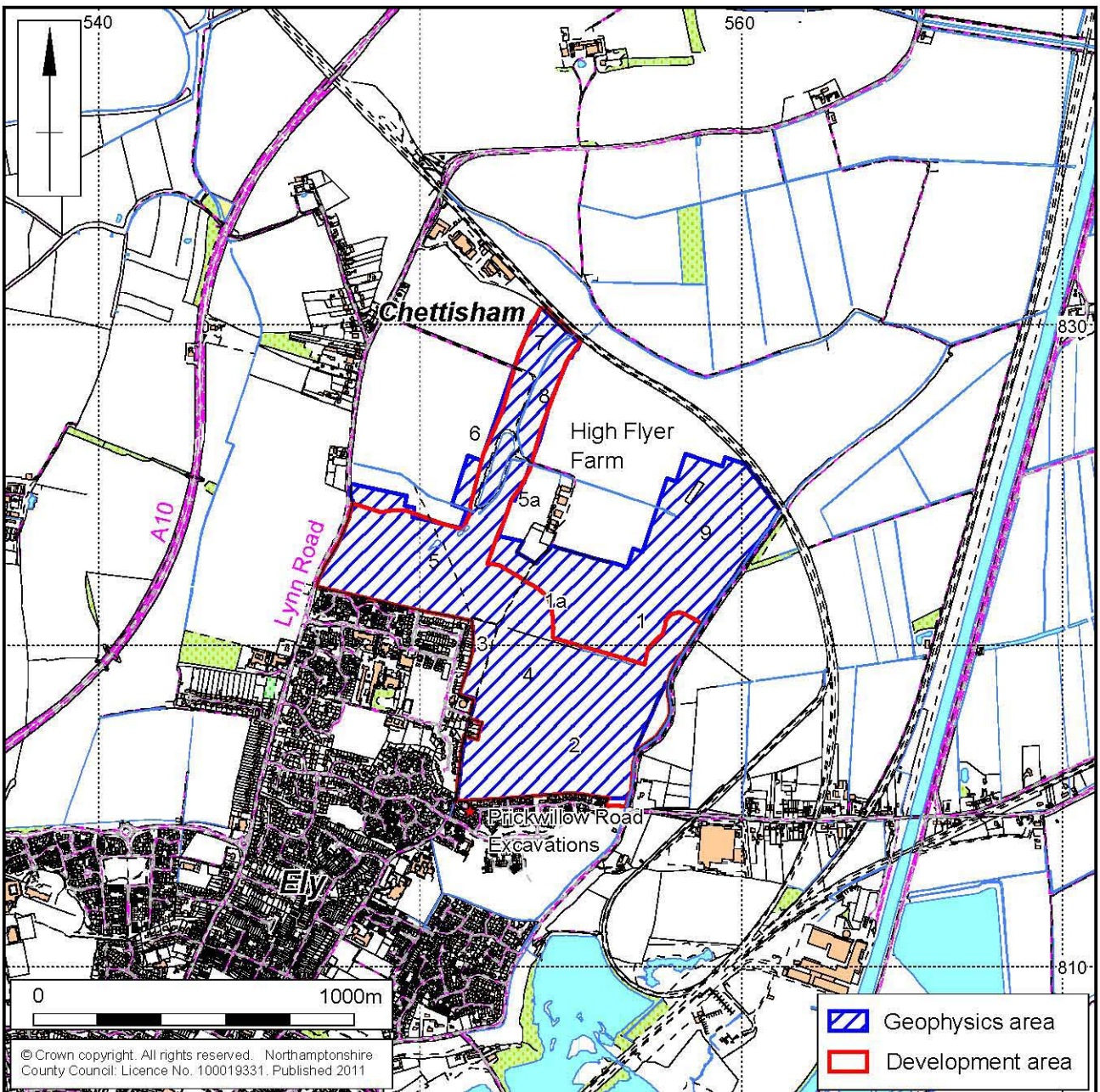
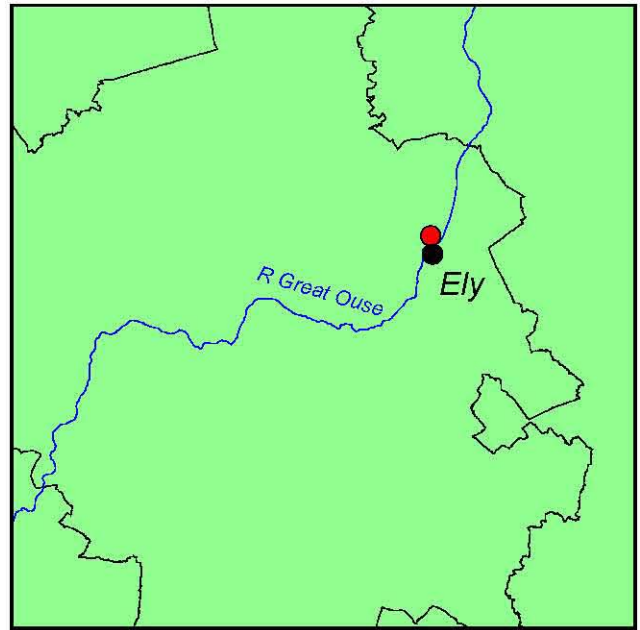
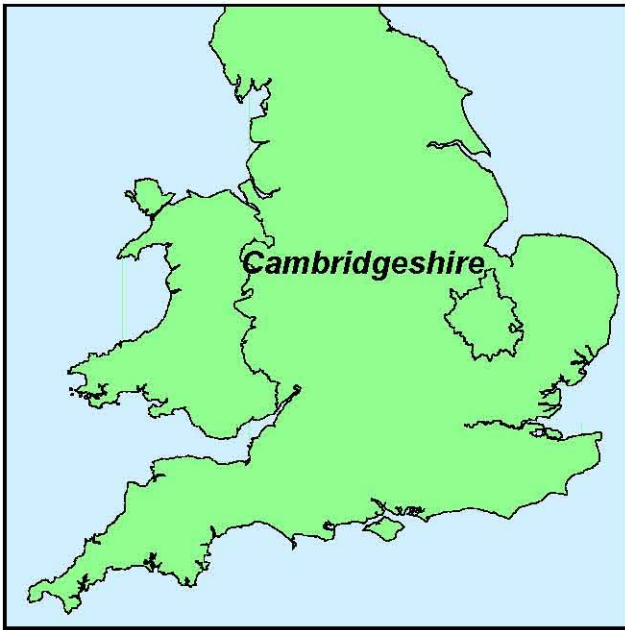
A concentration of likely archaeological features was located in the west of Field 2 and 4. These indicate a large and organised complex of rectilinear ditched enclosures, about 1ha in area, which are likely to represent a settlement site of Romano-British date. Sub-rectangular enclosures in the south-west of Field 4 are considered likely to be from the Late Iron Age. A possible trackway was orientated northwards through Field 4, towards the square enclosure in Field 1, where some evidence was located for a continuation of the track.

