

GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT

Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West Berkshire

Client

RPS Consulting Services

Survey Report

00548

Date

November 2020



Survey Report 00548: Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West Berkshire

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	LIST OF FIGURES	1
2	SURVEY TECHNIQUE	1
3	SUMMARY OF RESULTS	2
4	INTRODUCTION	2
5	RESULTS	3
6	DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT	3
7	CONCLUSION	3
8	REFERENCES	4

Appendix A Technical Information: Magnetometer Survey Methods, Processing and Presentation

Appendix B Technical Information: Magnetic Theory

1. LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 01	NTS	Site Location
Figure 02	1:1000	Magnetometer Survey - Greyscale Plots
Figure 03	1:1000	Magnetometer Survey - Interpretation
Figure 04	1:1000	Minimally Processed Data – Greyscale Plots

2. SURVEY TECHNIQUE

Detailed magnetic survey (magnetometry) was chosen as the most efficient and effective method of locating the type of archaeological anomalies which might be expected at this site.

Bartington Grad 601-2

Traverse Interval 1.0m

Sample Interval 0.25m

3 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- 3.1 A detailed magnetometer survey was conducted over approximately 5.1 hectares of land off Hoad Way, Theale. No definite archaeological anomalies have been mapped. Remains associated with a former watercourse, drainage channel and building have been detected, along with areas of modern ferrous disturbance.

4 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 **SUMO Geophysics Ltd** were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area outlined for development. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by **RPS Consulting Services**.

4.2 Site details

NGR / Postcode	SU 647 714 / RG7 5AG
Location	The site is located to the east of Theale, which lies at the western fringes of Reading, Berkshire. Hoad Way bounds the site to the west, with the A4 (Bath Road) to the south and the M4 motorway to the east.
HER	West Berkshire
Unitary Authority	West Berkshire
Parish	Theale CP
Topography	Level
Current Land Use	Grassland
Geology (BGS 2020)	Solid: Seaford Chalk Formation - chalk. Superficial: Alluvium - clay, silt, sand and gravel.
Soils (CU 2020)	Soilscape 22: loamy soils with naturally high groundwater.
Archaeology (TVAS 2019)	One possible heritage asset is located within the site; aerial photographs reveal ditches forming no coherent pattern, concentrated in the western section of the area. The features are undated, but at least two can be matched to features shown on 19 th century mapping and the remainder are more likely to be late post-medieval drainage. The wider area contains few archaeological features, with just one findspot for prehistoric and Saxon periods, and one area of possible medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.
Survey Methods	Magnetometer survey (fluxgate gradiometer)
Study Area	c. 5.1 ha

4.3 Aims and Objectives

To locate and characterise any anomalies of possible archaeological interest within the study area.

5 RESULTS

Specific anomalies have been given numerical labels [1] [2] which appear in the text below, as well as on the Interpretation Figure(s).

5.1 **Probable / Possible Archaeology**

- 5.1.1 No magnetic responses have been recorded that could be interpreted as being of definite archaeological interest.

5.2 **Former Water Course / Drainage Channel**

- 5.2.1 Discrete ferrous anomalies and curvilinear trends [1-2] are visible in the data. The responses correspond with the location of a former watercourse [1] and drainage channel [2] visible on historic Ordnance Survey maps (Fig. 04); the linear trends are indicative of ditches and the ferrous anomalies reflect brick, tile or iron in the backfilled ground.

5.3 **Ferrous / Magnetic Disturbance**

- 5.3.1 An area of magnetic disturbance [3] in the west of the area is likely of modern origin and is thought to be related to a demolished outbuilding, visible in the location on historic maps (Fig. 04).
- 5.3.2 Ferrous responses close to boundaries are due to adjacent fences and gates, while a large ferrous response in the east is associated with an electricity pylon. Smaller scale ferrous anomalies ("iron spikes") are present throughout the data and are characteristic of small pieces of ferrous debris (or brick / tile) in the topsoil; they are commonly assigned a modern origin. Only the most prominent of these are highlighted on the interpretation diagram.

6 DATA APPRAISAL & CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

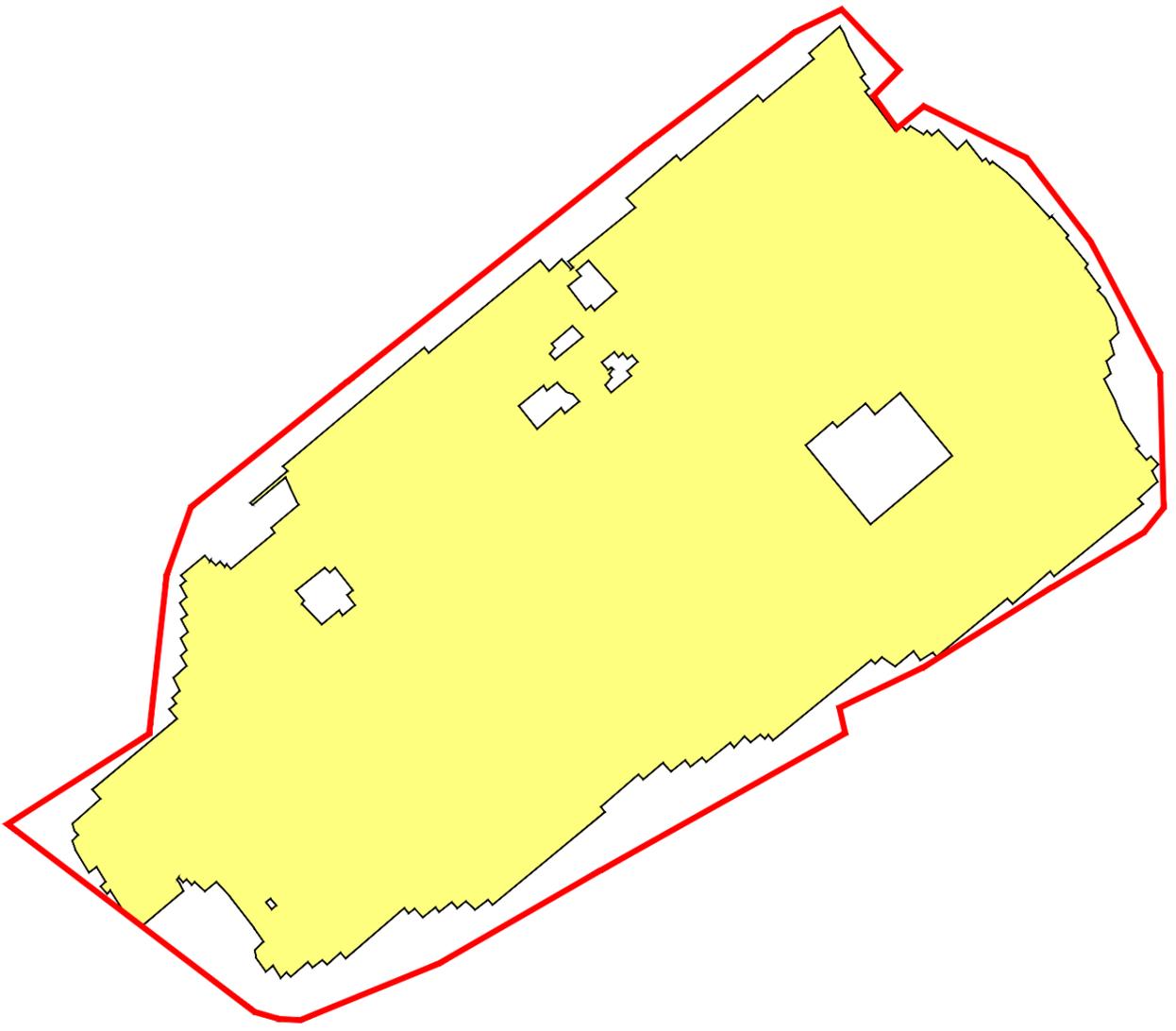
- 6.1 Historic England guidelines (EH 2008) Table 4 states that the typical magnetic response on the local soils / geology is generally good, though alluvial deposits have the potential to mask weaker archaeological features. The results from this survey indicate the presence of a former watercourse and drainage channel, and there is no *a priori* reason to suggest that archaeological features would not have been detected, should they be present.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The survey at Theale has not identified any anomalies of definite archaeological interest. Two curvilinear responses associated with a former watercourse and drainage channel have been mapped, along with ferrous disturbance associated with a former building. Other areas of magnetic disturbance are a result of nearby ferrous metal objects, such as boundary fences and an electricity pylon.

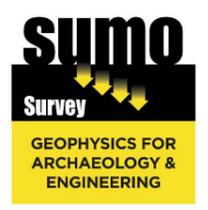
8 REFERENCES

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- TVAS 2019 *Land at Hoad Way, Theale, West Berkshire - Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*. Thames Valley Archaeological Services; unpublished report.



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	Survey Area	
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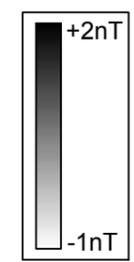
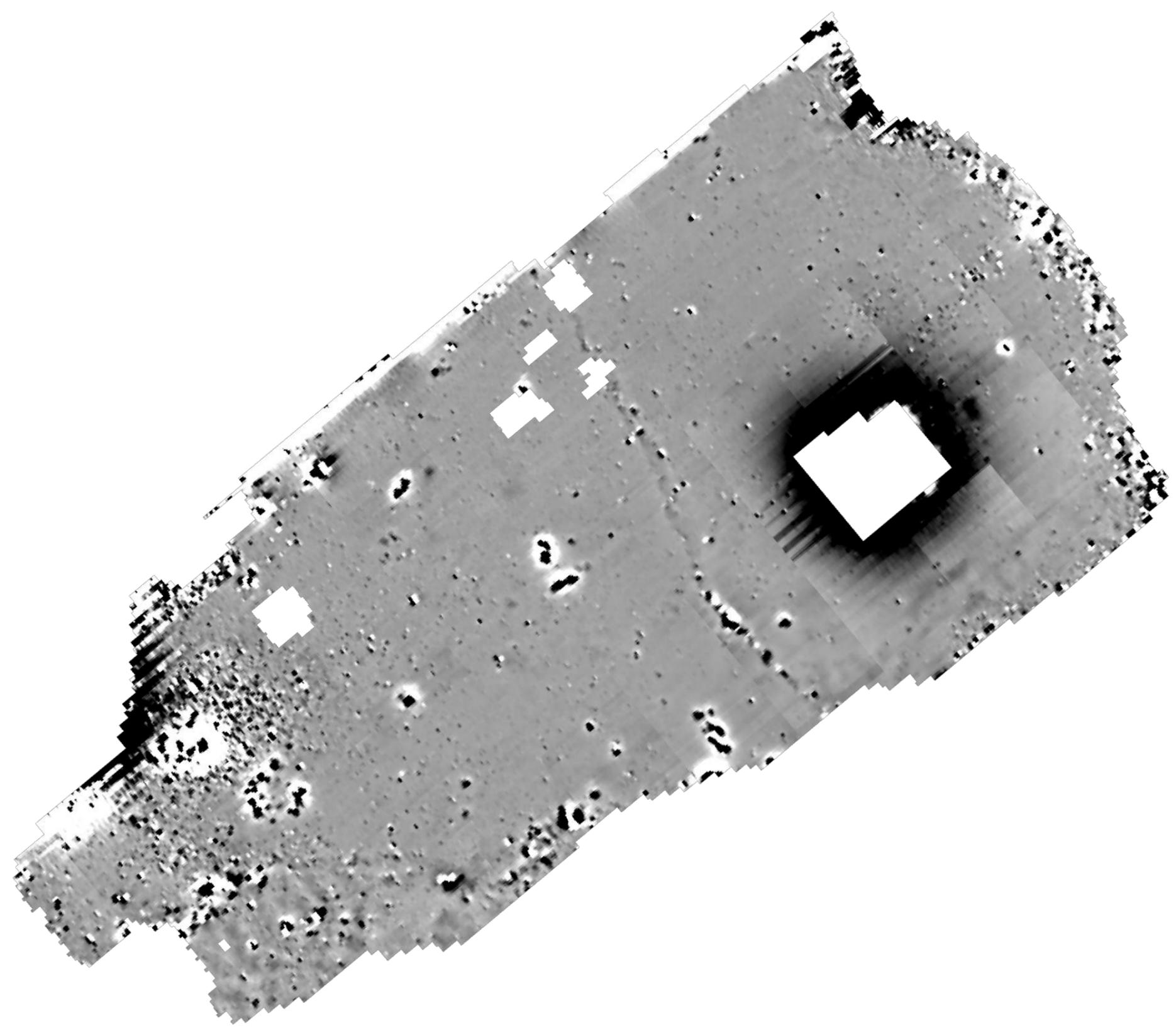


Title: Site Location

Client: RPS Consulting Services

Project: 00548 - Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West Berkshire

Scale: NOT TO SCALE	Fig No: 01
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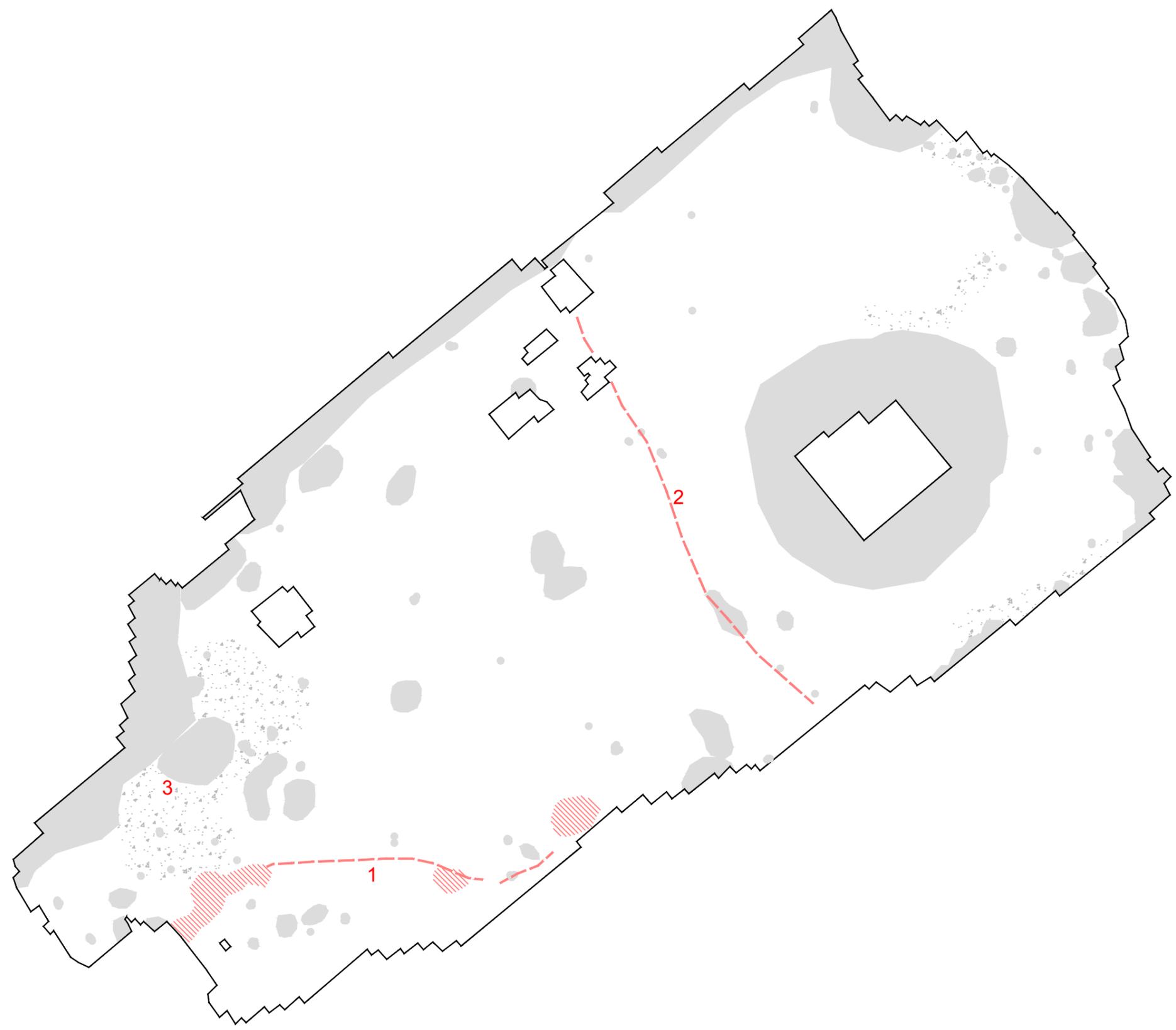
Title:
Magnetometer Survey - Greyscale Plot

Client:
RPS Consulting Services

Project:
00548 - Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West
Berkshire

Scale:
0 metres 62.5
1:1250 @ A3

Fig No:
02



KEY

	Former watercourse / drainage channel
	Magnetic disturbance
	Ferrous



Title: Magnetometer Survey - Interpretation

Client: RPS Consulting Services

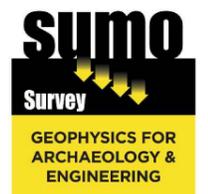
Project: 00548 - Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West Berkshire

Scale: 0 metres 62.5
1:1250 @ A3

Fig No: 03



c. 1892 - 1914, 25 Inch, Ordnance Survey Map ©2020 National Library of Scotland



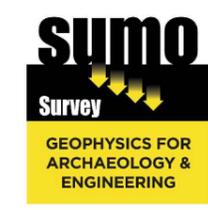
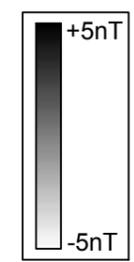
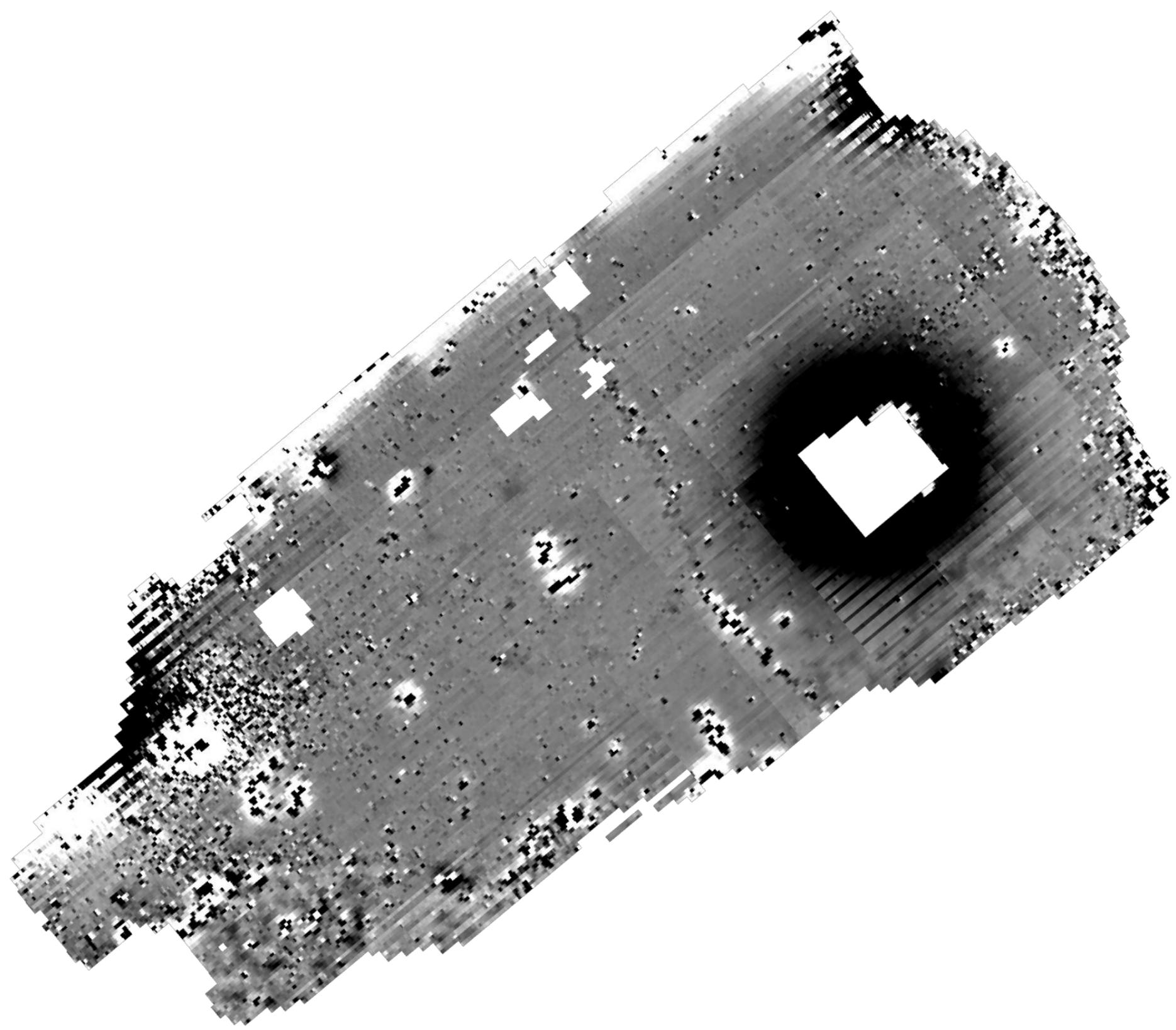
Title: c. 1892 - 1914 Ordnance Survey Map

Client: RPS Consulting Services

Project: 00548 - Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West Berkshire

Scale: 0 metres 62.5
1:1250 @ A3

Fig No: 04



Title:
Minimally Processed Data - Greyscale Plot

Client:
RPS Consulting Services

Project:
00548 - Land off Hoad Way, Theale, West
Berkshire

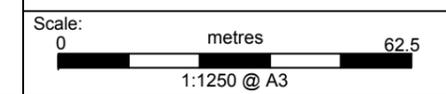


Fig No:
05

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), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014) and the European Archaeological Council (EAC 2016).

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.
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Presentation of results and interpretation

The presentation of the results includes a 'minimally processed data' and a 'processed data' greyscale plot. Magnetic anomalies are identified, interpreted and plotted onto the 'Interpretation' drawings.

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.

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.
<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.

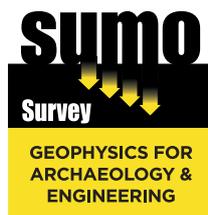
Magnetic susceptibility relates to the induced magnetism of a material when in the presence of a magnetic field. This magnetism can be considered as effectively permanent as it exists within the Earth's magnetic field. Magnetic susceptibility can become enhanced due to burning and complex biological 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.



- Archaeological
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