

LAND OFF PITT HILL SHEBBEAR DEVON

Results of a Geophysical Survey



South West Archaeology Ltd. Report no 161209

Land off Pitt Hill, Shebbear, Devon Results of a Geophysical Survey

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Work undertaken by SWARCH for Deborah Somerville (the Agent)
on behalf of
Simon Bentley-Jones (the Client)

SUMMARY

South West Archaeology Ltd. was commissioned by Deborah Somerville of Deborah Somerville Chartered Architect (the Agent) on behalf of Mr. Simon Bentley-Jones (the Client) to undertake a geophysical survey and for related off-site analysis and reporting on land west of Pitt Hill, Shebbear, Devon to inform potential future development in accordance with a Project Design drawn up in consultation with Stephen Reed, Devon County Historic Environment Team.

The site lies across two fields on the north-west edge of the village of Shebbear, in the parish of the same. The site is situated on agricultural land associated with medieval farmsteads, to the north of the parish church.

The geophysical survey indicated the presence of a medieval field-system which has been superseded by a later post-medieval field-system which had been removed by the late 19th century. The north-east corner of the site also shows evidence of likely post-medieval quarrying activity. There is an area of disturbed ground in the south-east corner of the site which may relate to the demolition of buildings, though the readings have been affected by proximity to modern metal fences.

The proposed development of the site would disturb potential archaeological deposits and validation of the geophysical survey results and investigation of the archaeological resource could be achieved through archaeological evaluation trenching. The value of the archaeological resource on the site would on the basis of these non-intrusive works appear to be of low significance.



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THE STAFF AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY (BL)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

LOCATION:	LAND OFF PITT HILL
PARISH:	SHEBBEAR
DISTRICT:	TORRIDGE
COUNTY:	DEVON
NGR:	CENTRED ON SS 43759 09337
SWARCH REF:	SPH16

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Deborah Somerville of Deborah Somerville Chartered Architect (the Agent) on behalf of Mr. Simon Bentley-Jones (the Client) to undertake a geophysical survey, and for related off-site analysis and reporting on land off Pitt Hill, Shebbear, Devon to inform potential future development. This work was carried out in accordance with a project design drawn up in relation to ClfA guidelines and in consultation with Stephen Reed, Devon County Historic Environment Team.

1.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL AND GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies across two fields on the north-west edge of the village of Shebbear, with a road (Pitt Hill) running along the eastern boundary of the site, intersecting at Pitt Cross with a lane running along the northern site boundary. The site lies near the centre of the parish of Shebbear, c.9km east-north-east of Holsworthy, 9km north-west of Hatherleigh and 10km south-south-west of Great Torrington, at a height of between c.120m and 140m AOD.

The site lies on the well drained fine loamy soils often over rock with small patches of similar soils with slowly permeable subsoils and slight seasonal waterlogging of the Neath Association (SSEW 1983), overlying the sandstone of the Bude Formation (BGS 2014).

1.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The settlement of Shebbear lies in the hundred of the same name, in the Deanery of Torrington and the Diocese of Exeter (Lysons, 1822). Before the Conquest, Domesday records that Shebbear (*Sepesberie*) paid geld for 5 hides and had land for 37 ploughs, 80 acres of meadow, a league of pasture and a similar amount of woodland. Shebbear was known as '*Sceft Beara*' between 1050 and 1073, as '*Sepesberia*' in 1086, '*Seftbia*' in 1167, '*Syeftbere*' in 1262 and '*Schebbeare*' in 1425, and is the sole example of the Old English word for 'grove', '*bearu*' in Devon (Gover *et al*, 1931). The Saxon Manor of Shebbear (*Sepesberia*) was a Royal Demesne, and was held by Earl Harold. After the Conquest, it remained the possession of the King until the 14th century (Oliver, 1948).

The 1844 Shebbear Tithe Map, records the site as containing four separate plots, and extending into a fifth. The accompanying tithe apportionment shows that they were occupied by two different tenants: Francis Bealey; and Richard Slade; although all were under the ownership of the Rev. Thomas Hockin Kingdon (see Appendix 1). The Kingdon family had purchased the manor in 1837. Plot 980, which is located in the south-east corner of the site, is depicted as containing three buildings, of which the larger barn along the northern boundary of the plot falls within the bounds of the site. Later Ordnance Survey mapping indicates that at least the barn had been demolished by later 19th century.