Further enclosures were located in Field 5, including two c 25m diameter examples on or near the north-western boundary of that field. The more northern of these may have an association with an adjacent kiln. Further east, to the south of the most northerly pond of Field 5, another kiln structure was located with a possible neighbouring roundhouse.

As is usual with such sites, the likely settlement archaeology of Fields 2 and 9 encompass a halo of pits of various sizes.

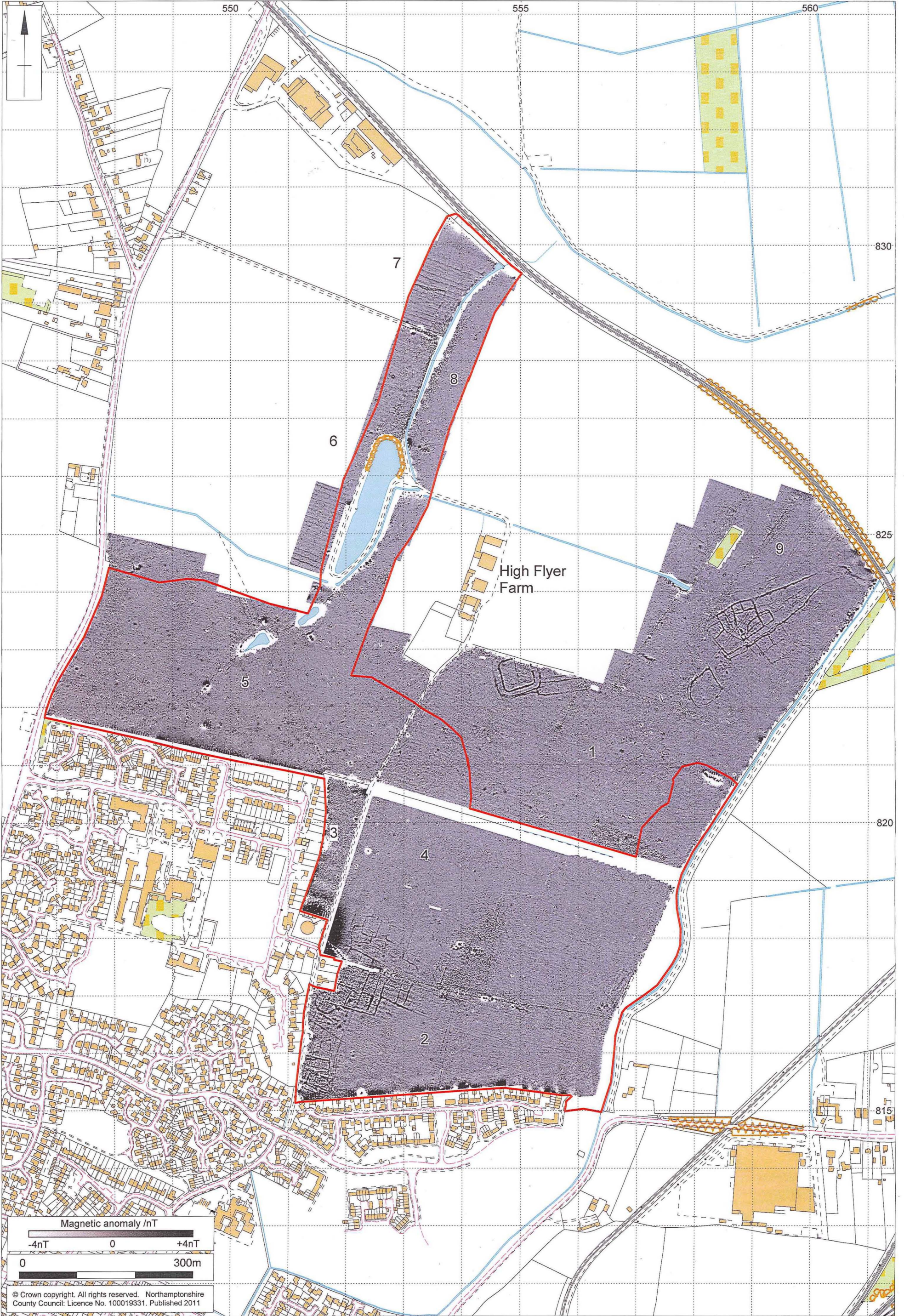
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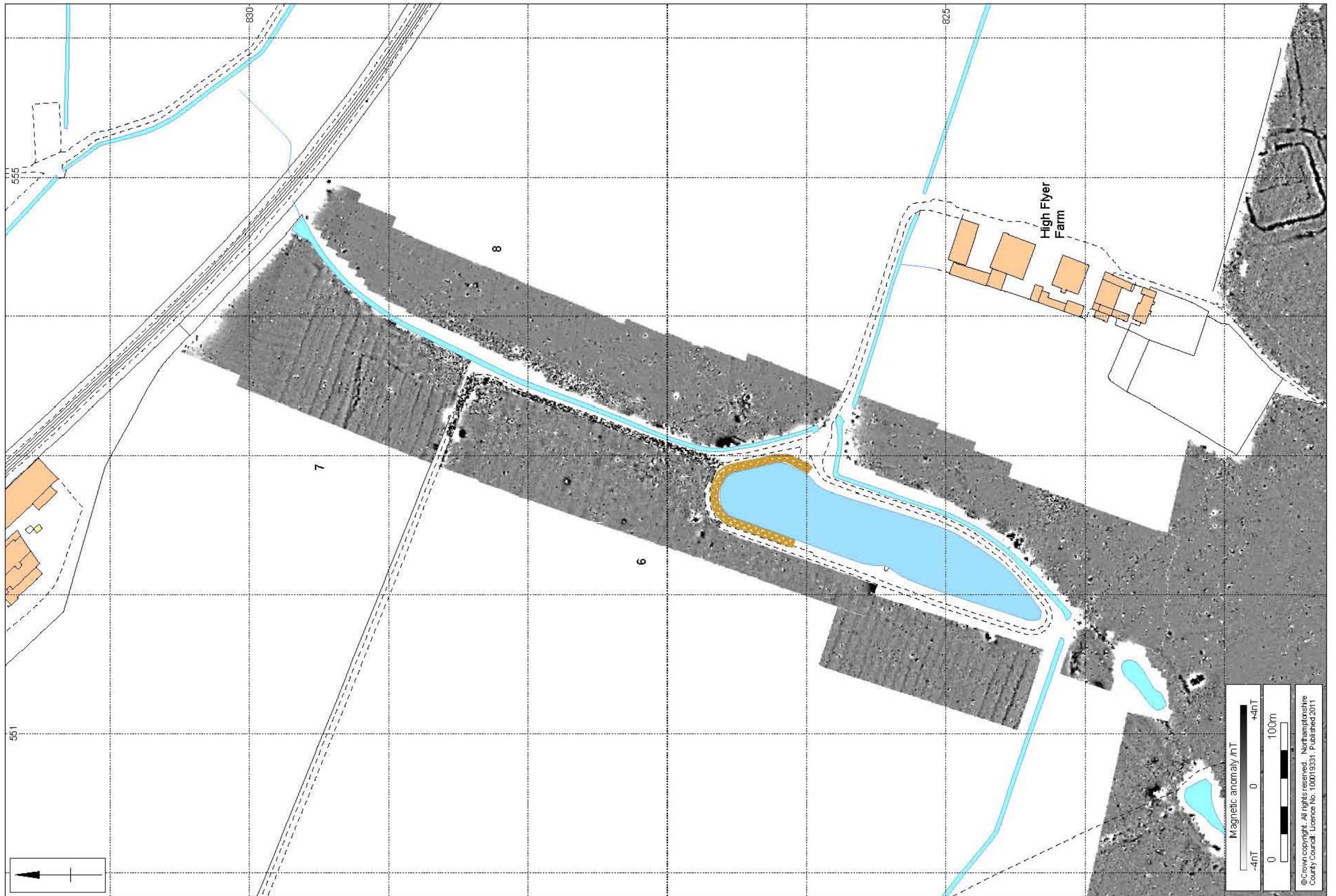
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Site Location Fig 1



