Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire.

An Archaeological Geophysical Survey





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An Archaeological Geophysical Survey

for

Ayleswood Developments Ltd

by



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COAS reference: C1/EVA/14/SDW Wiltshire Council planning reference: 14/07898/OUT National Grid Reference: centred on NGR SU 16971 21903 OASIS Reference: contexto1-213127

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June 2015

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Front cover image: View of the Site (from E). © Context One Archaeological Services 2015

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Non-technical summary

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd, in conjunction with GeoFlo Southwest Geophysical and Flotation Services, carried out a geophysical survey on land at Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire (centred on NGR SU 16971 21903) on 3 June 2015. The investigation was commissioned and funded by Ayleswood Developments Ltd.

The survey was carried out in support of an outline planning application (Wiltshire Council Planning Application Reference 14/07898/OUT) for the residential development of up to 25 dwellings and the demolition of the extant Victorian brick structure. Following consultation between Wiltshire Council Archaeology and Wiltshire Council Planning, it was considered that the Site was of archaeological interest, as part of it fell within an area of a previously evaluated Romano-British settlement.

No features of archaeological interest were identified during the geophysical survey. A single possible modern feature is present to the south-west of the house itself, and areas of magnetic disturbance caused by bonfire debris and service inspection chambers have also been identified. Due to the presence of below-ground services to the south and east, it is unlikely that any potential archaeological features will remain extant in these areas. However, the presence of the spread of bonfire debris has masked the data in the north-west of the Site, the area closest to the Romano-British settlement, and there is a possibility of any archaeological features present being obscured by this.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) in conjunction with GeoFlo Southwest Geophysical and Flotation Services, carried out a geophysical survey on land at Scott's House, Salisbury Road, Downton, Wiltshire (the 'Site') on 3 June 2015 The survey was carried out in support of an outline planning application (Wiltshire Council Planning Application Reference 14/07898/OUT) for the residential development of up to 25 dwellings and the demolition of the extant Victorian brick structure. The project was commissioned and funded by Ayleswood Developments Ltd.
- 1.2 The geophysical survey formed the initial phase of an archaeological evaluation as advised by Ms Clare King (Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Archaeology (WCA)). Depending upon the results of the geophysical survey, trial trenching may have formed a further phase to the evaluation. Following a consultation request from Mr Tim Pizzey (Senior Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council Planning (WCP)) in September 2014, Ms. King Stated:

"This site is of archaeological interest. Part of the site falls within an area of Romano - British settlement, part of which has been previously evaluated. The evaluation took place to the north of the proposed development site in 1990 in advance of a proposed bypass. Although the works undertaken were very small, they identified very significant settlement remains, including possible houses, pit and a clay lined oven. The evaluation did not include the proposed development site, but aerial photography suggests that the settlement continues into the site. In addition, burial grounds for sites of this period are usually located just outside the edges of the settlement"

- 1.3 The geophysical survey comprised three elements: field evaluation through geophysical (magnetometer) survey; post-survey and report production; and archive deposition.
- 1.4 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).

2. Site location and topography

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR SU 16971 21903) covers approximately 0.76ha, approximately 0.30ha of which was surveyed due to the presence of overgrown areas and services. Consisting of gardens and rough pasture surrounding Scott's House, the Site is located to the north of the village of Downton and immediately west of the Downton Business Centre industrial estate. The A338 Salisbury Road forms the eastern boundary of the Site, and it is bounded on all other sides by pastural land. The Site slopes gradually from east to west, with the western extent being located at *c*. 40m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) and the eastern extent at *c*. 37m aOD.
- 2.2 The Site is set on solid geology comprising Newhaven Chalk Formation Chalk. The superficial (drift) geology is recorded as River Terrace Deposits Sand and Gravel (British Geological Survey 2015). The Site is characterized by freely draining, slightly acidic, loamy soils. (http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes).





Figure 1. Site setting and location of area of geophysical survey















3. Methodology

3.1 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA 1985, rev. 2012; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008) and Wiltshire County Council (WCC 1995) at all times during the course of the investigation, and as recommended by English Heritage (2008) *Geophysical Survey in Archaeological Field Evaluation*. COAS will adhere to the *Code of Conduct* of the CIFA and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (CIFA). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on Site. The fieldwork methodology is summarised below.