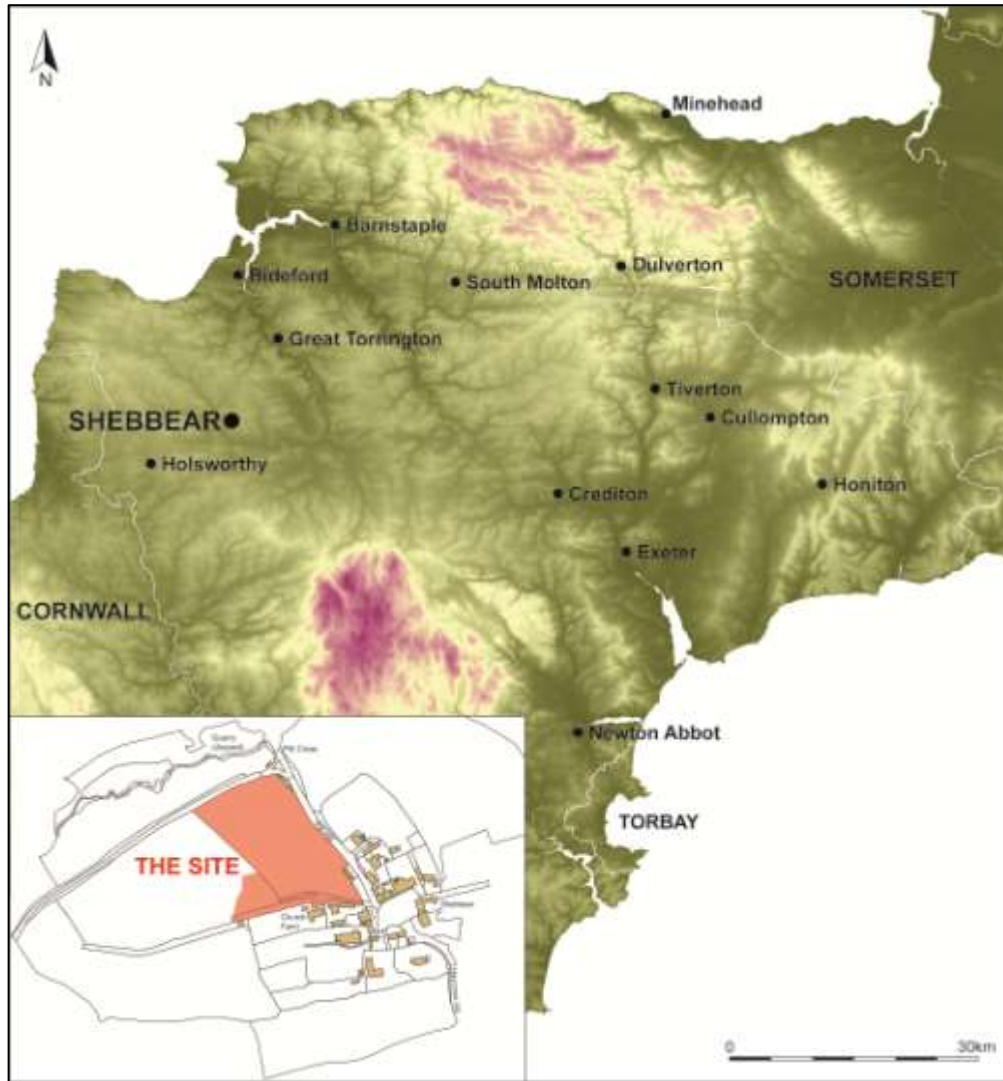


Figure 1: Site location (the site is indicated).

1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Shebbear has pre-Conquest origins, with the Parish church would have served as a focus for the development of the village through the Medieval period. The site lies approximately 30m to the north of the Parish Church of St. Michael and on the north western edge of the historic core of the village. The church has known Norman origins, with 14th and 15th century additions and a phase of renovation between 1875 and 1892 (Listing text). In such close proximity to the church, there is the possibility that the site could contain evidence of the early settlement, including perhaps evidence for the site of the early manor or manorial enclosure, as yet un-identified but assumed to be centred on the church.

The Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) identifies that: to the north of the site (to the north of Pitt Cross) is a post-medieval quarry site and the 17th century Pittbridge House; to the east of Pitt Hill is Coach House, formerly the New Inn & Temperance Hotel. To the north-west of the site a modern farmhouse stands on the site of Wootton Barton. The HER also records an area of the village to the east of the site which is indicative of enclosure in the later middle ages and part of an open field system. To the south west and south of the site, aerial photography has revealed cropmarks which appear to relate to Prehistoric enclosures (MDV11691 and MDV60497). An archaeological watching brief carried out in this area by Exeter Archaeology in 2006 revealed only modern finds, with no evidence of hedgebanks that had been depicted on 19th century mapping surviving.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The gradiometer survey follows the guidance outlined in *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (English Heritage 2008) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey* (CIfA 2014).

'Archaeological geophysical survey uses non-intrusive and non-destructive techniques to determine the presence or absence of anomalies likely to be caused by archaeological features, structures or deposits, as far as reasonably possible, within a specified area or site on land, in the inter-tidal zone or underwater. Geophysical survey determines the presence of anomalies of archaeological potential through measurement of one or more physical properties of the subsurface.' (Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey 2014).

The results of the survey will as far as possible inform on the presence or absence, character, extent and in some cases, apparent relative phasing of buried archaeology to inform a strategy to mitigate any threat to the archaeological resource.

2.0 GRADIOMETER SURVEY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this survey was to identify and record magnetic anomalies within the proposed site. While the anomalies may relate to archaeological deposits and structures, the dimensions of recorded anomalies may not directly correspond with any associated archaeological features. The following discussion attempts to clarify and characterise identified anomalies. The survey was undertaken on the 7th of December 2016 by P. Webb in sunny conditions. The survey data was processed by P. Webb. An area of approximately 1.5ha was surveyed.

The survey identified ten groups of anomalies. These were predominantly linear anomalies associated with phases of a probable medieval field system, with later post-medieval adaptations and probable quarrying activities. Groups 1, 2, and 3 represent a possible early post-medieval field system pre-dating the existing system and removed prior to 1840. Group 4 represents possible linear anomalies likely to have been associated with Groups 1-3. Group 5 represents traces of possible curvi-linear anomalies associated with a medieval strip-field system. Group 6 represents a discrete cut feature surviving as a depressive earthwork and likely to be a post-medieval quarry. Group 7 represents mixed responses likely to reflect collapsed modern barbed wire fencing. Group 8 represents a linear feature with mixed responses likely to be a modern service. Group 9 represents areas of geological variation resulting in the slight waterlogging of the ground. Instances of ferrous objects on the site and disturbed ground were also evident; the spread of disturbed ground may be indicative of thermoremanent debris or simply disturbed ground with responses of between c.-108nT and +51nT, and may be associated with the removal of structures on the site by 1855 (Group 10). Group 11 represents linear features anomalies which correspond to boundaries marked on the 1844 tithe map.

2.2 SITE INSPECTION

The site was comprised primarily of a single field, though including the south-east corner of the adjacent field; bounded by earth-built hedgebanks except to the south which was a well maintained stone-built wall with incorporated buildings. The hedgebanks were predominantly in a good state of consolidation, though rare patches were subject to slight collapse. Grass, brambles and hawthorn were noted in all of the boundaries. Along the eastern boundary the ground sloped steeply down to the hedgebank and the road. A cluster of five mature oak trees was also present at the north-east corner boundary of the site. The site sloped steeply down from a level 'platform' in the south from c.141 to 122m AOD. The site was under pasture with short rough grass, with patches of scrub and reed. An irregular depression with the appearance of a filled in quarry pit was identified in the north-east corner. A similar depression was also noted towards the centre of the field to the west, but outside the survey area. The ground was predominantly fairly firm, though two areas of more boggy ground were identified towards the north-east corner and southern end of the site, the northern of which was reflected in the growth of reedy-grass. A compliment of supporting photographs of the site can be seen in Appendix 1.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

The gradiometer survey follows the general guidance as outlined in: *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation* (English Heritage 2008) and *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Geophysical Survey* (CIfA 2014b).