Overview of magnetometer survey results, all phases Fig 2

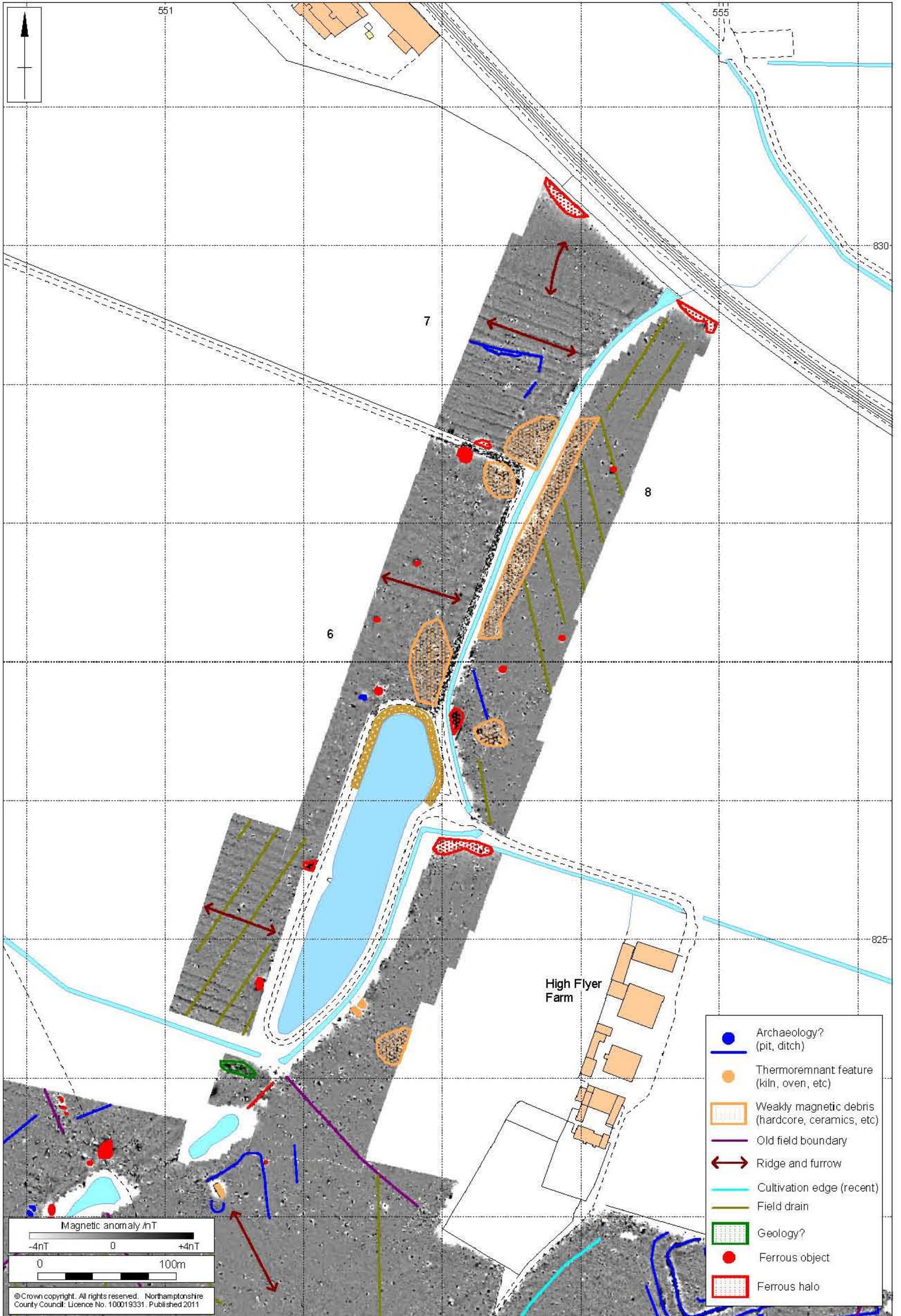
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Scale 1:2500 @ A3

