

# Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: SIR FREDERIC OSBORN SCHOOL, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, HERTFORDSHIRE**

*on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council*



by

**Jonathan R. Hunn BA PhD MIFA**

**June 2004**

**ASC: 573/FOS/2**

Letchworth House  
Chesney Wold, Bleak Hall,  
Milton Keynes MK6 1NE  
Tel: 01908 608989 Fax: 01908 605700  
Email: [office@archaeological-services.co.uk](mailto:office@archaeological-services.co.uk)  
Website: [www.archaeological-services.co.uk](http://www.archaeological-services.co.uk)



## Site Data

<i>ASC site code:</i>	FOS	<i>Project no:</i>	573
<i>County:</i>	Hertfordshire		
<i>District:</i>	Welwyn & Hatfield		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Welwyn Garden City		
<i>Parish:</i>	Tewin ( <i>ancient parish</i> )		
<i>NGR:</i>	TL 25644-12939		
<i>Extent of site:</i>	2.75 ha approx. (6.7 acres)		
<i>Present land use:</i>	Tennis courts and sports grounds		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Construction of new sports centre and parking		
<i>Extent of development:</i>	tba		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Tba		
<i>Client:</i>	Corporate Development Unit, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DQ		
<i>Contact name:</i>	Rob Grinter (Senior Planning Officer)		
<i>Telephone</i>		<i>Fax:</i>	

## Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Jonathan R. Hunn	<i>Date:</i>	June 4 <sup>th</sup> 2004
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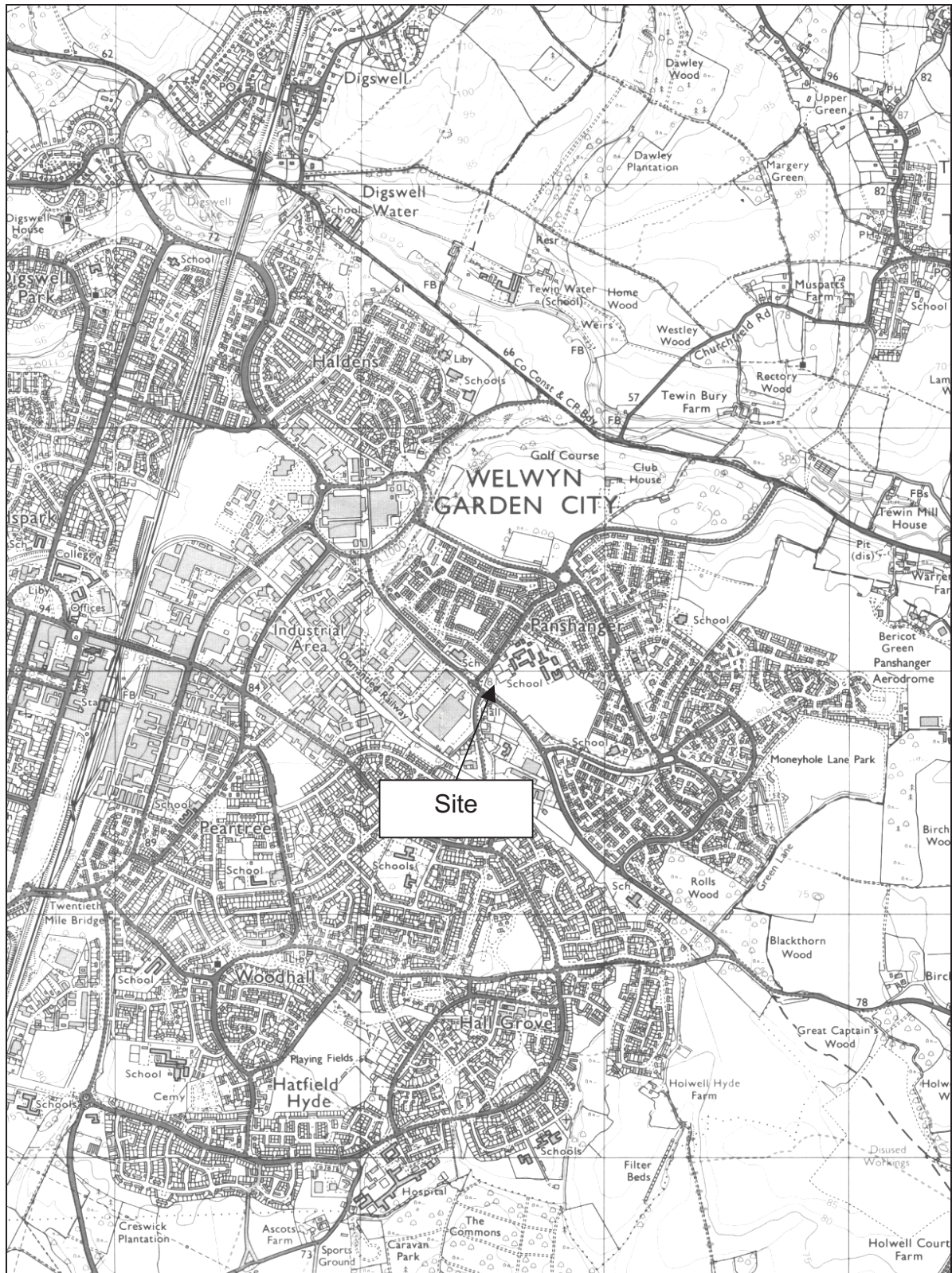
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**Figure 1:** General location (*scale 1:25,000*)