The survey was carried out using a twin-sensor fluxgate gradiometer (Bartington Grad601). These machines are sensitive to depths of up to 1.50m. The survey parameters were: sample intervals of 0.25m, traverse intervals of 1m, a zigzag traverse pattern, traverse orientation was circumstantial, grid squares of 30×30m. The gradiometer was adjusted ('zeroed') every 0.5-1ha. The survey grid was tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The data was downloaded onto *Grad601 Version 3.16* and processed using *TerraSurveyor Version 3.0.25.0*. The primary data plots and analytical tools used in this analysis were *Shade* and *Metadata*. The details of the data processing are as follows:

Processes: Clip +/- 3SD; DeStripe all traverses, median.

Details: 1.5125ha surveyed; Max. 112.98nT, Min. -196.23nT; Standard Deviation 9.60nT, mean - 0.14nT, median 0.00nT.

2.4 RESULTS

Table 1 with the accompanying Figures 2 and 3 show the analyses and interpretation of the geophysical survey data. Additional graphic images of the survey data and numbered grid locations can be found in Appendix 2.

Anomaly group	Class and Certainty	Form	Archaeological Characterisation	Comments
1	Moderate-strong mixed positive and negative, probable	Linear	Boundaries	Drainage ditches and bank material indicative of boundaries. It is possible it forms part of a field system and was removed before 1844. Responses vary between -15nT and +22nT.
2	Moderate-strong positive, probable	Linear	Boundaries	Drainage ditches indicative of boundaries associated with Group 1. It is possible it forms part of a field system and was removed before 1844. Responses vary between +2nT and +19nT.
3	Weak negative with associated positive, possible	Linear	Boundaries	Possible bank and ditch features indicative of boundaries associated with Groups 1 and 2. Removed before 1844. Responses vary between -2nT and +7nT.
4	Weak positive, possible	Linear	Boundary/Ditch	Undated possible cut features. Possibly associated with an early field system and may have been associated with Groups 1-3 phase. Responses vary between +2nT and +10nT.
5	Weak-moderate, mixed positive and negative, possible	Curvi-linear	Boundaries	Possible bank and ditch features associated with a potential medieval strip-field system pre-dating Groups 1-4. Responses vary between -18nT and +8nT
6	Moderate-strong positive, probable	Oval	Pit	Discrete anomaly indicative of a cut feature. Associated with depression earthwork with appearance of being a quarry pit. Responses vary between +5nT and +20nT.
7	Strong mixed positive and negative, probable	Linear	Fence	Positive linear anomaly with associated negative responses indicative of a wire/cable, the position suggesting modern metal fence. Responses vary between -22nT and +25nT.
8	Strong mixed positive and negative, probable	Linear	Modern service	Positive linear anomaly with associated negative responses indicative of a modern service. Responses vary between -29nT and +19nT.
9	Weak mixed, possible	Irregular	Geological	Irregular area of weak mixed responses which correspond with areas of waterlogging. Likely to be geological. Responses vary up to c.+/-5nT.
10	Strong mixed, possible	Irregular	Disturbed ground	Irregular area of mixed strong responses including bipolar and possible thermoremnant

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				debris, and may be a result of building demolition. Responses vary between -108nT and +51nT.
11	Weak negative, probable	Linear	Historic boundary	Weak negative linear anomalies with possible associated positive responses indicative of plough damaged boundaries. Responses vary between -7nT and +2nT.

TABLE 1: INTERPRETATION OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA.

Group 1 are moderate to strong positive and negative linear responses (-15nT to +22nT) indicative of a ditch with associated bank material which follows the same alignment as the current south boundary and is likely to form part of an earlier phase of the same field system. These features are associated with the Group 2 anomalies, moderate to strong positive linear responses (+2nT to +19nT) which are indicative of ditch boundaries, and are either parallel or perpendicular to Group 1. Group 3 anomalies, weak negative with associated positive linear responses (-2nT to +7nT) are also likely to be associated with these features. They are indicative of the heavily plough damaged bank material with truncated remains of ditches. Group 4 are weak positive linear responses (+2nT to +10nT) which are indicative of ephemeral cut features, and which follow the same alignment as Groups 1-3 suggesting that they are likely to form part of the same field-system. All four of these groups are likely to be part of a phase of post-medieval field-system on the same alignment as the existing system, but rationalised prior to 1844 when the tithe map was produced, and on which the divisions are not portrayed.