Magnetometer survey results, Fields 6, 7 & 8 Fig 3

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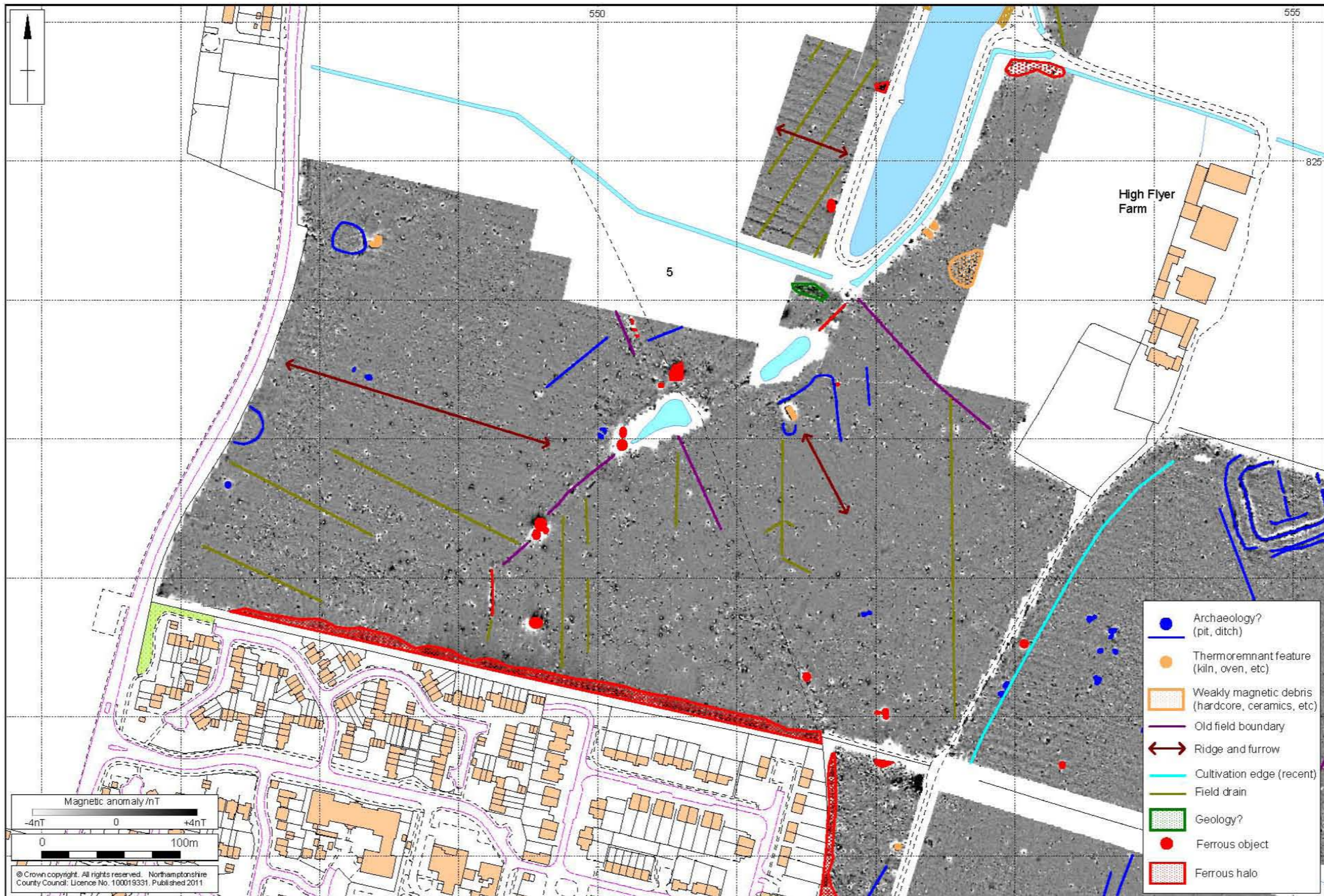
- Archaeology? (pit, ditch)
- Thermoremanent feature (kiln, oven, etc)
- Weakly magnetic debris (hardcore, ceramics, etc)
- Old field boundary
- ↔ Ridge and furrow
- Cultivation edge (recent)
- Field drain
- Geology?
- Ferrous object
- Ferrous halo