Geophysical Survey field methodology

- 3.2 The survey area comprised a sub-rectangular area comprising approximately 0.76ha (of which 0.30ha was surveyable). The survey area was divided into 20m x 20m grid squares, using a TopCon GRS-1 GPS system capable of 1-2cm accuracy. Partial squares were added where ground conditions allowed permitting maximum Site coverage.
- 3.3 The magnetometer survey was carried out using a Bartington Grad 601-2 Dual Sensor Gradiometer, comprising a double set of two vertically aligned fluxgates. A built-in data logger automatically recorded magnetic fluctuation between the vertical fluxgates in nano-Tesla (nT) at 0.125m intervals over traverses laid out 1m apart. The instrument has a manufacturer's specified depth range exceeding 3m.
- 3.4 Magnetometer survey can be recommended over Chalk (and indeed any sedimentary) geology, (English Heritage 2008, 15). The technique is also recommended for identifying features such as ditches, gullies, pits, hearths and ovens (*ibid*, 14), which would likely have been present as part of a possible Romano-British settlement.

Data processing

- 3.5 Processing was performed using specialist *Geoplot* and *Anomaly* geophysical survey software. This was used to remove background 'noise' within the data and to flatten varying background levels to produce clearer data, in turn aiding interpretation and presentation. Once the basic processing had flattened the background the data was further processed and this included de-striping (removing striping effects caused by zero-point discrepancies between different sensors and walking directions) and de-staggering (removes zigzag effects caused by inconsistent walking speeds on sloping, uneven or overgrown terrain). These were applied to the data in a targeted fashion, and aided with the eventual presentation and publication of the data.
- 3.6 The data was then interpreted and presented in colour plot (Figure 2) and greyscale (Figure 3) within various graphical 'clip' parameters. The colour plot is plotted at parameters of 10 and -10 nT to illustrate particularly high magnetic readings within the data.

4. Results

- 4.1 No anomalies deemed to be of significant archaeological interest have been identified on the Site. All anomalies present are depicted in the interpretation plot (**Figure 4**).
- 4.2 A strong curvilinear anomaly to the south-west of the house likely relates to a modern rubble-filled feature.
- 4.3 A number of areas of magnetic disturbance were identified across the survey area. The area to the north-west of the survey area relates to the magnetic debris spread of a bonfire pile visible on Site.
- 4.4 A second area of strong magnetic disturbance directly south of the house relates to a number of service inspection chambers (manholes) that were visible on the surface during the survey.
- 4.5 A number of weak positive anomalies to the south-west of the survey area possibly relate to agricultural activity, although these may also be geological or modern in origin.



4.6 A number of isolated magnetic anomalies visible across the Site likely relate to modern metallic debris.

5. Discussion

- 5.1 No features of archaeological interest were identified within the survey area and no evidence of the potential Romano-British settlement was visible.
- 5.2 A single strong curvilinear feature has been identified to the south-west of the house. The strong response is indicative of a modern feature, possibly a drain or other cut feature, filled with rubble or other modern material. The feature does not correspond directly with any features visible on historic mapping (OS mapping dating from 1871 to 1975), although it is in close proximity to the present boundary between the house and the field/garden to the west. The response is poorly defined overall, making further precise interpretation difficult.
- 5.4 Other features identified are likely modern or natural in origin and relate to ferrous objects and scattered debris in the topsoil. A bonfire pile has resulted in a magnetic spread across the northwest of the Site, and a number of service inspection chambers are present to the south of the house as reflected by strong magnetic responses within the survey data. A number of curvilinear features located in the south-west of the survey area may be the result of past agricultural activity (such as ploughing) although may also have a geological or modern origin. The weak nature of these features makes further interpretation difficult.
- 5.5 Overall, the consistency of the data collected has indicated that the selected technique of magnetometer survey was effective, although due to the presence of magnetic debris and the small size of the survey area, interpretation of the anomalies visible has been difficult. There is a lack of readings consistent with archaeological features such as ditches, gullies, pits, hearths, ovens or other settlement features, although the absence of such features is not diagnostic for the entirety of the Site as some areas have been obscured by modern debris. It is unlikely, due to the presence of a mains drain to the east and further services across the south of the Site, that any possible earlier features will remain extant in these areas. However, the presence of the spread of bonfire debris has masked the data in the north-west of the Site, the area closest to the Romano-British settlement, and there is a possibility of any archaeological features present being obscured by this. Targeted evaluation trenching in this area of the Site would allow further interpretation of potential archaeological features present.

6. Archive

- 6.1 The project archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of raw digital data files, and processed data composites in .cmp format.
- 6.2 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record. A digital copy of the report will also be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service, via OASIS (On-line Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations http://oasis.ac.uk/england/). The OASIS entry (contexto1-213127) will also be completed to include details of the archive contents.

7. COAS acknowledgements

7.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

Mr Rob Hewlett, Ayleswood Developments Ltd. Ms Clare King, Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council

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