

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

# STRATASCAN™



Project name:  
**Austles, Altarnun, Cornwall**

Client:  
**Cornwall County Council**

Job ref:  
**J10052**

**June 2016**

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Survey date: <b>20th June 2016</b>	Report date: <b>June 2016</b>
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## 1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A detailed gradiometry survey was conducted over approximately 0.5 hectares of grassland. No features of probable or possible archaeological origin have been identified. Evidence of ridge and furrow and modern ploughing indicates that the site has been used for agricultural purposes since the medieval period. The remaining features are modern and include an area of magnetic disturbance and magnetic spikes which are likely to be modern rubbish.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background synopsis

Stratascan were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area outlined for the relocation of a farmstead and temporary dwelling. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by Cornwall County Council.

### 2.2 Site Details

<b>NGR / Postcode</b>	SX 212 806 / PL15 7SF
<b>Location</b>	The site is located approximately 1.1km south-west of Altarnun and 0.6km west of Trewint, Cornwall.
<b>HER/SMR</b>	Cornwall
<b>Unitary Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Parish</b>	Altarnun Civil Parish
<b>Topography</b>	The site lies on a north-east facing slope, descending from approximately 250m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the south, to 240m AOD in the north.
<b>Current Land Use</b>	Grassland
<b>Weather Conditions</b>	Overcast, wet.
<b>Soils</b>	The overlying soils are known as Hexworthy which are typical ironpan stagnopodzols soils. These consist of gritty loamy over very acid soils (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 5 South West England).
<b>Geology</b>	The underlying geology comprises Brendon Formation – Hornfelsesd Slate, Hornfelsesd Siltstone and Hornfelsesd Sandstone. No drift geology is recorded (British Geological Survey website).

<b>Archaeology</b>	<p>A search of Cornwall Historic Environment Record (HER) (Cornwall County Council, 2016) identifies a large number of prehistoric and medieval remains within a 1km radius of the site.</p> <p>The site lies within land characterised through Historic Landscape Classification as ‘Anciently Enclosed Land (Farmland Medieval)’ – that is land within ancient agricultural heartland. Typically, this has been farmed continuously since later prehistory and it is not uncommon for the pattern of enclosure to partially fossilise older enclosure boundaries of late prehistoric or Roman date. These have often been substantially reorganised and re-aligned by the medieval period.</p> <p>A prehistoric settlement (1109) comprising five hut circles (1109.1, 1109.2, 1109.3, 1109.4, 1109.5) is recorded approximately 900m southeast of the site, at the south of the Trewint Downs. A field system (1109) is thought to be associated with the settlement. Further hut circles (1001) are recorded approximately 1km south of the site, to the west of Hendra. Fragments of a prehistoric field system (58711) are visible on the south-west facing slopes above Hendra, and are thought to be contemporary with the hut circles. Hut circles are also recorded on the north-east facing slopes of West Moor (1521.1, 1521.2), around 1km east of the site.</p> <p>Bronze Age remains are also frequent within the area surrounding the site. A group of three cairns (1514) are also recorded on the north-east facing slopes of West Moor. At the same location as the cairns, a stone circle (55419) was discovered in 2004, with a diameter of around 31m. The cairns and stone circle form part of a typical ritual or ceremonial complex.</p> <p>From the medieval period, the surrounding landscape was largely agricultural and industrial. A series of early medieval prospecting pits (12051) are recorded on the east of West Moor, and are likely to have been cut to locate the east-west lode which provided cassiterite for the streamworks (12053) to the south. To the south of the site, on the Trewint Downs, an area of lode backworkings were identified (12055), forming part of a historic mine.</p> <p>To the south-west of the site, at Hendra, a medieval house and field system (1050) were recorded from aerial photographs dating to 1946. The field system covers an area of approximately 3 hectares. Within the area surrounding the site, several medieval settlements are recorded and include Trewint Marsh (1110), South Carne (1520), Trewint (1530), Austle (17687) and Darras (1524). Evidence of medieval ridge and furrow is also recorded in a number of locations (58602, 58790, 54610).</p> <p>Post-medieval sites in the area include a number of small quarries, prospecting and extractive pits, the nearest of which is MCO24161, which is located on the south-eastern edge of the site, and post-medieval settlements, again the nearest of which is Jollsground settlement itself MCO15071, first referred to on the 1888 OS map of the</p>
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	area. An additional undated field boundary MCO47364 is positioned at the south-eastern corner of the site.
<b>Survey Methods</b>	Detailed magnetic survey (gradiometry)
<b>Study Area</b>	c. 0.5 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 ClfA and are committed to upholding its policies and standards.

### 3.2 Survey methods

Given the high number of prehistoric and medieval remains within the surrounding area, 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. *Destripe*
2. *Destagger*

### 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 Austle, Altarnun has not identified any anomalies that have been characterised as being either of a *probable* or *possible* archaeological origin. The following refers to numerical labels on the interpretation plots.

### 4.1 *Probable Archaeology*

No probable archaeology has been identified within the survey area.

### 4.2 *Possible Archaeology*

No possible archaeology has been identified within the survey area.

### 4.3 *Medieval/Post-Medieval Agriculture*

Ridge and furrow cultivation [1] is visible across the area in the form of widely spaced, parallel linear anomalies, while evidence of modern ploughing [2] is visible in the form of closely spaced, magnetically weak linear anomalies.

### 4.4 *Other Anomalies*

Two areas of enhanced magnetic variation [3] in the north of the site are likely to be natural, i.e. geological in origin. A small area of magnetic disturbance [4] in the north-east corner of the site is likely to be the result of a nearby ferrous metal object, such as a fence. Smaller ferrous anomalies, or 'magnetic spikes' [5] indicate ferrous objects and are likely to be modern rubbish.

## 5 DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

Slate geologies in Cornwall generally provide good results for gradiometer survey. In this instance, there is a relatively high contrast between agricultural features and the background magnetic response. There are no superficial deposits on the site which have the potential to mask weaker features, and it is likely that any archaeological anomalies, should they be present, would have been detected.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The survey at Austles, Altarnun has not identified any features of archaeological origin, despite the proximity of prehistoric hut circles, a stone circle and field systems. This is likely a result of the site lying on relatively low ground, in comparison to the locations of the prehistoric features which are typically situated on high ground. Evidence of ridge and furrow indicates that the site formed part of an agricultural landscape in the medieval period, while evidence of more modern ploughing suggests an extended agricultural past. The remaining features are modern and include an area of magnetic disturbance and magnetic spikes which are likely to be modern rubbish.

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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	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.
Traverse	
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.
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#### **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 &amp; 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 &amp; 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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