Group 5 are weak to moderate mixed positive and negative slightly curvilinear responses (-18nT to +8nT) indicative of heavily plough damaged bank and ditch features. Their curvilinear appearance and alignment suggest that they form part of a medieval strip-field system on which the later post-medieval field-systems were based.

Group 6 anomalies are a moderate to strong positive sub-oval response (+5nT to +20nT) indicative of a discrete cut feature. Given the appearance of the associated earthwork it is likely that this feature is a post-medieval quarry pit, though larger in size than the survey results indicate, the magnitude of the responses likely dampened by geological factors (see Group 9).

Group 7 anomalies are strong mixed positive and negative linear responses (-22nT to +25nT) indicative of wire or cable runs, and may reflect former fence lines or the position of services running along boundaries.

Group 8 anomalies are a strong mixed positive and negative linear response (-29nT to +19nT) indicative of a modern service trench.

Group 9 anomalies are weak mixed positive and negative responses (between +/-5nT) forming irregular areas. They are normally responses associated with the natural geology and their different appearance to the rest of the site is likely due to geological variation resulting in greater water retention evidenced to some extent in the more boggy nature of the ground in these areas.

Group 10 anomalies are mixed positive and negative responses (-108nT to +51nT) which are partially affected by proximity to above ground metal fences, but which indicate a spread of disturbed ground some of which may be indicative of thermoremnant debris, and may be associated with a structure present on the 1844 tithe map, but which had apparently been demolished by the time of the 1855 Ordnance Survey. However, no responses relating to the footprint of this building were identified, suggesting this may be screened by the debris, or have been completely obliterated during demolition and subsequent agricultural activity on the site.

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Group 11 anomalies are mixed weak negative linear anomalies with traces of positive response (-7nT to +2nT) and are indicative of plough damaged bank material with associated ditches. The responses in this area have been dampened by the waterlogged nature of the ground (associated with Group 9) and the features are likely to relate to field boundaries depicted on the 1844 tithe map.

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FIGURE 2: SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; MINIMAL PROCESSING.