Magnetometer survey interpretation, Fields 6, 7 & 8 Fig 4



Scale 1:2500 @ A3

Magnetometer survey results, Field 5 Fig 5





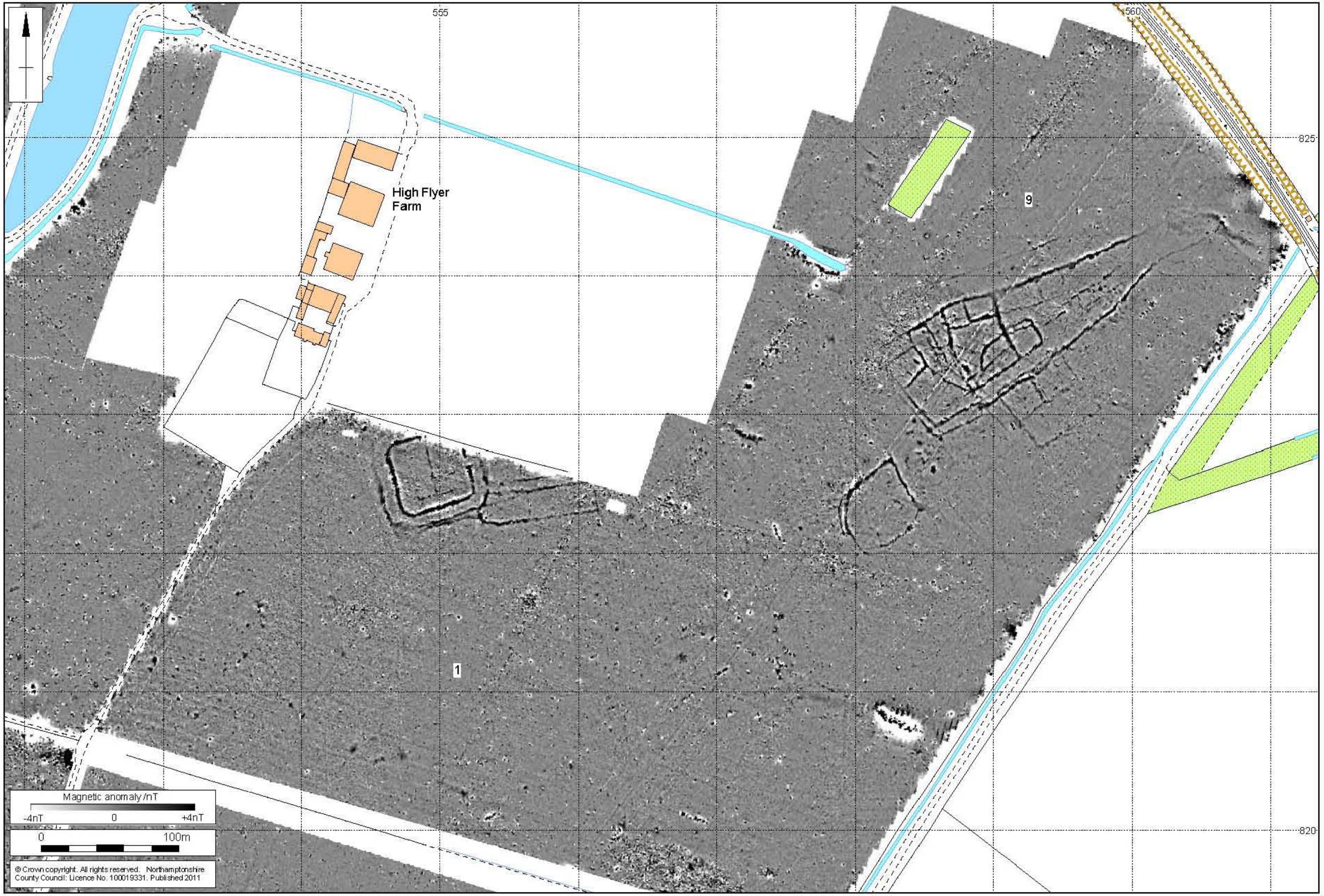
Scale 1:2500 @ A3

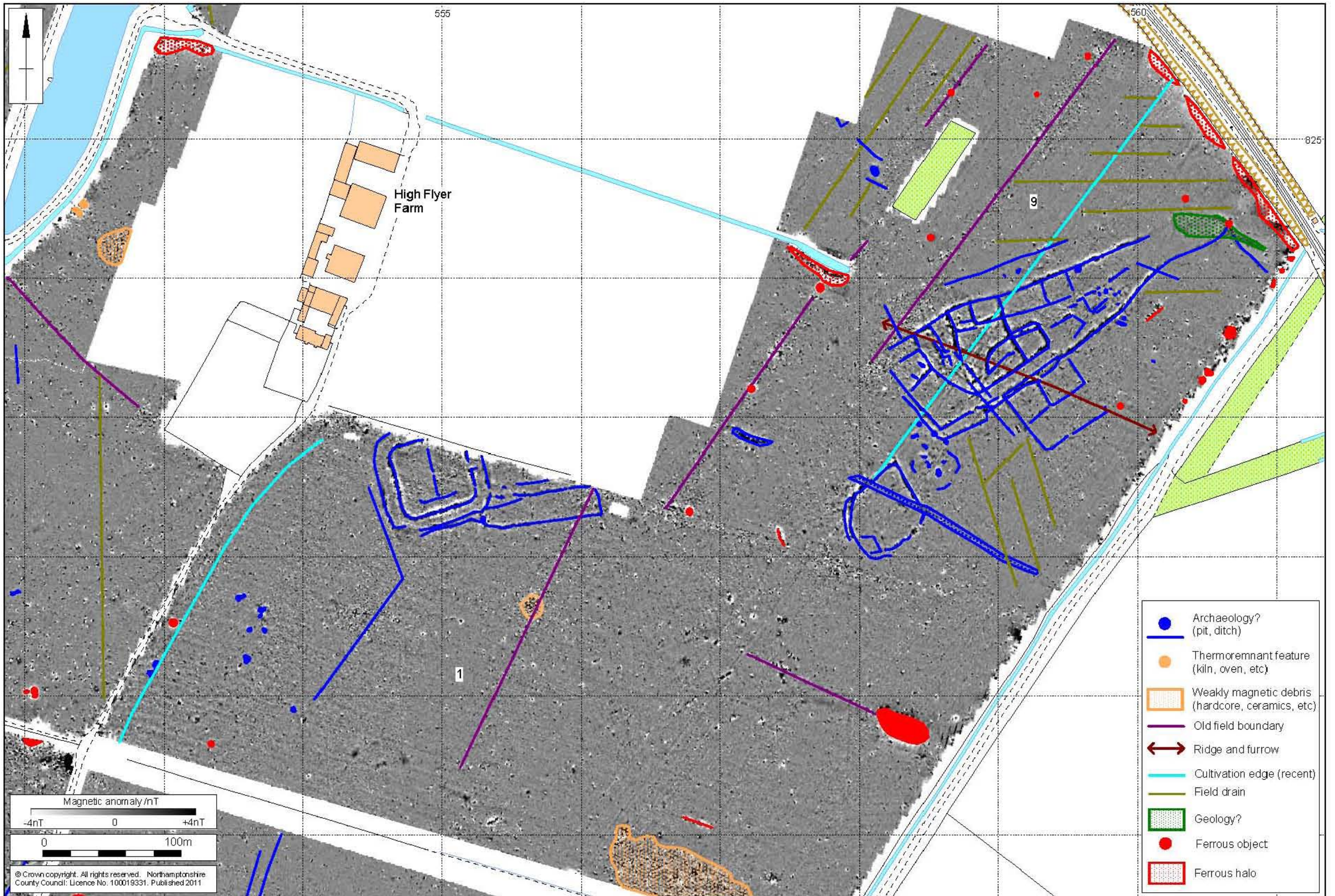
Magnetometer survey results, fields 2, 3 & 4 Fig 7



