

Geophysical Survey Report

West Angle Bay, Pembrokeshire

for

Cambria Archaeology

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L	LIST OF FIGURES					
1	SUN	SUMMARY OF RESULTS				
2	INT	INTRODUCTION3				
	2.1	Background synopsis	3			
	2.2 Site location					
	2.3	2.3 Description of site				
	2.4 Geology and soils					
	2.5 Site history and archaeological potential					
	2.6 Survey objectives					
	2.7 Survey methods					
3	ME	METHODOLOGY				
	3.1	Date of fieldwork	4			
3.2 Grid locations		4				
	3.3 Survey equipment		4			
	3.4 Sampling interval, depth of scan, resolution and data capture		5			
3.4.1 3.4.2		1 Sampling interval	5			
		Depth of scan and resolution	5			
3.4.3		Data capture5				
3.5.2 3.5.2		Processing, presentation of results and interpretation	5			
		1 Processing	5			
		Presentation of results and interpretation				
4	RES	SULTS	6			
	4.1	Area 1	6			
	4.2	Area 2	7			
5 CONCLUSION			7			
	APPE	NDIX A – Basic principles of magnetic survey	9			
	APPENDIX B – Glossary of magnetic anomalies					

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	1:25 000	General location plan
Figure 2	1:2000	Site plan showing location of grids and referencing
Figure 3	1:1000	Plot of raw magnetometer data- Area 1
Figure 4	1:1000	Trace plot showing positive values- Area 1
Figure 5	1:1000	Trace plot showing negative values- Area 1
Figure 6	1:1000	Plot of processed magnetometer data- Area 1
Figure 7	1:1000	Abstraction and interpretation- Area 1
Figure 8	1:1000	Plot of raw magnetometer data- Area 2
Figure 9	1:1000	Trace plot showing positive values- Area 2
Figure 10	1:1000	Trace plot showing negative values- Area 2
Figure 11	1:1000	Plot of processed magnetometer data- Area 2
Figure 12	1:1000	Abstraction and interpretation- Area 2
Figure 13	1:1500	Plot of processed magnetometer data- 2006 and 2008 survey
Figure 14	1:1500	Abstraction and interpretation- 2006 and 2008 survey

1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The geophysical survey undertaken over 4.7ha of land at West Angle Bay, Pembrokeshire has located a number of anomalies of possible archaeological origin. Positive linear and area anomalies indicate the presence of cut features such as ditches and form a curvilinear enclosure in the western limits of Area 1. Negative anomalies suggest the presence of former banks or earthworks. Possible pits are evident in both survey areas in the form of discrete positive anomalies.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 <u>Background synopsis</u>

Stratascan were commissioned to undertake a geophysical survey of an area of archaeological interest. This survey forms part of an archaeological investigation being undertaken by Cambria Archaeology.

2.2 Site location

The site is located near North Studdock, West Angle Bay, Pembrokeshire at OS ref. SM 851 029.

2.3 Description of site

The site consists of two survey areas both of which slope slightly to the north. The total combined area is 4.7ha of agricultural land south east of West Angle Bay.

2.4 Geology and soils

The underlying geology is Tournaisian and Visean (Carboniferous Limestone Series) (British Geological Survey South Sheet, Fourth Edition Solid, 2001). The overlying soils are known as East Keswick 3 soils which are typical brown earths. These consist of drift over Palaeozoic limestone (Soil Survey of England and Wales, Sheet 2 Wales).

2.5 <u>Site history and archaeological potential</u>

No specific details were available to Stratascan. However a survey undertaken in June 2006 by Stratascan in an adjacent field identified a number of anomalies relating to the ecclesiastical site known to be in that area. The presence of this site and the results of the previous survey would suggest that there is potential for the location of anomalies of an archaeological origin within the gradiometer data.

2.6 Survey objectives

The objective of the survey was to locate any features of possible archaeological significance to enhance the archaeological knowledge and assist in the investigation of the area.

2.7 Survey methods

Detailed magnetic survey (gradiometry) was used as an efficient and effective method of locating archaeological anomalies. More information regarding this technique is included in the Methodology section below.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Date of fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out over four days from 7th April 2008. Weather conditions during the survey were dry and overcast.

3.2 Grid locations

The location of the survey grids has been plotted in Figure 2 together with the referencing information. Grids were set out using a Leica 705auto Total Station and referenced to suitable topographic features around the perimeter of the site.

