

Southampton Road, Alderbury, Wiltshire: Geophysical Survey Report

Wardell Armstrong LLP

Date: March 2025
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Ref: 24777

Report to: Wardell Armstrong LLP
Report Title: Southampton Road, Alderbury, Wiltshire: Geophysical Survey Report

Version: V1.0
Issue Date: March 2025
Report Ref: 24777

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Version	Author	Description	Date
V0.1	JS	First draft	03/03/2025
V0.2	AS	QA1	04/03/2025
V0.3	JS	Amendments following QA1	04/03/025
V0.4	AC	QA2	07/03/2025
V1.0	AS	Issue for client comment	

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Executive Summary

Cura Terrae Land and Nature was commissioned by Wardell Armstrong LLP to conduct an archaeological geophysical survey ahead of development of land at Southampton Road, Alderbury, Wiltshire. The work took place in February 2025.

The surveyable area of the Site produced good data throughout. No anomalies identified can be confidently interpreted as archaeological in origin. However, a series of weakly positive, pit-like anomalies in the east of Field 2, running northeast to southwest over c. 40 m, have been tentatively identified as a possible pit alignment. A more recent agricultural origin, or a natural origin, cannot be ruled out, however.

Multiple agricultural trends were identified in Fields 1 and 2, as well as an uncertain trend that could represent an unrecorded former boundary, but this is not definitive. Other anomalies within the dataset represent areas of increased magnetic response, modern agricultural practices, and the presence of various quantities and varieties of modern ferrous material.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Cura Terrae was commissioned by Wardell Armstrong LLP to carry out an archaeological geophysical survey ahead of a forthcoming planning application for development of land at Southampton Road, Alderbury, Wiltshire (hereafter 'the Site'). The Site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 419000 127270 (SU 19000 27270) (Fig. 1).

1.2 Location, Topography and Geology

- 1.2.1 The Site is c. 3.65 ha in size, comprised of two agricultural fields, and situated c. 5 km southwest of Salisbury, in Wiltshire.
- 1.2.2 The survey area is bounded by trees, hedgerows and fencing on all sides. Further agricultural fields lie beyond the Site boundary to the north. Residential buildings are located directly to the west and to the south, while Junction Road also forms part of the eastern boundary to the Site.
- 1.2.3 The Site is on east-facing slope, descending from c. 84 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the west to c. 69 m aOD in the east.
- 1.2.4 The underlying bedrock of the Site is recorded as Wittering Formation (sand, silt and clay) (British Geological Survey, 2025).

2. Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The following section contains a summary of archaeological and heritage data compiled from publicly available Historic Environment Records (online) within an approximate 1 km search radius of the Site. While not exhaustive, this section aims to present a digest of findings considered relevant to the interpretation of the geophysical survey data collected.

2.2 Summary

Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 Four or more Palaeolithic, lower Acheulian axes were discovered by a member of the public in 1934 c. 300 m east of the Site (MWI9679).
- 2.2.2 A Mesolithic flint tool was discovered in 1996 c. 400m northwest of the Site (MWI9694). A Mesolithic beaker pot was discovered in 1929, c. 750 m south of the Site (MWI9706).
- 2.2.3 A ring-ditch was discovered c. 300 m southeast of the Site at Alderbury and West Grimstead School by an archaeological evaluation in 1991 by Wessex Archaeology. The ditch is believed to be Neolithic to Bronze Age in origin (MWI9802). A further ring-ditch is visible in aerial photography c. 230 m southeast of the Site, at Alderbury and West Grimstead School. The ditch is believed to be Neolithic to Bronze Age in origin (MWI9803).

Post-medieval to Modern

- 2.2.4 A post-medieval, cast uniface, lead token was discovered c. 110 m northeast of the Site (MWI9779).

Undated

- 2.2.5 Several undated pits were identified c. 220 m southeast of the Site in geophysical data recorded by Lefort Geophysics in 2019 (MWI78168) and (MWI78168). An undated ditch feature was also recorded within the survey data (MWI78167), along with an undated enclosure (MWI78166) and an undated field boundary (MWI78169).

3. Geophysical Survey Methodology

- 3.1.1 All survey work was completed to appropriate standards, as outlined by current guidance (ClfA 2020a; 2020b; 2020c, 2022; and Schmidt *et al.* 2015).
- 3.1.2 The geophysical survey was completed using a Bartington Grad601-2 system. Readings were recorded at a resolution of 0.01 nT and data collected with a traverse interval of 1 m and a sample interval of between 0.16 - 0.25 m.
- 3.1.3 Data was collected by traversing the survey area in 4 m increments using a hand-pushed non-magnetic cart system to achieve the best possible results.
- 3.1.4 Real Time Kinematic (RTK) differential GPS equipment (Carlson BRX7 GNSS Smart Antenna) was used to accurately determine the position of the survey equipment and survey monitor data.
- 3.1.5 Data processing was performed using TerraSurveyor64 software and consisted of a 'DeStripe' process. This process determines the average of the datapoints in each track, and subtracts that value from all the datapoints along each survey track.
- 3.1.6 Illustrations were created using QGIS software. Interpretation of identified anomalies was achieved through analysis of anomaly patterning and increases in magnetic response and was aided by examining the available supporting information, including but not limited to Greyscale plots, Colourscale plots and XY Trace plots. The interpretations follow Cura Terrae colour coding and categorisations of anomalies and attempt, where possible, to suggest the nature of buried features.
- 3.1.7 Further details of geophysical survey methodology can be found in Appendix A.

4. Mitigating Factors

- 4.1.1 At the time of survey, the Site conditions were wet but predominantly firm underfoot with short grass ground coverage. Conditions through the centre of Field 1 were boggy, restricting survey coverage in this area.
- 4.1.2 A modern service is noted traversing the survey data from northwest to southeast. The strong magnetic response resulting from the presence of the service has affected the data in its immediate vicinity, limiting the detection of potential weaker anomalies nearby. However, this has not had an overall impact on the efficacy of the survey.
- 4.1.3 Field boundaries comprised trees, hedgerows, and fencing. Where necessary, a 2 m buffer was maintained along metal fences although some interference is still noted at the survey periphery. The buffer served to minimise the effects of magnetic interference on the survey and to help to reduce as far as possible any non-detection of potential buried features.
- 4.1.4 The results of geophysical survey may not reveal all potential archaeology within a survey area, and geological, agricultural and modern features may limit the detection of weaker archaeological responses.

5. Results and Interpretation

5.1.1 Anomalies found within the survey data are listed in Table 1 and illustrated on Figure 3.

Table 1: Survey anomalies

Anomaly Number	Anomaly Type	Description	Interpretation
1. (Field 2, Figure 3)	Possible Archaeology	A series of weak positive pit-like anomalies in the east of Field 2. This anomaly measures c. 40 m long and is on a northeast to southwest alignment. At its north end, the anomaly becomes curvilinear.	This anomaly is possibly indicative of a pit alignment. This anomaly is equally likely to be natural or agricultural in origin.
2. (Field 2, Figure 3)	Agricultural Trend	This weak negative linear anomaly measures c. 100 m and traverses the northern border of Field 2 on a northeast to southwest alignment.	This linear feature aligns with visible modern farming tracks.
3. (Field 1, Figure 3)	Agricultural Trend	A series of strong positive circular anomalies in a northeast to southwest orientation in the southwest of Field 1. The alignment is c. 24 m long.	These anomalies are likely to be an agricultural trend associated with ploughing regimes.
4. (Field 1, Figure 3)	Uncertain Trend	A weak negative linear anomaly, measuring c. 18 m long in the southwest of Field 1. The anomaly is on a northwest to southeast orientation.	This anomaly is orientated against the visible plough lines of the field. This could be representative of a former boundary that is not visible on historic mapping.

Anomaly Number	Anomaly Type	Description	Interpretation
N/A (Fields 1 & 2, Figure 3)	Ferrous Spike	Small, dipolar, 'spike' anomalies scattered across the Site.	These anomalies represent isolated ferrous material and are not likely to be archaeological in origin but are more likely associated with more recent agricultural land use.
N/A (Fields 1 & 2, Figure 3)	Modern Service	Strong, highly magnetic, dipolar, linear anomaly present in both fields on a northwest to southeast alignment.	This anomaly represents a modern service.

6. Discussion

- 6.1.1 The survey produced good data throughout but has not located any anomalies of definitive archaeological origin. One anomaly that is potentially of an archaeological nature is noted: a linear feature, possibly comprised of small pits, identified in the east of Field 2 (1). However, a natural or modern agricultural related origin cannot be ruled out. The responses may be the result of localised variations in the magnetic susceptibility of the underlying deposits or topsoil.
- 6.1.2 Multiple weak trends have been identified as agricultural in origin (2, 3). These anomalies could be representative of recent ploughing activity, a modern trackway, or a footpath.
- 6.1.3 A linear anomaly in the southwest of Field 1 (4) is interpreted as an uncertain trend. Due to it being oriented against visible modern plough lines it is possible that this represents an unmapped historic boundary. However, a more recent origin is possible.
- 6.1.4 Further anomalies have been identified as resulting from agricultural practices or as representing modern ferrous materials, including a modern service and numerous ferrous 'spike' anomalies found in both fields.

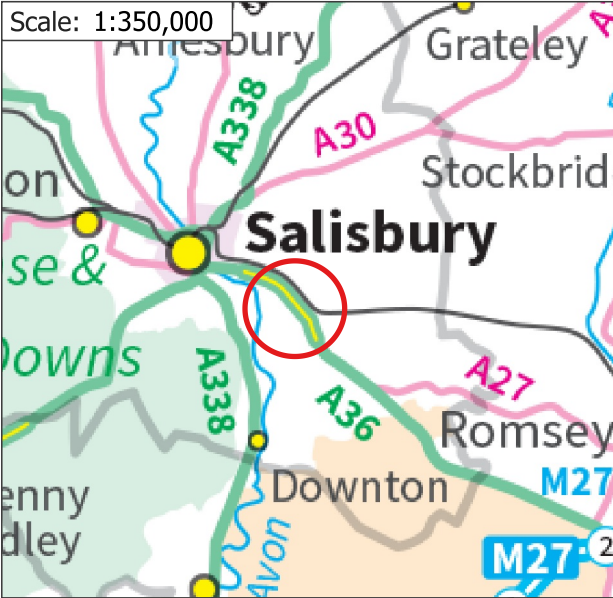
7. Curation and Storage

- 7.1.1 The archive will be prepared in accordance with national guidelines (ClfA 2020b). The integrity of the primary field record will be preserved. Security copies will be maintained where appropriate. Digital records of the geophysical survey and its collected data will be held by Cura Terrae.
- 7.1.2 An OASIS form has been created detailing the results of the works under the following reference number: CuraTerrae-532041. Following approval of the report, a pdf version of the final version will be submitted within three months to the Archaeology Data Service via the OASIS form.

8. References

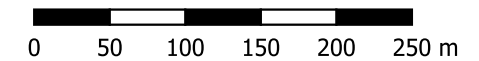
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Scale: 1:350,000



Key

Site Boundary

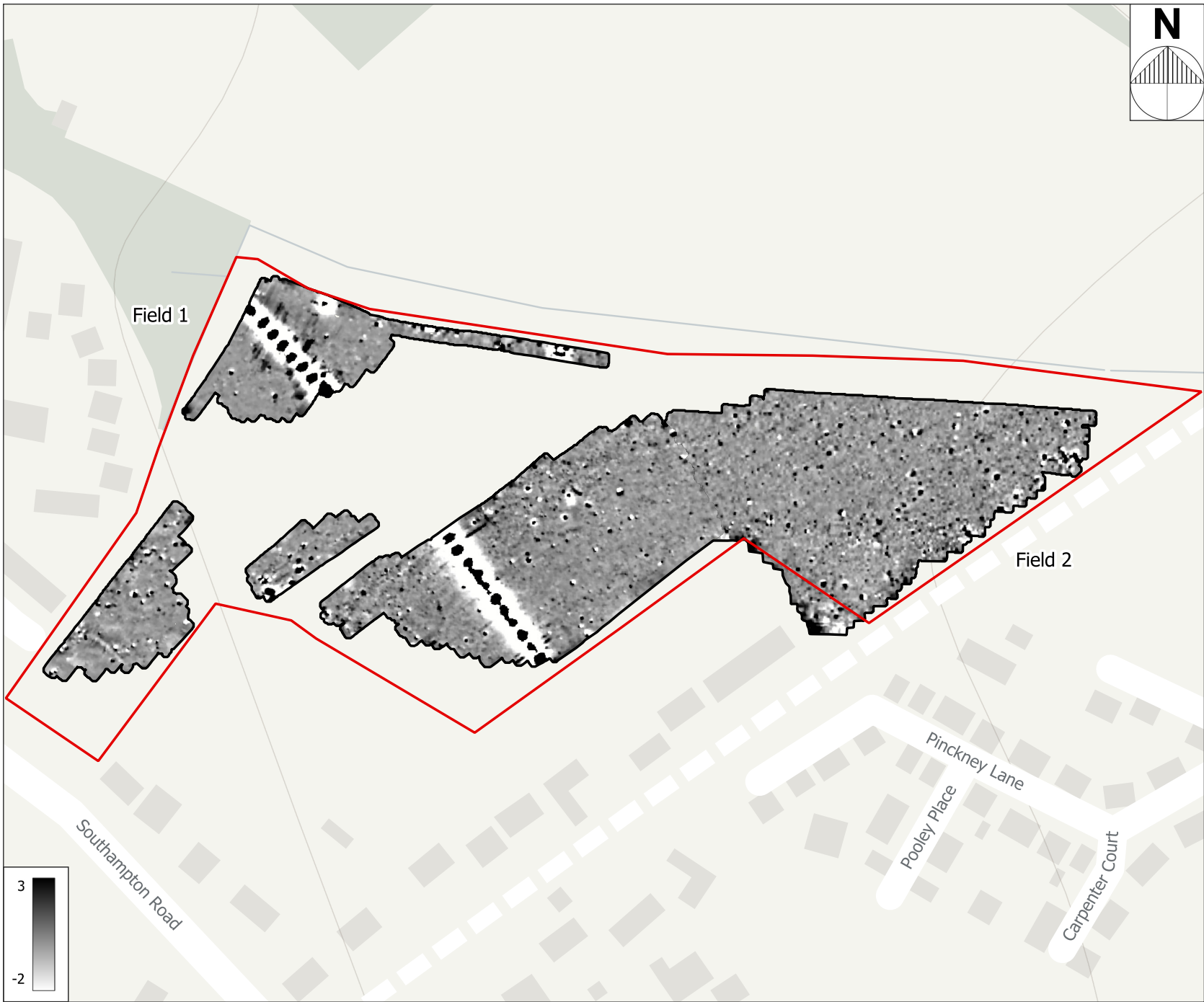


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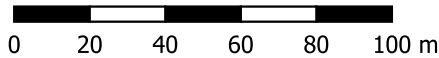
Figure 1
Site Location

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Site centred on:		SU 18995 27282	



Key

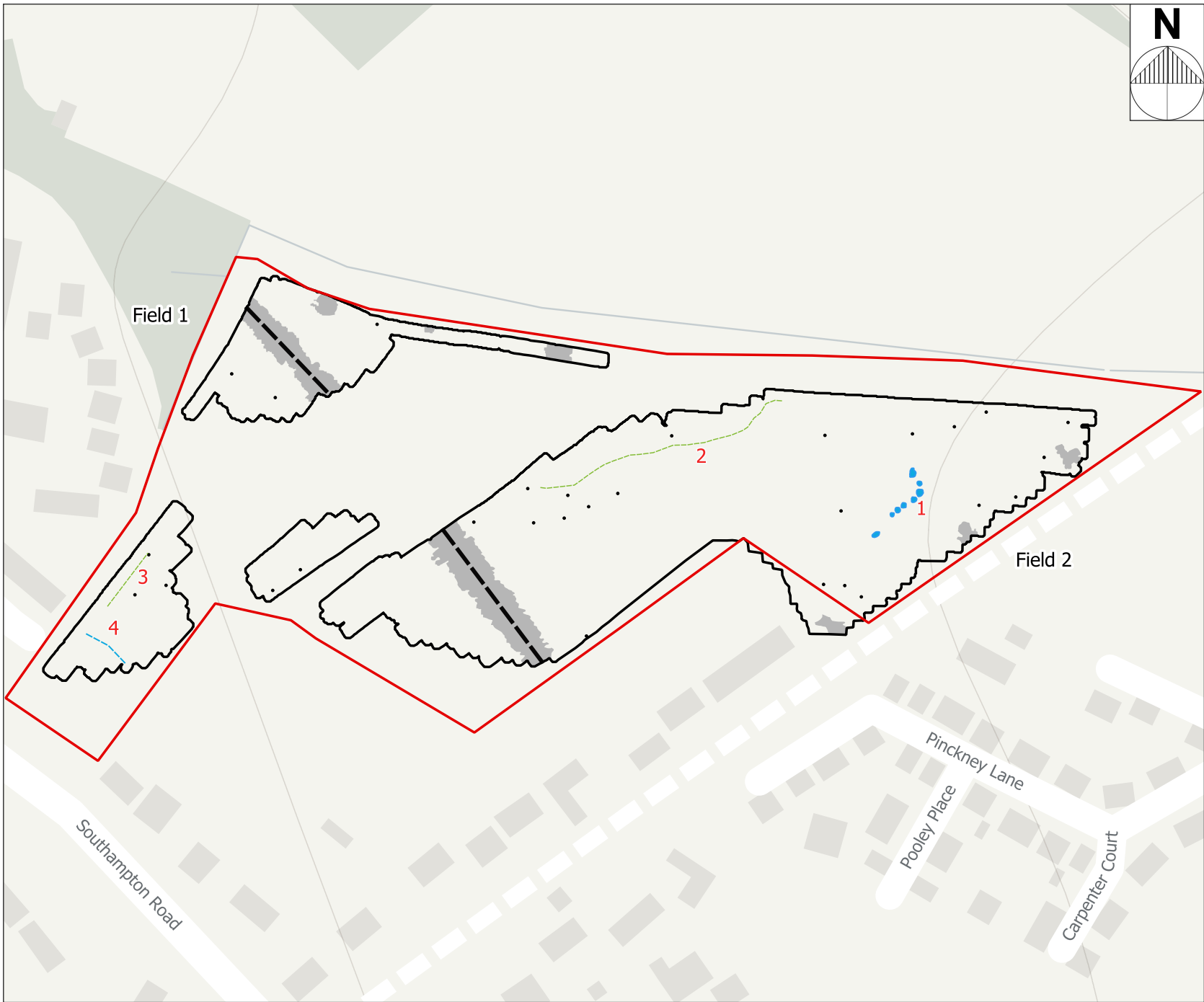
-  Site Boundary
-  Survey Extent



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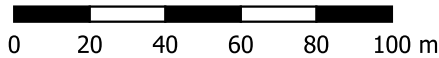
Figure 2
Greyscale Plot - Fields 1 and 2

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Site centred on:		SU 18995 27282	



Key

- Site Boundary
- Survey Extent
- Possible Archaeology
- Uncertain Trend
- Agricultural Trend
- Service
- Ferrous spike
- Ferrous Disturbance



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Figure 3
Interpretation Plot - Fields 1 and 2

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Site centred on:		SU 18995 27282	

Appendix A: Technical Information

Gradiometer Survey

Magnetic surveys measure distortions of variable strength in the earth's magnetic field caused by magnetic fields associated with buried features (Gaffney and Gater 2003, 36) that have either remnant or induced magnetic properties (Aspinal *et al.* 2008, 21–26). Human activity and inhabitation often alter the magnetic properties of materials (Aspinal *et al.* 2008, 21) resulting in the ability for numerous archaeological features to be detected through magnetic surveys.

Intensive burning or heating can also result in materials attaining a thermoremanent magnetisation; examples of which include kilns, ovens, hearths, and brick structures (Aspinal *et al.* 2008, 27; Gaffney and Gater, 2003, 37). However, there is also no way to always confidently assert from the results of Gradiometer surveys alone, whether burned material is in situ or has been redeposited within, for example, a refuse pit.

When topsoil-rich with iron oxides fills a man-made depression in the subsoil, it creates an infilled feature, such as a pit or ditch, with a higher magnetic susceptibility compared to the surrounding soil (Aspinal *et al.* 2008, 37–41; Gaffney and Gater 2003, 22–6). Magnetic surveys can also detect features with a lower magnetically susceptibility than the surrounding soil, an example of which is a stone wall.

Limitations

Poor results can be due to several factors including, but not limited to, short lived archaeological occupation and land use, or sites with minimal cut or built features. Results can also be limited in areas where the natural geology is of a similar composition to the fills of cut archaeological features such as ditches, or where soils are naturally deficient in iron compounds. Poor results can also be caused by areas with soils overlying naturally magnetically enhanced geological deposits, which can produce strong or variable responses limiting the detection of earlier archaeological features.

Overlying layers, such as demolition rubble or layers of made ground such as during landscaping works, can also limit the detection of earlier archaeological features. The presence of above ground structures within, or in the near vicinity of, the survey area as well as underground services containing ferrous material such as pipelines or electricity cables can distort survey results, further limiting the detection of earlier archaeological features.

Particularly uneven or locally variable elevation in topography can increase the data processing required, and/or distort results beyond the capabilities of processing. It is also possible in areas containing dramatic topographical changes that natural weathering, such as hill wash, often in

combination with intensive modern ploughing or other natural geological deposits, will reduce the topsoil on slopes and towards the peaks of hills and possibly destroy or truncate potential archaeological features as a result. Conversely features at the bottom of slopes may be covered by a greater layer of topsoil or other deposits, and so if buried features are present, they appear faint or are entirely limited in their detection.

Over-processing of data can also obscure, remove or artificially enhance or create anomalies, especially if there are on the same orientation as the direction of data collection. Consequently, where possible, attempts are made to ensure data is not collected on the same orientation as known potential features and that data quality is sufficient to minimise the required data processing.

Instrumentation

Bartington Grad601-2

The Bartington 601-2 is a single axis, vertical component fluxgate gradiometer comprising a data logger battery cassette and two sensors. The sensors are mounted on a rigid carrying frame; each sensor contains two fluxgate magnetometers with 1 m vertical separation.

The difference in the magnetic field between the two fluxgates in each sensor is measured in nano Tesla (nT). The gradiometer data is recorded with a range of ± 100 nT. It should be noted that the actual resolution is limited because of potential internal instrumental noise. The gradiometers are calibrated at the start of every day and recalibrated whenever necessary.

This system records four lines of data on each traverse, with traverses walked in a zig-zag pattern until all the survey area is covered.

Appendix B: Data Visualisation and Further Information

Visualisation

The survey data collected was used to produce a series of images to demonstrate the results of surveys. These are outlined below:

- Greyscale plot – This method visualises the survey data as a shaded drawing, with highest readings showing as black, running through different shades to lowest showing as white. Plotting parameters can be adjusted to aid interpretation of geophysical survey data.
- XY Trace plot – This is an alternative method of data visualisation, plotting the magnitude of responses on a scaled XY trace. The stronger the response, the sharper the rise in the trace. This type of plot can be used to differentiate the origin of an anomaly and is best used in conjunction with an alternative method of interpretation.
- Interpretation plot – Through detailed analysis, anomalies have been interpreted and possible features identified. Interpretation drawings are used to show potential features and to reinforce and clarify the written interpretation of the data. Anomalies have been characterised using the terminology detailed in the following section and have been assigned colour coding, which is outlined in keys on figures associated with this report.

Magnetic Anomalies

Different anomalies can represent different features created by human occupation, agricultural or modern activity, or natural pedological and/or geological changes in the substrata.

Anomalies interpreted as 'stronger' are considered more likely to be of the interpreted characterisation; whereas a 'weaker' categorisation represents a more tentative interpretation applied to those anomalies with lesser increases in magnetic response or if the anomaly has incomplete patterning or irregular form. The strength and size of anomalies can vary depending on the magnetic properties of the feature, the magnetic susceptibility of the soil, the depth at which the feature is buried, and the state of preservation.

Terminology

- **Anomaly** - Any outstanding high or low magnetic response forming a particular shape or covering a specific area within the survey results.
- **Feature** - A man-made or naturally created object, material or deposit that has been detected through the site investigation works and has sufficient characteristics or supporting evidence for positive identification.
- **Magnetic Susceptibility** - The ability of a buried feature to be magnetically induced when a magnetic field is applied.
- **Magnetic Response** - The strength of the changes in magnetic values caused by a buried feature with either a greater or lesser ability to be magnetised compared with the soil around it. Anomalies are considered to either have strong/weak or positive/negative response. The strength of magnetic response (along with patterning) can be essential in determining the nature of a buried feature, but it should be noted that the size or strength of the magnetic response does not always correlate with the size of the buried feature.
- **Morphology** - The shape or form of an individual anomaly.
- **Thermoremanence** - The affect caused when a material has been magnetically altered through a process of heating. Thermoremanent magnetisation occurs when an object or material is heated passed the Curie Point and acquires a permanent magnetisation that is associated with the magnetic field that they cooled within (Gaffney and Gater 2003, 37).

Characterisation of Anomalies & Interpretation Categories

Archaeological or Historical Anomalies

- **Archaeology** – Linear, rectilinear, or curvilinear anomalies with a positive and/or negative magnetic response, composed of a patterning or shape that is suggestive of a buried archaeological feature. These are often indicative of structural remains or infilled cut features such as ditches. The strength of the anomaly signal can be suggestive of the properties of the feature. Negative linear anomalies represent upstanding or infilled features that are less magnetically susceptible than background readings, for example structures such as a ditch-bank, or a cut ditch containing a fill composed of a non-igneous stone material. Bipolar linear anomalies considered to be of an archaeological nature are indicative of material with a high magnetic susceptibility, such as a brick wall. Isolated anomalies or anomalies with a more amorphous form possibly represent infilled features or thermomagnetic features such as areas of heating/burning of an archaeological origin. Unless associated with conclusively identified archaeological remains, such as linear anomalies, absolute identification of positive responses can be problematic as it is often not possible to decipher if they are of an archaeological, modern, or agricultural origin. Consequently, isolated positive responses such as those indicating pit-features, are not always shown within the Interpretation plot(s) unless composed of a broad form or belonging to a series of isolated positive responses. Bipolar responses considered likely to be of an archaeological

origin are also interpreted as isolated anomaly (archaeology). These are considered to relate to material with a very strong magnetic susceptibility or thermoremanent magnetisation.

- Possible archaeology – This categorisation is applied where anomalies are weaker or more diffuse in response, resulting in a less certain origin. It is possible that these belong to archaeological features but given their weaker responses or incomplete patterning it is equally plausible that they relate to other sources, such as agricultural features or natural soil formations or geological variations.
- Former Boundary - Linear anomalies, sub/irregular-rectilinear anomalies either with positive or negative magnetic responses, that correspond with the location of former field boundaries, ponds or buildings recorded on historic maps, Aerial photos and/or LiDAR coverage of the site.
- Ridge and Furrow - Broadly spaced linear anomalies or trends that are likely to be indicative of earlier forms of agricultural practice, such as ridge and furrow. These often correspond with the location of earthworks visible on the ground during the survey, or can be identified on aerial or LiDAR survey imagery.

Strongly Magnetic / Bipolar / Dipolar

- Modern Service – Highly magnetic, typically dipolar linear anomalies with an stronger area of variably decreasing ferrous response depending on the vicinity of the survey instrumentation to the buried or extant feature.
- Increased magnetic response – Isolated bipolar responses of a typically modern nature that are likely to relate to buried ferrous material, building debris, or objects, such as magnetically enhanced agricultural debris. If a trend is noted in the alignment or spacing of isolated bipolar responses, it is possible that they are indicative of ferrous fittings or connectors used on buried non-magnetic buried utilities, although occasionally an archaeological origin cannot be ruled out. Also, areas of increased magnetic response denote areas of disturbance containing a high concentration of dipolar or bipolar responses. These are generally considered to be caused by modern debris in the topsoil, including agricultural 'green waste'. It is also possible that the disturbance is in part also caused by isolated archaeological material or geological or pedological changes in the substrata.
- Ferrous disturbance - Areas of magnetic disturbance, often along the edges of survey areas, or surrounding Modern Services caused by highly ferrous material such as standing metal structures like fencing and buildings. Modern Agricultural Anomalies.

Modern Agricultural

- Agricultural Trend - Ploughing trend tends to be regularly spaced linear anomalies, often with a narrower spacing, that conform with ploughing regime at the time of survey, or a recent regime recorded on aerial photos of the site. The response and distribution of land drains varies depending on the composition of the land drain and associated ditch or channel. Consequently, land drains can be composed of weak / strong positive / negative magnetic responses and are identified as a product of either their variance in magnetic values or positioning compared with

regularly spaced linear anomalies considered to relate to modern ploughing. Land drains can be located within former agricultural regimes, such as ridge and furrow.

- Land drain – Weakly positive, and/or dipolar, regularly broadly spaced linear trends in a typically parallel or 'herringbone' formation. These are generally modern in origin, although earlier post-medieval ceramic drains are often plausible but cannot be determined.
- Uncertain Trend – Generally positive, although sometimes negative, isolated and weak linear or curvilinear trends. This category is applied where multiple origins can be asserted to a barely detected anomaly.