## Summary

*During the late spring of 2004 an archaeological assessment was undertaken by ASC Ltd at Sir Fredrick Osborn School, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. Three trenches were excavated in order to test the results of a geophysical survey. The results demonstrated that there was a good concordance between the preliminary survey plots and the excavated trenches. The results demonstrate that it should be possible to be confident about further geophysical analysis of the area.*

## 1 Introduction

1.1 At the end of May 2004 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out an assessment on a site at Sir Fredrick Osborn School, Hens Lane, Welwyn Garden City (NGR TL 25644-12939: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Rob Grinter of Hertfordshire County Council, and was carried out according to a standard brief agreed with the County Archaeology Office (CA)), and a written scheme of investigation prepared by ASC (ASC: 573/FOS/2).

### 1.2 *Reason for Work*

The evaluation was undertaken to test the accuracy and reliability of an earlier geophysical survey undertaken by Stratascan Ltd.

### 1.3 *Setting*

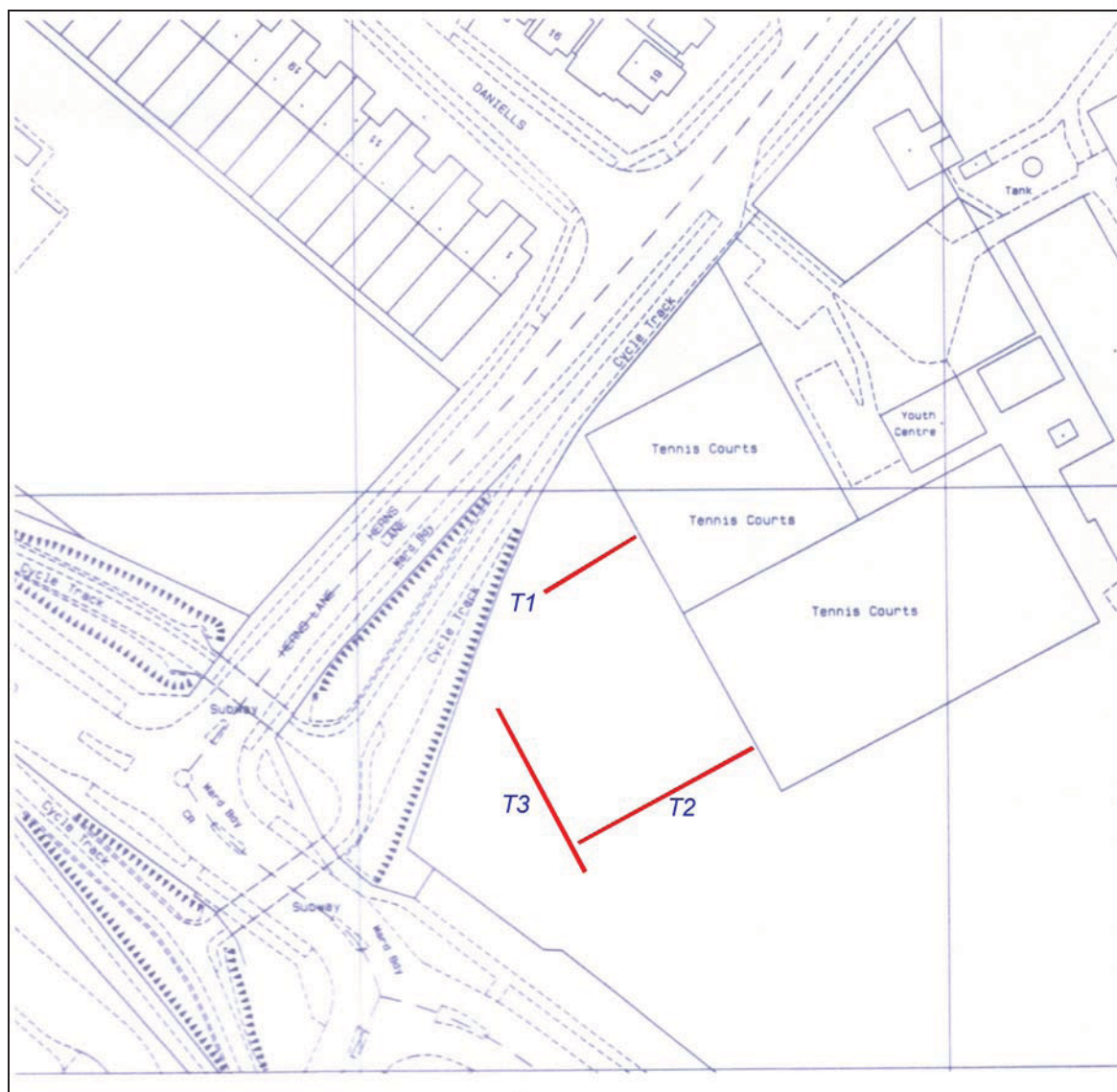
1.3.1 The site lies in the south west corner of the school at the junction of Hens Lane with Black Fan Road on the eastern side of Welwyn Garden City (Fig 1 & 2). The area is essentially suburban in character , and is surrounded by residential property. The site is a combination of sports fields and defunct tennis courts, being 2.75 ha in extent, of which 0.25 ha is the focus of this initial survey