3.3 Survey equipment

Although the changes in the magnetic field resulting from differing features in the soil are usually weak, changes as small as 0.2 nanoTesla (nT) in an overall field strength of 48,000nT, can be accurately detected using an appropriate instrument.

The mapping of the anomaly in a systematic manner will allow an estimate of the type of material present beneath the surface. Strong magnetic anomalies will be generated by buried iron-based objects or by kilns or hearths. More subtle anomalies such as pits and ditches can be seen if they contain more humic material which is normally rich in magnetic iron oxides when compared with the subsoil.

To illustrate this point, the cutting and subsequent silting or backfilling of a ditch may result in a larger volume of weakly magnetic material being accumulated in the trench compared to the undisturbed subsoil. A weak magnetic anomaly should therefore appear in plan along the line of the ditch.

The magnetic survey was carried out using a dual sensor Grad601-2 Magnetic Gradiometer manufactured by Bartington Instruments Ltd. The instrument consists of two fluxgates very accurately aligned to nullify the effects of the Earth's magnetic field. Readings relate to the difference in localised magnetic anomalies compared with the general magnetic background. The Grad601-2 consists of two high stability fluxgate gradiometers suspended on a single frame. Each gradiometer has a 1m separation between the sensing elements so enhancing the response to weak anomalies.

3.4 Sampling interval, depth of scan, resolution and data capture

3.4.1 Sampling interval

Readings were taken at 0.25m centres along traverses 1m apart. This equates to 3600 sampling points in a full 30m x 30m grid.

3.4.2 Depth of scan and resolution

The Grad 601 has a typical depth of penetration of 0.5m to 1.0m. This would be increased if strongly magnetic objects have been buried in the site. The collection of data at 0.5m centres provides an optimum methodology for the task balancing cost and time with resolution.

3.4.3 Data capture

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 job, data is transferred to the office for processing and presentation.

3.5 Processing, presentation of results and interpretation

3.5.1 Processing

Processing is performed using specialist software known as *Geoplot 3*. This can emphasise various aspects contained within the data but which are often not easily seen in the raw data. Basic processing of the magnetic data involves 'flattening' the background levels with respect to adjacent traverses and adjacent grids. 'Despiking' is also performed to remove the anomalies resulting from small iron objects often found on agricultural land. Once the basic processing has flattened the background it is then possible to carry out further processing which may include low pass filtering to reduce 'noise' in the data and hence emphasise the archaeological or man-made anomalies.

The following schedule shows the basic processing carried out on all processed gradiometer data used in this report:

1. *Despike* (useful for display and allows further processing functions to be carried out more effectively by removing extreme data values)

Geoplot parameters:
X radius = 1, y radius = 1, threshold = 3 std. dev.
Spike replacement = mean

2. Zero mean grid (sets the background mean of each grid to zero and is useful for removing grid edge discontinuities)

Geoplot parameters: Threshold = 0.25 std. dev.

3. Zero mean traverse (sets the background mean of each traverse within a grid to zero and is useful for removing striping effects)

Geoplot parameters: Least mean square fit = off

3.5.2 Presentation of results and interpretation

The presentation of the data for each site involves a print-out of the raw data both as greyscale (Figures 3 and 8) and trace plots (Figures 4, 5 and 9 and 10), together with a greyscale plot of the processed data (Figures 6 and 11). Magnetic anomalies have been identified and plotted onto the 'Abstraction and Interpretation of Anomalies' drawing for the site (Figures 7 and 12).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Area 1

The data collected within Area 1 is dominated by the presence of magnetic disturbance. In the central region of the survey area a linear arrangement of disturbance aligned approximately north east to south west can be noted. This feature is related to a backfilled trench located in this position. A pipe or cable with associated disturbance can be noted immediately to the east of this trench feature.

A large bipolar area anomaly had been identified in the northern limits of Area 1. This anomaly measures approximately 70m across and is likely to extend beyond the limit of this survey area. The anomaly consists of a high magnitude positive response with an associated negative response which increases in magnitude towards the positive centre.

This anomaly is characteristic of the type of response expected from an event such as a meteor strike. Further investigation is needed in order to gain a full understanding of this feature.

Despite the concentrations of magnetic disturbance a number of anomalies of possible archaeological origin are evident within Area 1. Positive area anomalies indicating the presence of cut features such as pits and ditches are present within the survey area. A set of parallel ditches can be seen in the western limits of the site along with a curvilinear enclosure. Other positive anomalies of a possible archaeological origin are evident in the eastern limits of this survey area.

