

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

sumo

Survey

GEOPHYSICS FOR
ARCHAEOLOGY &
ENGINEERING

Wheatleys Farm, Ashton Keynes

Client
John Moore Heritage Services

Survey Report
10767

Date
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and
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GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

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DIGITAL CONTENT (Archive Data)

- Minimally Processed Greyscale Images and XY Trace Plots in DWG format
- DWG Viewer
- Digital Copies of Report Text and Figures (both PDF and native formats)

1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A detailed gradiometry survey was carried out over approximately 24.1 hectares of grassland. Former tracks and other cut features have been detected, and are thought to relate to an adjacent Roman field system. Evidence of ploughing and former field boundaries provide evidence of an agricultural past. The remaining features include areas of natural magnetic variation, an area of enhanced response of uncertain origin, and disturbance from nearby ferrous objects.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background synopsis

SUMO were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area outlined for sand and gravel extraction purposes. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by **John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS)**.

2.2 Site details

NGR / Postcode	SU 049 933 / SN6 6PN
Location	The site is located in Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire. Bound to the west by the B4696, Ashton Road, and to the north by The Derry and Happy Land. The River Thames runs southeasterly through the easternmost part of the site.
HER/SMR	Wiltshire
Unitary Authority	Wiltshire
Parish	Ashton Keynes CP
Topography	Largely flat
Current Land Use	Pasture
Weather Conditions	Sunny/occasional light rain
Geology	Solid: Mudstone (Oxford Clay Formation) Superficial: Sand and Gravel (Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member) dominate the site area, with an area of alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel) in the central part of the site. (British Geological Survey website).
Soils	Badsey 2 Association (511i) (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 5, South West England)
Archaeology	Extract from: "Wheatleys Farm Gravel Extraction, Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire – Heritage Impact Assessment" (JMHS, 2017): <i>"The potential for archaeological remains dating to the Iron Age or Roman period is considered to be high – this is due to the crop marks evident across the south western portion of the site. These crop marks appear to form part of an Iron Age or Roman field system and will require archaeological investigation.</i> <i>Given the proximity of the site to Ashton Keynes there is also moderate potential for remains of a medieval date, possibly consisting of remnant ridge and furrow. Any later archaeology is also likely to be related to agriculture; the OS maps of the late 19th century show a number of field boundaries that have since been removed; it is likely that evidence of these would survive to some extent below ground. A small building and associated enclosure are seen on historical mapping in the south east corner of the western half of the site; there is therefore potential for remains of these features to survive below ground."</i>
Survey Methods	Magnetometer survey (fluxgate gradiometer)

Study Area 26.9 ha – approximately 2.8 hectares could not be surveyed due to overgrown vegetation and ponds

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 (EH 2008) (then English Heritage) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2002 & ClfA 2014).

3.2 Survey methods

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

Technique	Instrument	Traverse Interval	Sample Interval
Magnetometer	Bartington Grad 601-2	1.0m	0.25m

More information regarding this technique is included in Appendix A

3.3 Data Processing

The following basic processing steps have been carried out on the data used in this report:

De-stripe
De-stagger
Interpolate

3.4 Presentation of results and interpretation

The presentation of the results for each site involves a grey-scale and colour-scale plot of processed data. Magnetic anomalies are identified, interpreted and plotted onto the 'Interpretation' drawings. The minimally processed data are provided as a greyscale image in the Archive Data Folder with an XY trace plot in CAD format. A CAD viewer is also provided.

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 other existing evidence, the anomalies will be given specific categories, such as: *Abbey Wall* or *Roman Road*. Where the interpretation is based largely on the geophysical data, levels of confidence are implied, 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 survey has been divided into 9 survey areas (Areas 1-9); where considered appropriate, specific anomalies have been given numerical labels [1] [2] and these appear in the text below, as well as on the Interpretation Figure(s).

4.1 **Probable Archaeology**

Parallel, positive linear anomalies [1] in the south of Area 2 correspond with the location of cropmarks, discussed in the desk-based assessment (JMHS, 2017). These are likely to be associated with former tracks or droveways, linked to the adjacent Romano-British coaxial field system (MWI19669).