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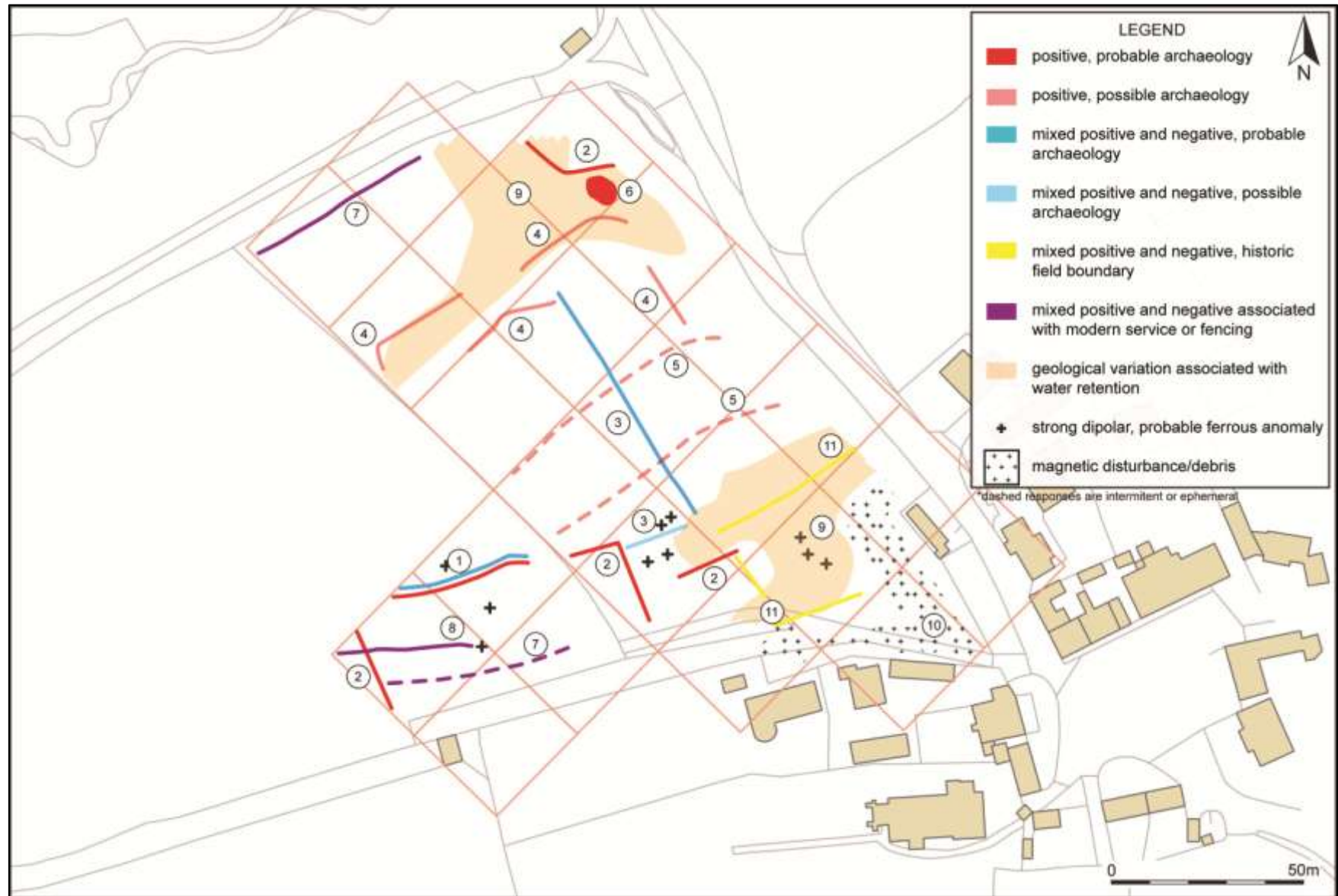


FIGURE 3: INTERPRETATION OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA.

2.5 DISCUSSION

The survey identified ten groups of anomalies. These were predominantly linear anomalies associated with phases of a probable medieval field system, with later post-medieval adaptations and discrete pit features probably relating to post-medieval quarrying activity. Cartographic sources supporting the discussion and comments can be seen in Appendix 1, and supporting visual sources in Appendix 3.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) describes this existing field-scape as being *modern enclosures* set on earlier *medieval enclosures based on strip-fields*. Group 5 is likely to form part of the medieval strip-field system, with Groups 1-4 and 11 part of a later overlying system which is now only represented in the broader outline of larger fields following 19th century rationalisation. Elements of this change can be seen between the 1804 Ordnance Survey surveyors draft map and 1844 tithe map; the former indicating that the site was divided on an approximate north-east to south-west alignment, a division surviving from the earlier medieval system; and may not have had the north-west to south-east division that is present today (although the map only provides broad outlines of the field-systems). This indicates that elements of the medieval system survived into the early 19th century, though had been increasingly removed by the middle of the century, the 1844 tithe map showing fields more closely resembling the layout as it is today. By the late 19th century the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map indicates further field rationalisation, the boundaries represented by Group 11 having now been removed along with the structures for which the only evidence may be in the disturbed ground of the Group 10 anomaly, the results similarly having been affected by the waterlogged deposits and by the nearby presence of upstanding metal fencing.

The Group 6 quarry pit is likely to have been associated with quarrying activity within the wider landscape, particularly to the north at Pitt (formerly Pitbridge). The Group 7 anomalies are modern in date, possibly services or remnants of metal fencing. The Group 8 anomaly is a modern service. The Group 9 anomalies are probably alluvial deposits within natural hollows or possible holloways which hold water to a greater extent than elsewhere on the site.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The results of the geophysical survey would suggest that there are traces of a medieval field-system which have been superseded by a later post-medieval field-system and had been removed by the late 19th century. The north-east corner of the site also shows evidence of likely post-medieval quarrying activity. There is an area of disturbed ground in the south-east corner of the site which may relate to the demolition of buildings, though the readings have been affected by the proximity to modern metal fences.