1.3.2 The site lies on flat terrain (below 80m OD) on the plateau above the Mimram valley which lies 500m to the north east. The local geology is classified as Glaciofluvial drift, which is the parent material for soils belonging to the Ludford Association (Soil Survey 1983). The soils are well-drained, non calcareous, argillic brown earths which were developed in fine and coarse loamy Head (Hodge *et al* 1984, 237).

1.3.3 The proposed development area comprises flat ground, formerly part of the playing fields of Sir Frederic Osborn School, and is accessed from Hens Lane to the north through the premises and a series of school buildings (Fig. 2). The perimeter is bounded by a metal chain-link fence with a hedge along its south and west side. To the west of the site are playing fields and to the north are school buildings. The proposed development area consists of turfed level ground and there are two hard court areas to the east.



**Figure 2:** Area of survey and proposed trial trenches (scale: 100m x 100m squares; green = area of preliminary evaluation; yellow = additional area of proposed development)



**Fig 3:** Trench location plan (*scale: 1: 1250*)

## 2 Aims & Methods

### 2.1 Aims

The aims of the archaeological assessment were:

- To determine the accuracy of the geophysical survey.
- To consider the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains which were liable to be threatened by the proposed development.
- To provide an assessment of the regional context within which any archaeological evidence rests.
- To highlight any regional research priorities relevant to any further investigation of the site as set out in *Research and Archaeology: A framework for the Eastern Counties. 2. Research agenda and strategy.*

### 2.2 Methods

The work required:

- A geophysical survey involving magnetic susceptibility and resistivity techniques.
- The excavation of 75m linear by 1.8m wide trenches targeted on any features that were indicated by the geophysical survey.