Positive linear anomalies [2] in the north of Area 2 and the centre of Area 1 are indicative of cut features, such as ditches. These are likely to be related to the nearby field system and trackways [1].

4.3 **Former Field Boundary**

Several positive linear anomalies [3-6] have been detected across the site, and are all related to former field boundaries visible on available historic OS mapping. Anomalies 3-5 are visible from 1885 to 1990, while Anomaly 6 is only visible on the 1900 Edition.

A positive linear anomaly [7] running approximately southwest-northeast in the north of Area 2 is likely to be related to a former field boundary, but is not visible on available historic mapping.

4.4 **Agricultural – Ploughing**

Evidence of modern ploughing is visible across the western part of the site in the form of closely spaced, magnetically weak, parallel linear anomalies.

4.5 **Natural / Geological / Pedological / Topographic**

Several amorphous areas of enhanced magnetic response have been detected across the site. These are typical of responses detected across deposits of sand and gravel, with the responses in the east likely a result of alluvial deposits from the River Thames.

4.6 **Uncertain**

An area of strongly enhanced magnetic response [8] in Area 1 is of uncertain origin. It is possible that the response is natural, though it is similar in response to evidence of former sand/gravel extraction works. No evidence of such work is visible on historic mapping, and as such the origin of the feature remains unclear.

4.7 **Ferrous / Magnetic Disturbance**

An area of magnetic debris [10] in the south of Area 5 is likely to be modern in origin, related to rubbish within the topsoil.

Ferrous responses close to boundaries are due to adjacent fences and gates. Smaller scale ferrous anomalies ("iron spikes") are present throughout the data and their form is best illustrated in the XY trace plots or the colour-scale plots. These responses are characteristic of small pieces of ferrous debris (or brick / tile / igneous rocks) in the topsoil and are commonly assigned a modern origin. Only the most prominent of these are highlighted on the interpretation diagram.

5 DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

English Heritage Guidelines (EH 2008) Table 4 states that the average magnetic response across mudstone geologies is variable, as is the response over superficial deposits of sand and gravel. Though alluvial deposits have the potential to mask weaker archaeological anomalies, the detection of former trackways/ditches suggests that the data collected are a good indicator of below ground features.

6 CONCLUSION

The survey at Wheatleys Farm has identified a number of linear anomalies, indicative of former tracks/droeways. These are likely to be associated with the Romano-British field system (MWI19669) recorded immediately to the west. An area of possible former sand/gravel extraction has been detected, though its exact origin is uncertain. Former field boundaries and evidence of ploughing indicate the site has a largely agricultural past. The remaining features are natural or modern and include areas of natural magnetic variation, magnetic debris and disturbance from nearby ferrous objects.

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 Grad 601-2**

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 This process sets the background mean of each traverse within each grid to zero.
Traverse The operation removes striping effects and edge discontinuities over the whole of the data set.
Step Correction (De-stagger) 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 responses 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 may lead and empty into larger diameter pipes, 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 are indicative of ferrous pipes/cables. Sometimes other materials (e.g. pvc) or the fill of the trench can cause weaker magnetic responses which can be identified from their uniform linearity.
<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 / Natural</i> or (in the case of linear responses) <i>Possible Archaeology / 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 0.1 nanoTeslas (nT) in an overall field strength of 48,000 (nT), 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.

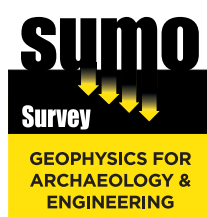
Magnetic susceptibility relates to the induced magnetism of a material when in the presence of a magnetic field. This magnetism can be considered as effectively permanent as it exists within the Earth's magnetic field. Magnetic susceptibility can become enhanced due to burning and complex biological 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; 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 feature. The difference between the two sensors will relate to the strength of a magnetic field created by this 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 and disturbance from modern services.



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