Scale 1:2500 @ A3

Magnetometer survey interpretation, Fields 2, 3 & 4 Fig 8





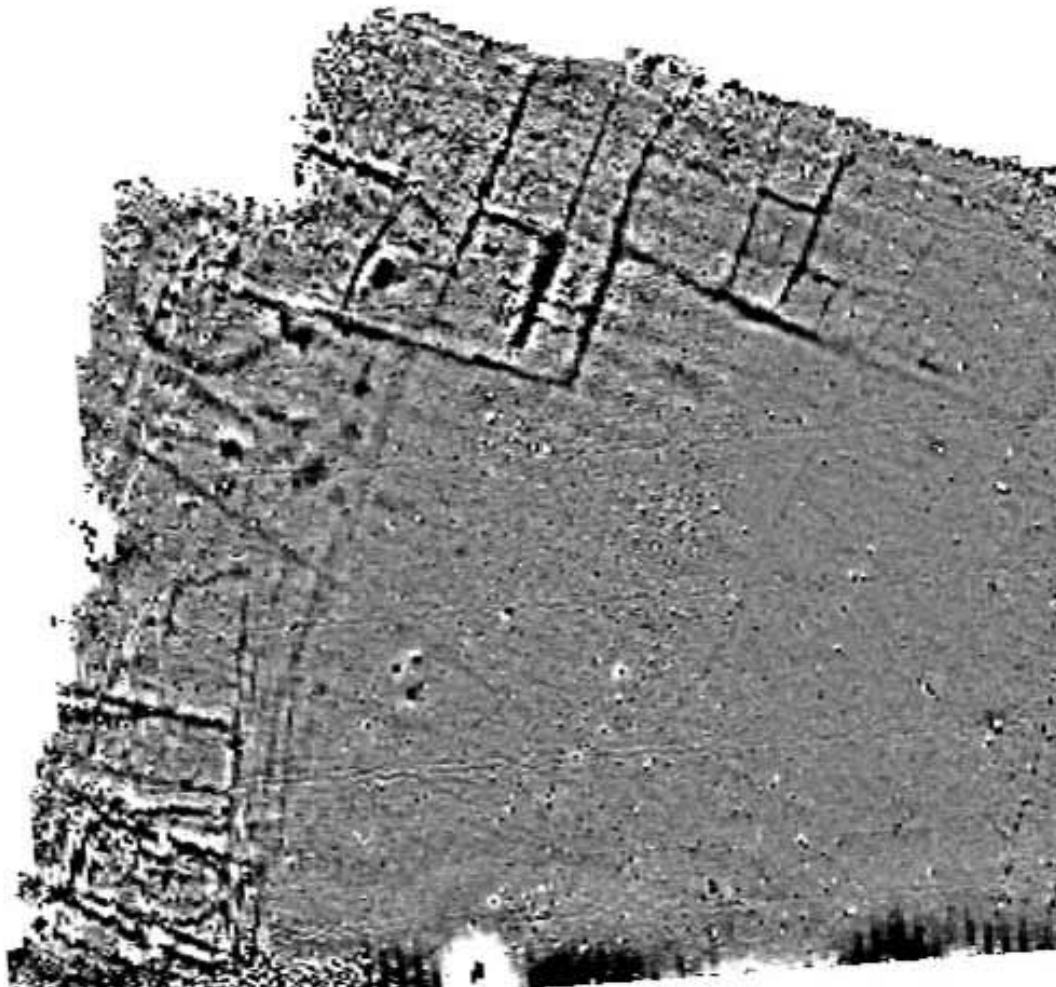
Scale 1:2500 @ A3

Magnetometer survey interpretation, Fields 1 & 9 Fig 10



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