### 2.3 Standards

The work conforms to the project design which was written by Bob Zeepvat and agreed with Jonathan Smith (CAO), to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

### 3 Archaeological & Historical Background

- 3.1 The area has been described in greater detail in a desk-based assessment (ASC:533FWS/1) so only a brief outline will be described here. The site is located adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance No. 15 which is classified as a late Iron Age cemetery. Of particular note, in terms of the national context, was the existence of a chieftain's burial (Stead 1967).
- 3.2 The character of late Iron Age burials are such that they are most often found as a result of a chance discovery. The Welwyn burial was discovered during the course of the excavation of a new gas pipe line (Stead 1967, 3). It is not known whether it was an isolated burial or one of a series of such internments.
- 3.3 In addition to the Iron Age burial site previously mentioned the school grounds lie adjacent to the contemporary settlement of Grubs Barn discovered by the Lockleys Archaeological Society in the late 1960s (Rook 1970, 31-36). The character and extent of this settlement has yet to be defined. Nevertheless, the area was clearly of importance and potentially may have been of considerable extent.
- 3.4 Very little is known of the Welwyn area during the centuries following the end of the Roman period, and no sites or finds of Saxon date are recorded within the environs of the site. By the later part of the Saxon period, the area fell within the parish of Tewin, known as *Tiwingum* in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Gover *et al* 1938).
- 3.5 From the available cartographic evidence dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the site and its environs appear to have remained as largely open agricultural land until the development of the Panshanger estate of Welwyn Garden City between 1919 and the 1960's (Figs. 4 & 5). During this period the parish of Tewin in the hundred of Hertford was recorded as *Tewinge* (11<sup>th</sup> century), *Thewinge* (13<sup>th</sup> century) and *Tuyng* (16<sup>th</sup> century) (Page 1914).

## **4 Results**

4.1 Three trenches were excavated and each will be described in sequential order (see Fig. 3):

### **Trench 1**

Location: Towards the northern corner of the site

NGR: TL 125330-129850 to TL125480-129930

Orientation: SW-NE

Dimensions: 15m x 1.8m x up to 0.5m deep

Area: 27 sq. m.

Description:

This went down to an entirely natural horizon which consisted of a gravely silty clay except at its NE end. Here the sub-soil appeared to be much sandier and appeared to run almost parallel to the end of the tennis court (Plate 1).

Finds: None

### **Trench 2**

Location: South side of assessment area.

NGR: TL 125400-129420 to TL 125665-129560

Orientation: SW-NE

Dimensions: 32m x 1.8m x 0.35 to 0.5m deep

Area: 57.6m

Description:

The subsoil was a uniform, gravely, sandy clay (Plate 2). As in Trench 1 there was a sandier band located at the NE end of the trench.

Finds: None

### **Trench 3**

Location: West side of assessment site

NGR: TL 125415-129350 to 125270-12962

Orientation: WSW-ENE

Dimensions: 32m x 1.8m x 0.3 to 0.4m deep

Area: 57.6 sq.m.

Description:

The subsoil is a gravely, sandy clay (Plate 3). No features observed with the exception of a raised bank of reddish brown gravel about 1.6m wide and lying only 0.1m below the ground surface (Plate 4). It is orientated NE-SW and heads directly towards some man-hole covers lying adjacent to the tennis courts.