The proposed development of the site would disturb potential archaeological deposits and validation of the geophysical survey results and investigation of the archaeological resource could be achieved through archaeological evaluation trenching. The value of the archaeological resource on the site would on the basis of these non-intrusive works appear to be of low significance.

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APPENDIX 1: CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES



EXTRACT FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY SURVEYORS DRAFT MAP OF 1804; THE APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF THE SITE IS INDICATED (SOURCE BRITISH LIBRARY).



EXTRACT FROM THE SHEBBEAR TITHE MAP, DATED 1844; THE APPROXIMATE OUTLINE OF THE SITE IS INDICATED IN RED (SOURCE DEVON HISTORY CENTRE DHC).

LAND OFF PITT HILL, SHEBBEAR, DEVON

Field No.	Landowner	Tenant	Field Name
974	Rev. Thomas Hockin Kingdon	Francis Bealey	Lower Well Park
975			Higher Well Park
981			Homestead
982			Garden
977		Richard Slade	Float Meadow
978			Waste in Float Meadow
979			Mowhay
980			Homestead
983			Orchard

EXTRACT FROM THE 1844 SHEBBEAR TITHE APPORTIONMENT, THE FIELDS OF ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITE ARE HIGHLIGHTED (SOURCE DHC)



EXTRACT FROM THE ORDNANCE SURVEY 1ST EDITION MAP, 25 INCH SERIES, PUBLISHED 1885; THE APPROXIMATE OUTLINE OF THE SITE IS INDICATED IN RED (SOURCE DHC).

APPENDIX 2: SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS: SITE INSPECTION



VIEW ALONG THE SOUTHERN SITE BOUNDARY AND LEVEL NATURE OF THE SITE IN THIS LOCATION; VIEWED FROM THE EAST.



VIEW ACROSS THE SOUTHERN END OF THE SITE SHOWING THE LEVEL NATURE OF THE SITE IN THIS LOCATION; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

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VIEW ALONG THE EASTERN BOUNDARY OF THE SITE AT THE SOUTHERN END; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH.



VIEW OF THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF THE SITE; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

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DETAIL OF THE SOUTHERN END OF THE WESTERN SITE BOUNDARY AT THE ENTRANCE TO ADJOINING FIELD; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH.



VIEW ALONG THE WESTERN SITE BOUNDARY; VIEWED FROM THE SOUTH.

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VIEW ALONG THE WESTERN SITE BOUNDARY; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH.



VIEW ACROSS THE SITE FROM THE NORTH-WEST CORNER; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST.

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VIEW ALONG THE NORTHERN SITE BOUNDARY; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-WEST.



VIEW INTO THE PROBABLE QUARRY PIT DEPRESSION IN THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE SITE; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH.

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DETAIL OF THE PROBABLE QUARRY PIT DEPRESSION IN THE NORTH-EAST CORNER OF THE SITE; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST.



VIEW ACROSS THE NORTHERN END OF THE SITE; VIEWED FROM THE EAST.

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VIEW ACROSS THE SITE FROM THE NORTH-EAST CORNER, SHOWING THE SLOPE OF THE GROUND; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH-EAST.



VIEW ALONG THE EASTERN SITE BOUNDARY, SHOWING HOW IT DROPS AWAY TO THE HEDGEBANK AND THE ROAD; VIEWED FROM THE NORTH.

APPENDIX 3: ADDITIONAL GRAPHICAL IMAGES OF THE GRADIOMETER SURVEY



SITE GRID LOCATION AND NUMBERING

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RED-CYAN-BLACK SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; BAND WEIGHT EQUALISED; GRADIATED SHADING.

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BLACK-GREEN-YELLOW-WHITE SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; BAND WEIGHT EQUALISED; GRADIATED SHADING.

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BLACK-GREEN-WHITE SHADE PLOT OF GRADIOMETER SURVEY DATA; BAND WEIGHT EQUALISED; GRADIATED SHADING.



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