A number of discrete positive anomalies can be noted within Area 1. These anomalies have been interpreted as pits of a possible archaeological origin.

4.2 <u>Area 2</u>

Positive area anomalies spread across Area 2 indicate the presence of cut features of a possible archaeological origin. However, the large number of these features and the fact that they don't seem to form any discernable pattern may suggest that they are of a geological or pedological origin.

Discrete positive anomalies representing pits of a possible archaeological origin are also evident spread across the survey area.

A number of negative linear and area anomalies can be noted within Area 2. These anomalies may indicate the presence of former banks or earthworks.

A large spread of magnetic variation can be seen in the central region of this area. This disturbance may be related to a spread of metallic debris or a change in pedology.

5 CONCLUSION

The gradiometer survey undertaken over 4.7ha of agricultural land at West Angle Bay, Pembrokeshire has located a number of anomalies of a possible archaeological origin.

The parallel ditches identified in the western limits of Area 1 correlate well with the data collected in June 2006. The left hand most of these ditches seems to form the eastern limit of the rectilinear enclosure identified in that survey. It is interesting to note that the enclosure encompasses part of a watercourse that flows from a pond to the sea in the north suggesting that the watercourse post dates the enclosure.

The curvilinear enclosure identified in the more recent survey is of a similar shape and has similar dimensions to that located within the rectilinear enclosure. Further investigation would be necessary in order to ascertain as to whether or not these two features are contemporary with each other.

6 REFERENCES

British Geological Survey, 2001. *Geological Survey Ten Mile Map, South Sheet, Fourth Edition (Solid)*. British Geological Society.

Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983. Soils of England and Wales, Sheet 2 Wales

APPENDIX A – Basic principles of magnetic survey

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.

Weakly magnetic iron minerals are always present within the soil and areas of enhancement relate to increases in *magnetic susceptibility* and permanently magnetised *thermoremnant* 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.

Thermoremnance 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. Thermoremnant archaeological features can include hearths and kilns and material such as brick and tile may be magnetised through the same process.

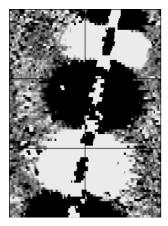
Silting and deliberate infilling of ditches and pits with magnetically enhanced soil creates a relative contrast against the much lower levels of magnetism within the subsoil into which the feature is cut. Systematic mapping of magnetic anomalies will produce linear and discrete areas of enhancement 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 either 0.5 or 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.

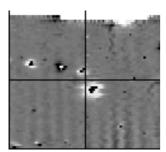
APPENDIX B – Glossary of magnetic anomalies

Bipolar



A bipolar anomaly is one that is composed of both a positive response and a negative response. It can be made up of any number of positive responses and negative responses. For example a pipeline consisting of alternating positive and negative anomalies is said to be bipolar. See also dipolar which has only one area of each polarity. The interpretation of the anomaly will depend on the magnitude of the magnetic field strength. A weak response may be caused by a clay field drain while a strong response will probably be caused by a metallic service.

Dipolar

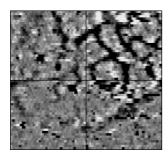


This consists of a single positive anomaly with an associated negative response. There should be no separation between the two polarities of response. These responses will be created by a single feature. The interpretation of the anomaly will depend on the magnitude of the magnetic measurements. A very strong anomaly is likely to be caused by a ferrous object.

Positive anomaly with associated negative response

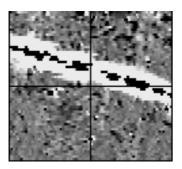
See bipolar and dipolar.

Positive linear



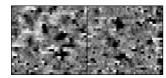
A linear response which is entirely positive in polarity. These are usually related to infilled cut features where the fill material is magnetically enhanced compared to the surrounding matrix. They can be caused by ditches of an archaeological origin, but also former field boundaries, ploughing activity and some may even have a natural origin.

Positive linear anomaly with associated negative response



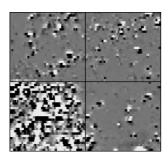
A positive linear anomaly which has a negative anomaly located adjacently. This will be caused by a single feature. In the example shown this is likely to be a single length of wire/cable probably relating to a modern service. Magnetically weaker responses may relate to earthwork style features and field boundaries.

Positive point/area



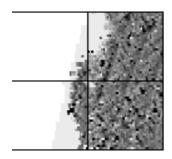
These are generally spatially small responses, perhaps covering just 3 or 4 reading nodes. They are entirely positive in polarity. Similar to positive linear anomalies they are generally caused by infilled cut features. These include pits of an archaeological origin, possible tree bowls or other naturally occurring depressions in the ground.

Magnetic debris



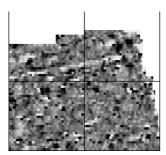
Magnetic debris consists of numerous dipolar responses spread over an area. If the amplitude of response is low (+/-3nT) then the origin is likely to represent general ground disturbance with no clear cause, it may be related to something as simple as an area of dug or mixed earth. A stronger anomaly (+/-250nT) is more indicative of a spread of ferrous debris. Moderately strong anomalies may be the result of a spread of thermoremnant material such as bricks or ash.

Magnetic disturbance



Magnetic disturbance is high amplitude and can be composed of either a bipolar anomaly, or a single polarity response. It is essentially associated with magnetic interference from modern ferrous structures such as fencing, vehicles or buildings, and as a result is commonly found around the perimeter of a site near to boundary fences.

Negative linear

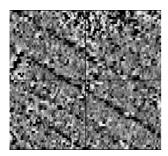


A linear response which is entirely negative in polarity. These are generally caused by earthen banks where material with a lower magnetic magnitude relative the background top soil is built up. See also ploughing activity.

Negative point/area

Opposite to positive point anomalies these responses may be caused by raised areas or earthen banks. These could be of an archaeological origin or may have a natural origin.

Ploughing activity



Ploughing activity can often be visualised by a series of parallel linear anomalies. These can be of either positive polarity or negative polarity depending on site specifics. It can be difficult to distinguish between ancient ploughing and more modern ploughing, clues such as the separation of each linear, straightness, strength of response and cross cutting relationships can be used to aid this, although none of these can be guaranteed to differentiate between different phases of activity.

Polarity

Term used to describe the measurement of the magnetic response. An anomaly can have a positive polarity (values above 0nT) and/or a negative polarity (values below 0nT).

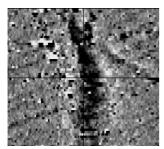
Strength of response

The amplitude of a magnetic response is an important factor in assigning an interpretation to a particular anomaly. For example a positive anomaly covering a 10m^2 area may have values up to around 3000nT, in which case it is likely to be caused by modern magnetic interference. However, the same size and shaped anomaly but with values up to only 4nT may have a natural origin. Trace plots are used to show the amplitude of response.

Thermoremnant response

A feature which has been subject to heat may result in it acquiring a magnetic field. This can be anything up to approximately +/-100 nT in value. These features include clay fired drains, brick, bonfires, kilns, hearths and even pottery. If the heat application has occurred insitu (e.g. a kiln) then the response is likely to be bipolar compared to if the heated objects have been disturbed and moved relative to each other, in which case they are more likely to take an irregular form and may display a debris style response (e.g. ash).

Weak background variations

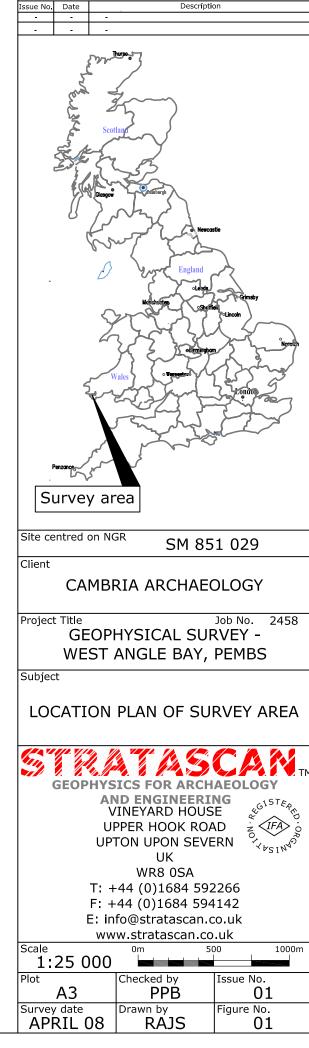


Weakly magnetic wide scale variations within the data can sometimes be seen within sites. These usually have no specific structure but can often appear curvy and sinuous in form. They are likely to be the result of natural features, such as soil creep, dried up (or seasonal) streams. They can also be caused by changes in the underlying geology or soil type which may contain unpredictable distributions of magnetic minerals, and are usually apparent in several locations across a site.

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OS 100km square = SM





Amendments