Finds: None



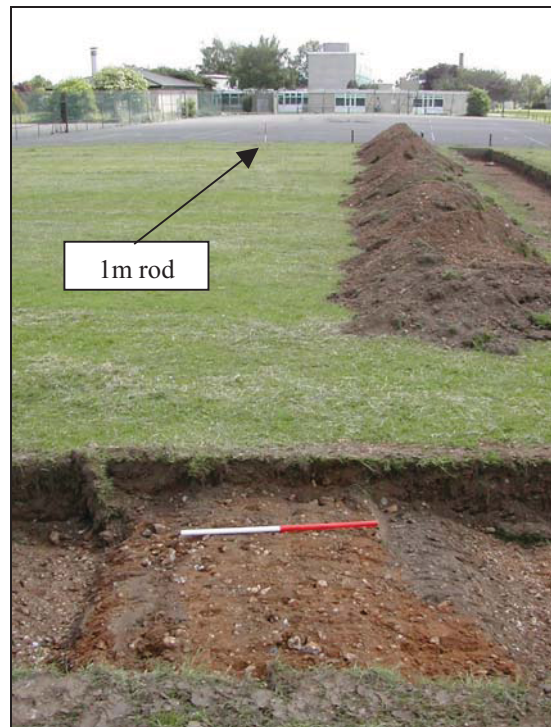
**Plate 1:** Trench 1 looking south west



**Plate 2:** Trench 2 looking south west with T3 under excavation.



**Plate 3:** Trench 3 looking west



**Plate 4:** Detail of gravel bank

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 Both the geophysical survey techniques (magnetic susceptibility and resistivity surveys) show the sandier band at the north east end of the first two trenches (T1 & T2). In addition, the resistivity plot (Appendix 1, Fig 4b) showed the presence of a backfilled service trench (Plate 4). The remainder of the trench areas were, as shown on the two geophysical plots, devoid of any further features.
- 5.2 Accordingly, there is a good concordance between the results of the geophysical surveys and the trial trenching.

## 6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Rob Grinter for commissioning this project on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council. Also to Jonathan Smith (CAO) for his advice and pragmatic approach. Thanks are also due to David Sabin of *Stratascan Ltd* for the results of the geophysical survey. Finally, my thanks to my colleague, Bob Zeepvat, for editing this report

## 7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

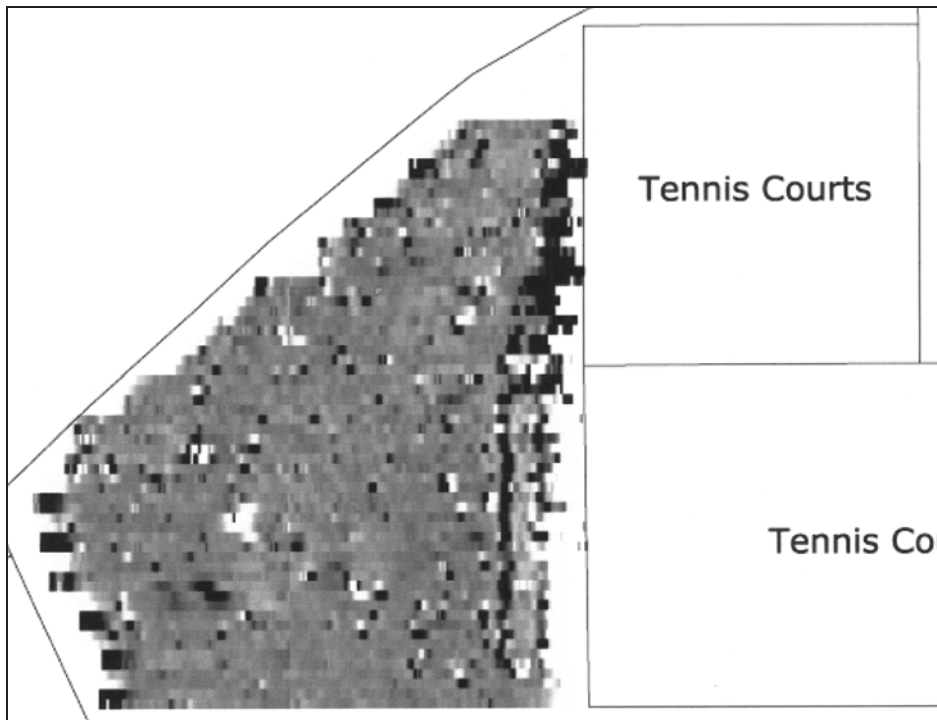
1. Project Design
2. Initial Report
3. Clients site plans
4. List of photographs/slides
5. Colour slides
6. B/W prints & negatives
7. Original specialist reports and supporting information
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Welwyn and Hatfield Museum.

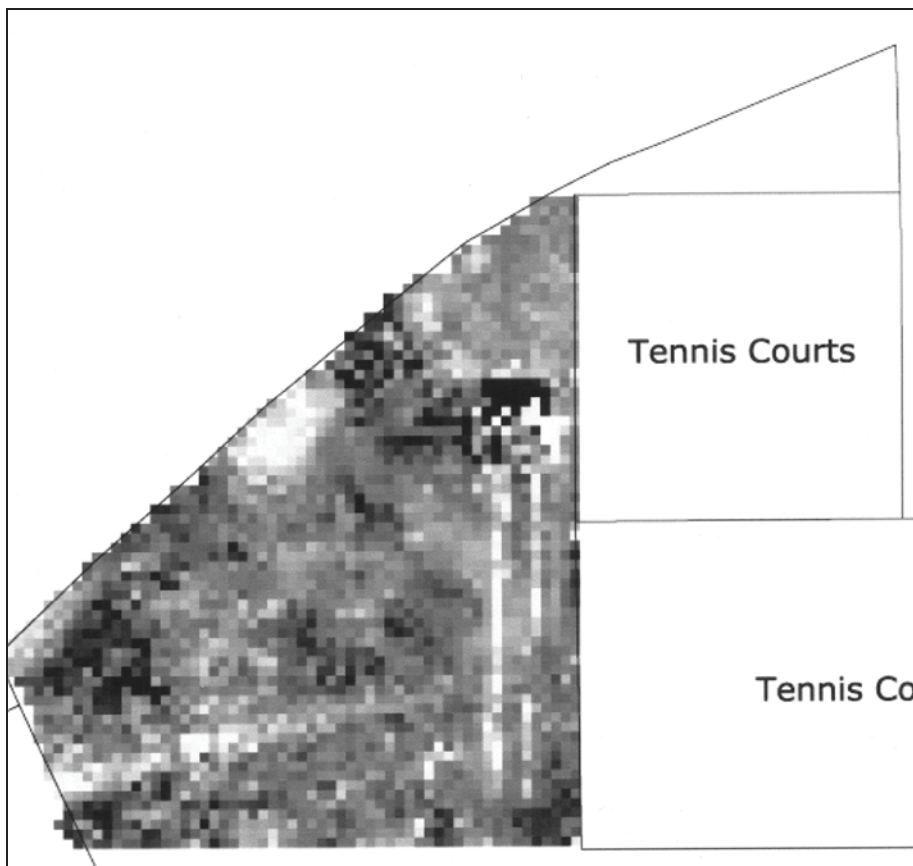
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- Rook, A.G, 1970 'Investigation of a Belgic site at Grub's Barn, Welwyn Garden City', *Herts. Archaeol.* **2**, 31-36.
- Soil Survey 1983 *1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales, and accompanying legend* (Harpenden).
- Stead, I. M. 1967 'A La Tène III Burial at Welwyn Garden City', *Archaeologia* **101**.

## Appendix 1: Preliminary Geophysical Survey



**Fig 4a:** Magnetic Susceptibility plot of assessment area (not to scale)



**Fig 4b:** resistivity plot of assessment area (not to scale)

## Appendix 2: SMR Summary Sheet

### HERTS

Site name and address: Sir Fredrick Osborn School, Hems Lane,		
County: Hertfordshire		District: Welwyn & Hatfield
Village/Town: Welwyn Garden City		Parish: Tewin (ancient parish)
Planning application reference: TBA		
Client name, address, & tel. no: Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DQ		
Nature of application: New sports facilities		
Present land use: grass		
Size of application area: n/a		Size of area investigated: n/a
NGR (to 8 figures): TL 25644-12939		Site code:
Site director/Organization: J.R. Hunn / ASC Ltd		
Type of work: Method assessment		
Date of work:	Start: May 17 <sup>th</sup> 2004	Finish: May 31 <sup>st</sup> 2004
Curating museum: Welwyn and Hatfield		
Related SMR nos:		Periods represented: Nil
Relevant previous summaries/reports ASC 533FWS/01 (desk-based assessment)		
Summary of fieldwork results:		
Author:		Date: