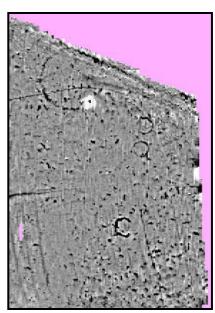
# Land to the South of the Salt Way, Banbury, Oxfordshire. Report on a Geophysical Survey



Field 2: Greyscale Shade Plot

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the results of a geophysical survey undertaken on land to the south of the Salt Way in Banbury, Oxfordshire as part of a heritage assessment. A desk-based assessment compiled in 2013 concluded that there is moderate to high potential for archaeological remains to be encountered on the land.

A geophysical survey was carried out between 27<sup>th</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 using a Bartington 601 dual sensor fluxgate gradiometer. Three fields comprising a total of approximately 18 hectares were included in the geophysical survey.

In field 1, an area of high archaeological potential has been identified with clear evidence of settlement activity. The archaeology has been interpreted as a late Iron Age/ Romano-British settlement, possibly a farm complex which could be of regional importance. Also within field 1, further possible archaeological remains in the form of field boundary ditches, possible pits and extensive evidence of more than one phase of agricultural activity have been identified.

In field 2, the possible remains of four circular features have been identified. The largest feature is approximately 40m in diameter and could date from the Neolithic or Bronze Age. The three smaller features, with diameters of approximately 15m, may indicate the surviving remains of Iron Age round houses. Further evidence of field boundary ditches and possible pits were also recorded within the field.

In field 3, a well-defined, three-sided anomaly corresponding to a crop mark was recorded in the western of the field, The anomaly has been interpreted as representing an archaeological feature of unknown origin although a more modern cause cannot be discounted. In the remainder of field 3, a number of minor anomalies were recorded without any particular form or context and are therefore thought unlikely to be significant. A narrow strip in the south of field 3, forming an access easement to Bodicote Cricket Club, was surveyed but was mainly paved and landscaped and has not revealed any evidence of archaeological remains.

## 1 Introduction

# 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Gladman Developments Ltd. appointed Archaeological Research Services Ltd (ARS Ltd.) to undertake a geophysical survey as part of a heritage assessment of land to the south of the Salt Way in Banbury, Oxfordshire.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of the survey was to determine the potential for sub-surface archaeological remains to survive at the site, to assist in the development of appropriate mitigation and to provide sufficient information to enable the Local Planning Authority to make an informed decision on the archaeological implications of any proposed development.
- 1.1.3 The objective was to carry out a non-intrusive survey to identify whether any anomalies of a possible archaeological origin could be identified within the survey area which may be affected by any proposed development and which, consequently, may require further evaluation and/or specific mitigation.
- 1.1.4 This report presents the results of the geophysical survey and concludes this aspect of the heritage assessment.

## 1.2 Location, Topography and Geology

- 1.2.1 The site is situated adjacent to the southern edge of Banbury and the north-western edge of Bodicote, Oxfordshire (centred on NGR: SP 456 383) (figure 7). The site covers an area of approximately 18 hectares, bounded on the north by the Salt Way (an un-metalled track), on the west by an arable plot, on the south by Wykham Lane, on the south-east by Bodicote Cricket Club and on the east by White Post Road. The site is presently used as arable land (figures 1 to 6), with a plot of allotments in the south-west corner and a plot of managed open grassland in the east of the site, part of which is fenced off to provide an access easement to Bodicote Cricket Club in the south. A small plot of scrubland is located on the north boundary of the site (Clarke 2013).
- 1.2.2 The solid geology of the east and west parts of the development area consists of ferruginous limestone and ironstone of the Marlstone Rock Formation. The solid geology of the south and centre parts of the development area consists of siltstone and mudstone of the Dyrham Formation (British Geological Survey, 2013).



Figure 1. View north across field 1 with the corner of the allotments in left centre.



Figure 2. View north-east along field 1, with the cricket club in the left centre.

## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

## 2.1 Desk-Based Assessment

2.1.1 The site has been the subject of an archaeological desk-based assessment (Clarke 2013). The assessment has identified that there is a moderate to high potential for previously unknown archaeological remains to be present within the site.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Geophysical Survey

- 3.1.1 Magnetometry is a non-intrusive scientific prospecting technique that is the preferred geophysical technique used to determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological features when site and geological conditions are favourable. It is an efficient and effective method of locating anomalies corresponding with archaeological features. The instrument chosen for this survey was a Bartington Grad 601 dual sensor fluxgate gradiometer which can detect weak changes in the Earth's magnetic field caused by buried features.
- 3.1.2 All fieldwork and reporting was undertaken following English Heritage and Institute for Archaeologists standards and guidance (Gaffney *et al.* 2008; IfA 2011).
- 3.1.3 The 30m by 30m survey grids were located to cover the entire site (figure 9). In total 212 survey grids (including partial grids) were set out on site using a hand-held GPS unit. Each grid was then surveyed at 1m traverse intervals with the sampling at 0.250m (4 readings per metre) intervals. The survey was carried out in 'zigzag' mode with each alternate traverse walked in opposite directions. The range of the instrument was set at 100nT (0.01nT resolution).
- 3.1.4 The survey was carried out by Richard Durkin of ARS Ltd. between 27<sup>th</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March. The weather was predominantly mild and dry with the exception of Friday 28<sup>th</sup> February when it rained all day.
- 3.1.5 The majority of the survey site was ideal for geophysical survey, the ground being firm and dry and the fields under short grass. There were a small number of obstructions, mainly pylons but also an abandoned item of farm machinery in field 1 (figure 3). The boundaries in fields 1 and 2 were mainly hedgerows without metal fencing and therefore the survey could extend almost up to the boundaries without any risk of metallic contamination. In field 3, the access easement to Bodicote Cricket Club was enclosed with a substantial metal fence (figure 5) and approximately 5m clearance was necessary on both sides to avoid metallic contamination of the data. The access easement itself was within the application boundary and was surveyed but was narrow with a block-paved road winding through the centre. Any undisturbed area suitable for survey within this narrow strip was negligible.



Figure 3. Discarded item of farm equipment in the centre of field 1.

- 3.1.6 Prior to commencing the survey the gradiometer was balanced and calibrated to the local conditions and this was repeated regularly throughout each day. The magnetic background on all areas of the site was found to be highly variable and it was challenging to find an area with a low magnetic gradient suitable to adjust and balance the gradiometer. This may simply be because of the magnetic response from the underlying geology or soils and possibly be exaggerated by metallic contamination from ferrous litter or items added during the process of add manure to the land.
- 3.1.7 At the end of each day, the data was downloaded into a computer, checked and archived on the ARS Ltd server. The data was downloaded using Bartington Instruments' *Grad 601 Communication Application*.



Figure 4. View to the west along the access road to Bodicote Cricket Club.



Figure 5. View to the east along the metal fence in field 3



Figure 6. View to the north in field 2.

#### 4 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The data was processed using Geoplot software. To improve graphical presentation various Geoplot processing functions were utilised. The data was clipped (clipping parameters selected on the mean and standard deviation data values), random iron spikes were removed by setting the "despike" function to 1.5- 3.0 and the striping that can often appear in gradiometer data was removed by utilising the zero mean traverse function. Other processing tools such as "search and replace" were utilised where appropriate.
- 4.1.2 Occasionally, processing the data to compensate for directional sensitivity or to remove iron spikes caused by miscellaneous ferrous objects can also inadvertently disguise more subtle anomalies that may be of archaeological origin, particularly long linear features in the direction of the traverses. The data has therefore been interrogated in the various stages of processing, in both absolute and standard deviation units and in trace and shade plot formats.
- 4.1.3 The survey revealed a number of magnetic anomalies and these included positive and negative linear, positive and dipolar discrete classification. A small number of anomlies indicate modern activity and contamination from ferrous materials in the boundary were also recorded. Numerous small discrete anomalies were recorded across the site with no discernable pattern to the distribution. These anomalies have been interpreted as natural variations in the composition of the soils and geology, possibly due in some part to ironstone boulders or bedrock fragments within the topsoil or natural soil-filled depressions and have not been discussed separately. Some more significant concentrations of discrete anomalies may be indicative of settlement activity and are included in the discussion.

4.1.4 Images of the greyscale shade plots can be seen in figures 10, 12 and 15 and trace plots in figures 13, 16 and 19. Classification of the anomalies can be seen in figures 11, 17 and 20 and an archaeological interpretation of Area A in figure 14.

## 4.2 Field 1 – Area A

- 4.2.1 An area of approximately 2.7 hectares of archaeological interest has been identified in the south-west corner of field 1, hereafter referred to as Area A (figure 8). The geophysical survey results have revealed that significant evidence of activity, in the form of enclosures, ditches and possible pits may survive within Area A. Collectively these features have been interpreted as part of a late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement, potentially of regional importance.
- 4.2.2 The anomalies recorded within Area A are predominantly positive or dipolar (a negative response associated with the positive anomaly) in polarity and either linear or discrete. The positive linear anomalies all have a moderately strong magnitude in the range 10-50nT (nanotesla) and have been interpreted as cut ditches that have most likely silted up over time or possibly been deliberately backfilled. There is also evidence of a dipolar response in some of the linear anomalies and this could indicate that the features have been cut into the underlying rock and the less magnetic rock has been piled up within or alongside the ditches. The possibility of the rock being used as walling stone in some areas of the settlement cannot be ruled out.
- 4.2.3 The discrete anomalies are more difficult to interpret. Positive discrete anomalies have been recorded across all areas of the site but the discrete anomalies that specifically display dipolar polarity are mainly congregated within Area A and this suggests they are associated with the settlement activity, rather than being associated with the underlying geology. Dipolar polarity may be a result of disturbed ground, mixed or dug earth or possibly burning or heating. The anomalies are clustered and do appear to respect the position of the enclosures and a tentative interpretation is clusters of waste or storage pits cut into the rock. For example, rock-cut grain storage pits containing charred grain could certainly be associated with a settlement of this nature. An alternative interpretation is a spread of thermo-remnant material, such as ash, possibly indicating cooking or industrial activity.
- Within Area A the following features have been identified (refer to figure 14 for 4.2.4 identifying letters): boundary ditch (a), approximately 280m in length (within Area A) and up to 2.5m wide. The magnitude of the magnetic response varies indicating possibly varying width and depth or state of preservation. The ditch flanks the main settlement on the west and north sides. On the north side it appears that the ditch may continue eastwards across most of field 1 but becomes less visible in the geophysical survey results as it leaves Area A; boundary ditch (b) meets boundary ditch (a) approximately 20m from the western corner and extends northwards out of Area A for approximately 150m and presumably continues to meet anomaly 2 to form part of a further field system, although it is less well defined for a section as it disappears below the modern field boundary; a trapezoidal enclosure (c) abutting the field boundary ditch of approximately 40m x 30m with a possible entrance on the eastern side and evidence of a possible inner feature; a smaller square enclosure (d) of approximately 12m x 18m with a possible entrance on the eastern side; a larger square enclosure (e) of approximately 20m x 20m with a possible entrance on the eastern side and evidence of habitation within; an oval enclosure (f) of approximately 20m x 10m with a possible entrance on the eastern side and possibly

partially sub-divided on the west; a possible enclosure joining enclosure (c) and (e) and innumerable possible pits.

#### 4.3 Field 1 – Outside Area A

- 4.3.1 Anomaly 1 is positive in polarity and linear and extends across the centre of field 1 on an approximate north-west/south-east alignment. It has recorded clearly on the geophysical survey over a length of approximately 180 m although the magnitude of the response increases west to east but remains less than 10nT. This anomaly corresponds to the location of a field boundary on the 1882 map of Oxfordshire (Clarke 2013, appendix 3) and the archaeological interpretation is that the anomaly corresponds to the surviving buried remains, probably a silted up ditch, of the field boundary that was removed sometime between 1882 and 1900.
- 4.3.2 Anomaly 2 is positive in polarity and has been recorded in the geophysical survey results over a length of approximately 80m. The anomaly has a magnitude similar to boundary ditch (b) (4.2.4) and has been interpreted as relating to a ditch feature forming part of the same previously unrecorded field system
- 4.3.3 Two further linear anomalies were recorded towards the south-west of field 1 (3 and 4) and these share the alignment of the eastern ridge and furrow. The anomalies have been interpreted as cut features as they have a greater magnitude of response than the ridge and furrow and may be ditches forming part of the field system that enclosed the eastern ridge and furrow. Alternatively, they may actually represent the western extent of the agricultural activity and simply represent furrows which are deeper or in a better state of preservation. It appears that the feature responsible for anomaly 3 has been truncated by the east-west ridge and furrow, possibly giving an indication of phasing.
- 4.3.4 Anomaly 5 is bipolar and of high magnitude and represents a modern service. The anomaly was traced on site and found to terminate at a Severn Trent Water manhole.
- 4.3.5 A small group of weak negative anomalies (6) on the same alignment as the anomalies 3,4 and 7 have been interpreted as plough marks.
- 4.3.6 Within field 1 repeating parallel anomalies that have been interpreted as ridge and furrow cultivation were recorded on two distinct alignments. Across the northern end of the field and then extending down the eastern side and with further evidence in the south, the anomalies were recorded on a north-north-west/south-south-east alignment (7) and have an average spacing of 8m, although wider in places. To the west and south of this, the anomalies have been recorded on an approximate east-west alignment (8) and are more widely spaced at an average of 18m. These anomalies probably indicate two different phases of agricultural and it is interesting to note that the anomalies do not respect either the modern field boundaries, the field boundaries shown on the historic mapping (Clarke 2013, Appendix 3) or indeed the modern ploughing alignment that tends to respect the western field boundary.
- 4.3.7 In the north-east corner of the field positive linear anomaly 9 has been interpreted as a field boundary ditch and is probably associated with anomalies 20 and 21 in field 2 (see 4.4.5)

- 4.3.8 Anomalies 11, 12 and 13 are all positive and may represent either cut features or be associated with the agricultural activity. A more likely interpretation for anomaly 11 is that it is indicating the end of a boundary ditch associated with Area A but the relationship cannot be determined for certain due to the presence of the allotment gardens.
- 4.3.9 Positive discrete anomalies were recorded across the survey area (figure 11) but there is a higher concentration in the western half of the field to the north of Area A and also within Area A. These anomalies may be indicative of anthropogenic activity, possibly pits or small cut features but are equally likely to be natural in origin. The geology is ferruginous limestone and ironstone and ironstone boulders and naturally occurring soil filled depressions and sink holes would register a response in the geophysical survey results.
- 4.3.8 Weak positive and negative striations on a north-south alignment can be seen throughout the survey data and these have been interpreted as modern plough marks, possibly within the topsoil.

#### 4.4 Field 2

- 4.4.1 The geophysical survey results have revealed further evidence of potentially regionally important archaeology in field 2. Four clearly defined circular anomalies were recorded as well as further evidence of probable field boundaries with traces of agriculture. In the south-east corner of the field two further positive anomalies were recorded and, although not clearly defined, appear to represent further cut features which are possibly field boundary or enclosure ditches. Also in the south-east corner, there is a high concentration of short linear or discrete anomalies that may be indicative of anthropogenic activity.
- 4.4.2 Anomaly 16 is positive in polarity and circular and although apparently discontinuous it describes a substantial feature of approximately 40m in diameter. Although the anomaly is discontinuous, it is not clear if the feature it represents is incomplete containing deliberate gaps in the boundary ditch or is truncated by later activity. The anomaly coincides with the modern field boundary on the north side and therefore some masking of the geophysical response may have taken place at this location. The magnitude of the anomaly is highest in the south-west and north-east (10-15nT). A strong iron-spike was recorded on the exact line of the anomaly in the south-east. This may represent ferrous litter on the surface or within the topsoil and be purely coincidental although an association with the feature should not be ruled out.
- 4.4.3 To give anomaly 16 some possible context, two circular features of approximately 30m diameter have been identified in the field to the west of field 1 some 500m to the southwest. These features have been interpreted as Bronze Age barrows from aerial photographs (Clarke 2013, HER MOX12183). On this basis, a tentative interpretation for anomaly 16 may be that it also represents a Bronze Age enclosure ditch or barrow.
- 4.4.4 To the south-east of anomaly 16, three further circular anomalies were recorded (17, 18 and 19). The clearest response was recorded from anomaly 19, with a moderately high average magnitude of 10-20nT. The anomaly has a diameter of approximately 12m, appears to be penannular and faces east. Anomalies 17 and 18 are of similar diameter but of lower magnitude (less than 10nT). The anomalies also appear to be penannular but

this time face west. The geophysical response is not as conclusive as in anomaly 19 and the apparent discontinuities in the circumference may simply be due to a weak response or indicate the feature is truncated. Anomalies 17 to 19 have been interpreted as round house drip gullies or possibly annular/penannular ditches of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

- 4.4.5 In the west of field 2, two positive linear anomalies, 20 and 21 appear to continue beyond the modern, western boundary of field 2 and terminate at junctions with anomaly 9 in field 1. The anomalies terminate without respect to any other anomalies or extant features in the east. Anomaly 20 is approximately 85m long within field 2 and is linear/curvilinear and appears to turn to the south at the eastern end. Anomaly 21 is approximately 50m long within field 2. These anomalies have, therefore, been interpreted as field boundary ditches forming part of a previously unknown field system that does not respect the modern division of fields 1 and 2.
- 4.4.6 In the south-east of field 2, two weak and poorly defined positive anomalies were recorded (22 and 23). The anomalies are roughly parallel and spaced at 20-25m. Their alignment is approximately perpendicular to anomaly 21 and similar to anomalies 27 and therefore the most likely interpretation is further evidence of field boundaries associated with the anomalies described in 4.4.5.
- 4.4.7 Adjacent to the northern field boundary, a positive linear anomaly (25) and negative linear anomaly (26) were recorded. The anomalies are typical of those often recorded at the edge of arable fields, being caused by a build-up of more/ less magnetic material at the edge of the field. However, in this instance anomaly 25 coincides with anomaly 16 and may be associated as may anomaly 24.
- 4.4.8 Three parallel repeating anomalies (27), in the south-west corner represent ridge and furrow cultivation that respect anomalies 9 (in field 1) and anomaly 21. Anomaly 28, adjacent to the southern boundary may have a similar origin to anomaly 26 (4.4.7).
- 4.4.9 The effects of ferrous materials within and adjacent to the south and east boundary can be seen in figure 17, particularly along the edge of the cricket ground car park.
- 4.4.7 Within field 2, a general distribution of positive discrete or short linear anomalies was recorded without any obvious signs of patterns or clustering. The anomalies are more concentrated in the south-east corner and along the eastern boundary. Usually, little importance would be placed on such anomalies as they are likely to have a natural origin, particularly on limestone and ironstone geologies; however, given the strong evidence of settlement activity, an anthropogenic origin cannot be ruled out based on the geophysical survey results.

#### 4.5 Field 3

4.5.1 To the west of field 3 a moderately strong (*circa* -10 to -20nT) negative anomaly describing a slightly tapered, three-sided shape was recorded. The anomaly was initially interpreted as the south end of an enclosure of archaeological origin. However, the anomaly is extremely uniform and being negative has the reverse polarity that is usually expected from a buried cut feature, particularly considering the responses on the remainder of the site. The anomaly is visible as a crop mark on satellite imagery in which there is a hint of a fourth side and it therefore fits neatly within the modern field. It is felt

- that the anomaly may represent buried archaeological remains with the negative polarity indicating a rock cut or walled feature but other more modern origins should not be discounted in this case.
- 4.5.2 Positive linear anomalies 20 appears to represent a cut feature possibly a boundary in the narrow part of the field or possibly representing a short section of a more substantial feature has been destroyed to the north and south by modern activity.
- 4.5.3 In the east of the field and particularly north-east corner evidence of considerable modern disturbance is both visible on site (hard standings) and recorded in the geophysical survey results (anomaly 23). A mature tree sits in the centre of a large bowl or pit. Although this may be a natural feature it could also be a disused quarry pit and the adjacent anomalies (22 and 23) are probably associated with modern activity or geology/pedology and are unlikely to be significant.

#### 5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The results of the geophysical survey were generally good as magnetic disturbance from the underlying geology and items associated with the modern land-use did not prevent anomalies from being recorded in all areas of the site. Anomalies which are almost certainly of archaeological origin have been identified in several areas and these are likely to be affected by any proposed development. The objectives of the survey have, therefore, been achieved.
- 5.1 In field 1, an area of approximately 2.7 hectares of archaeological interest has been identified in the south-west corner. Within this area there is clear evidence of settlement activity in the form of a minimum of four or five enclosures, boundary ditches and innumerable possible pits. The collective interpretation is of a late Iron Age/ Romano-British settlement, possibly a farm complex and of possible regional importance.
- 5.2 In the remainder of field 1, further evidence of archaeological activity was recorded but this is limited to probable field boundary ditches (although one anomaly almost certainly relates to a former boundary that can be identified on historic mapping), further possible pit features of unknown origin and extensive evidence of agriculture, almost certainly from several periods.
- 5.4 In field 2, the possible remains of four circular features have been identified. The largest feature is approximately 40m in diameter and could date from the Bronze Age or even Neolithic periods. The three smaller features with diameters of approximately 15m may also date form the same period but could also be roundhouse drip gullies originating in the Iron Age.
- 5.5 In field 3 a well-defined anomaly was recorded in the west and this corresponds to a crop mark that can be seen on satellite imagery. The anomaly has negative polarity, the reverse of the expected response from a cut ditch feature and is also extremely uniform. Although an archaeological origin is still likely, other more modern origins should be considered.
- 5.6 In the remainder of field 3, a number of minor anomalies were recorded, without any particular form or context and are therefore thought unlikely to be significant. A narrow strip in the south of field 3, forming an access easement to Bodicote Cricket Club, was

- surveyed but was mainly paved and landscaped and has not revealed any evidence of archaeology.
- 5.7 The results of this geophysical survey should be read in conjunction with the desk-based assessment (Clarke 2013) as part of an overall heritage assessment and this will provide sufficient information to inform further evaluation or specific mitigation.

## 6 PUBLICITY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COPYRIGHT

- 6.1 Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

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7.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

#### 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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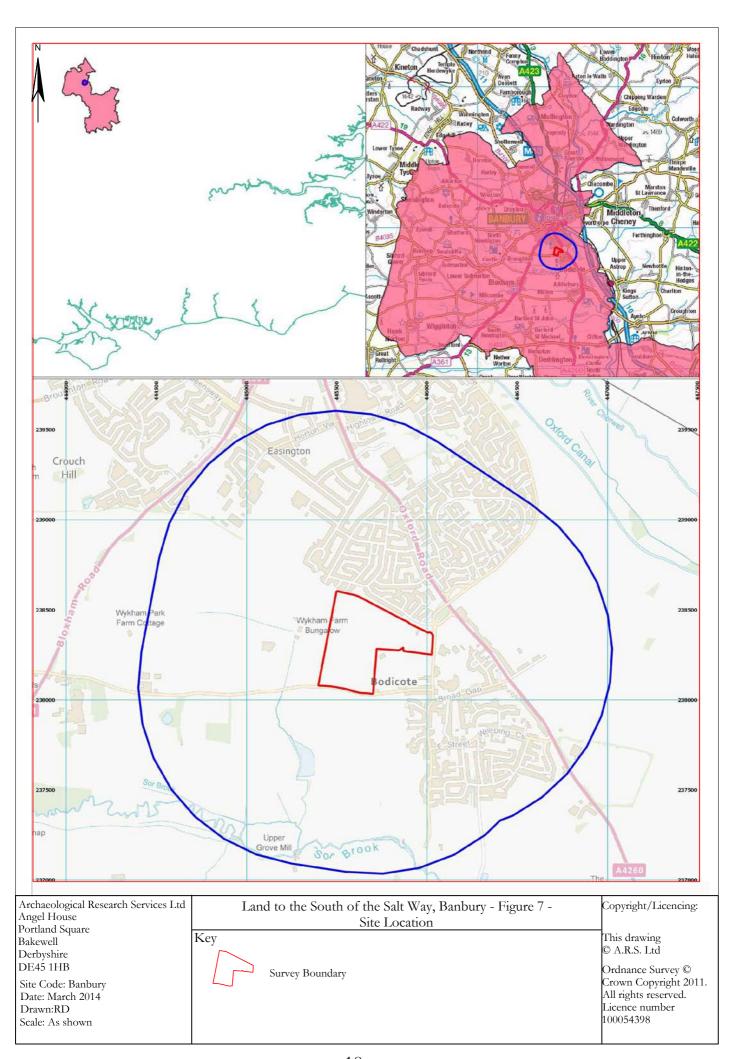
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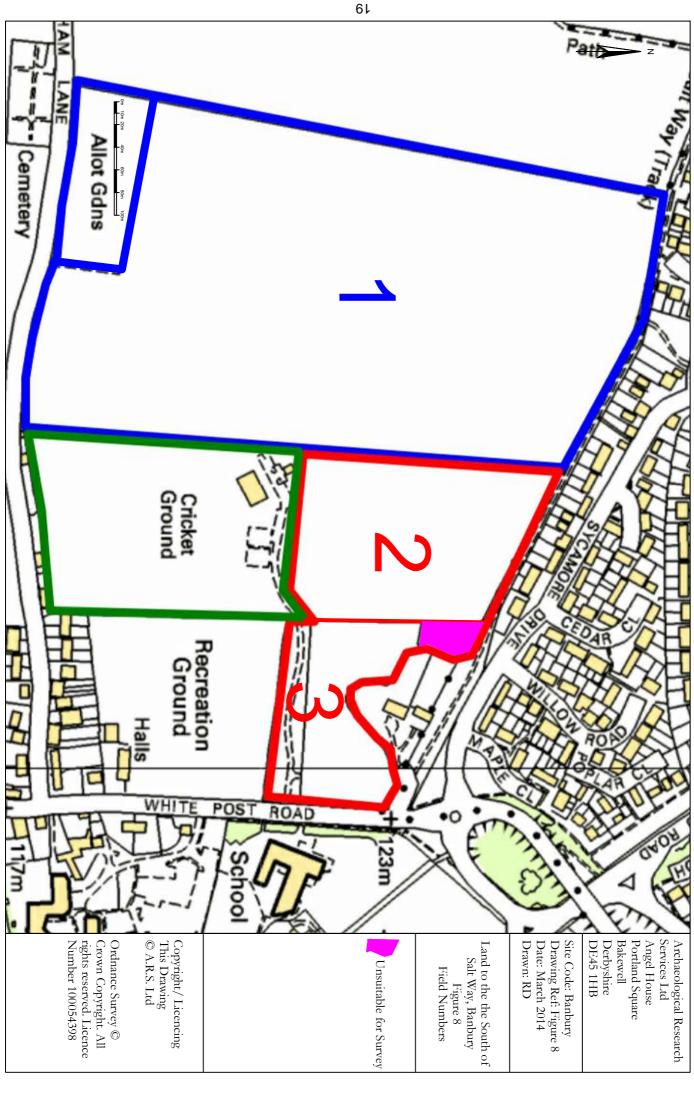
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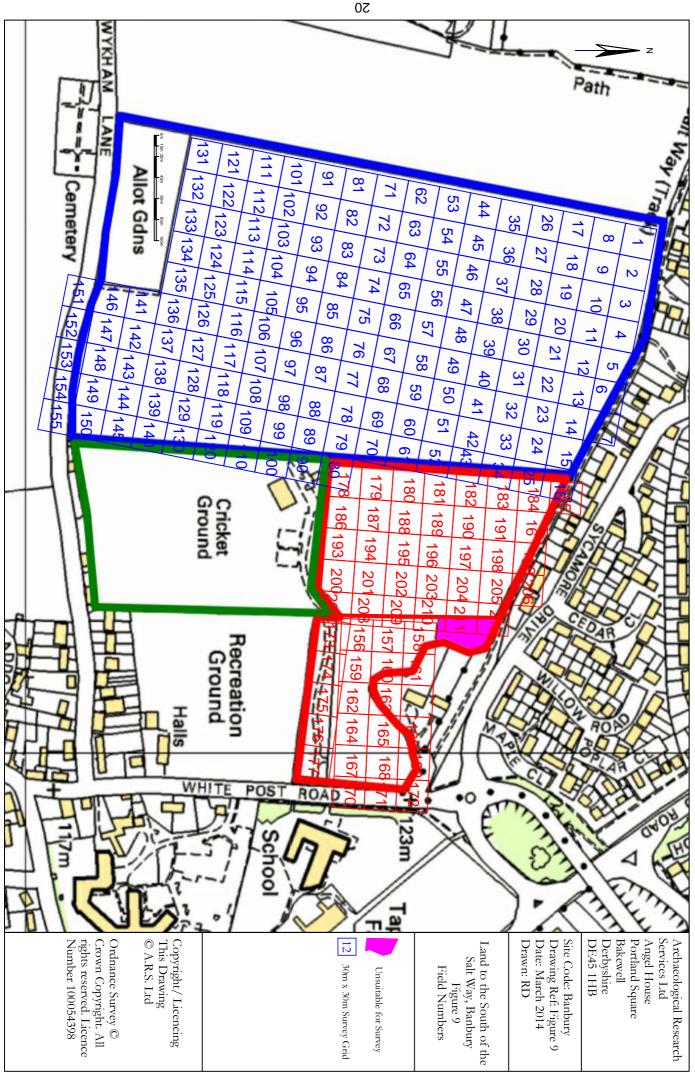
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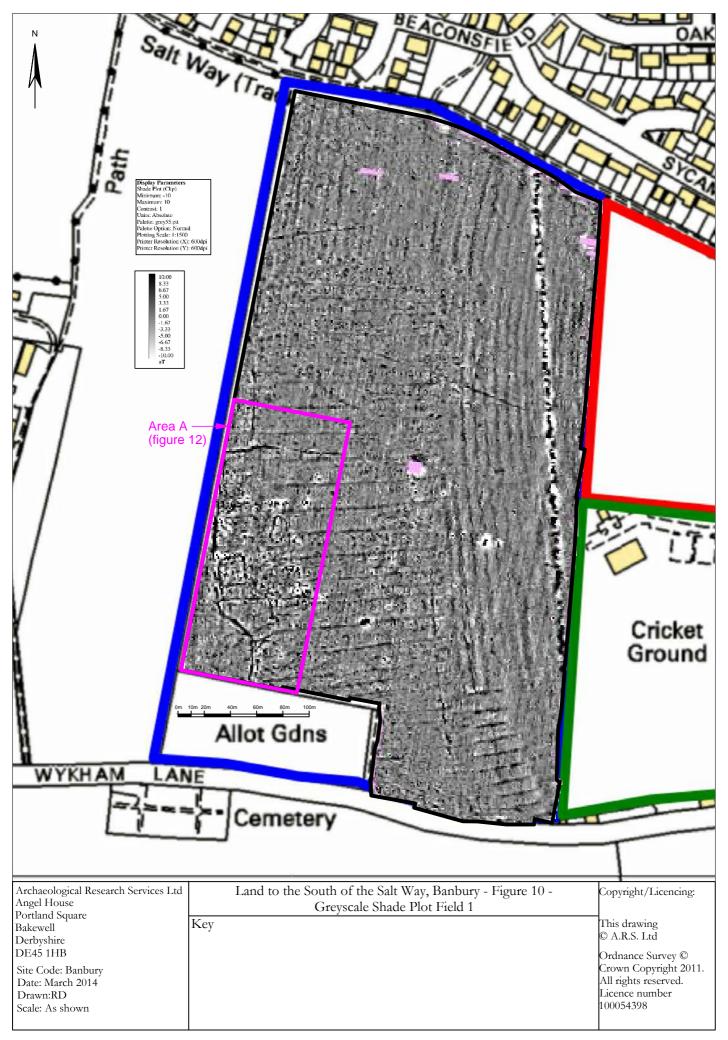
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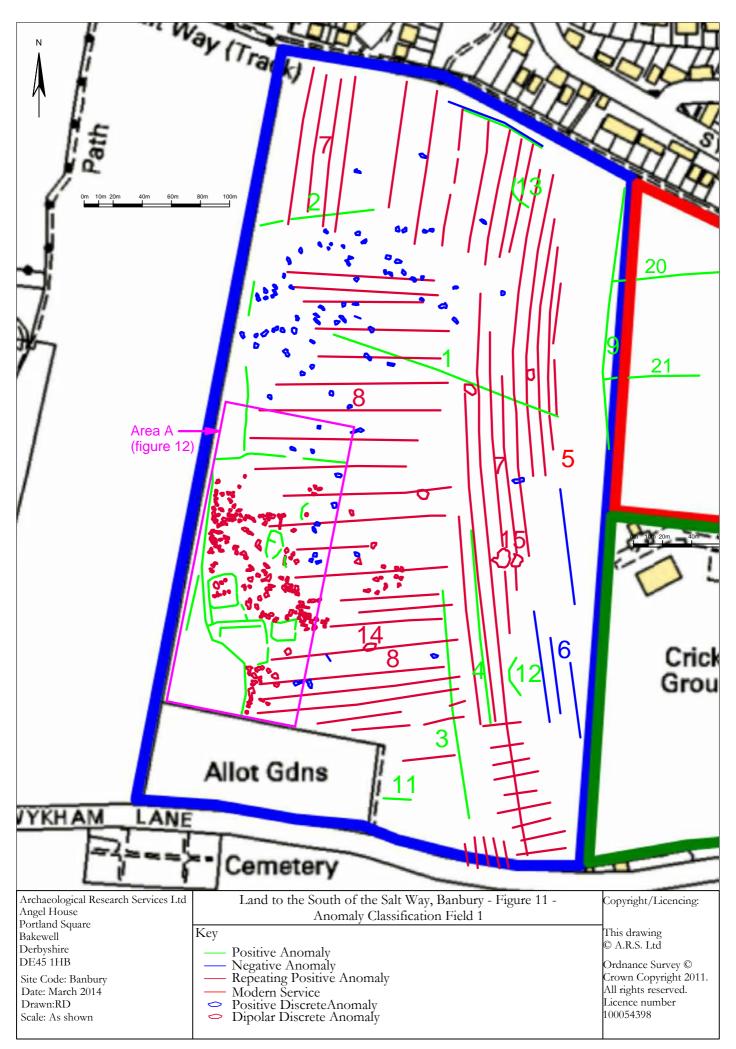
Land to the south of the Salt Way, Banbury, Oxfordshire – A Geophysical Survey		
Appendix 1: Figures		
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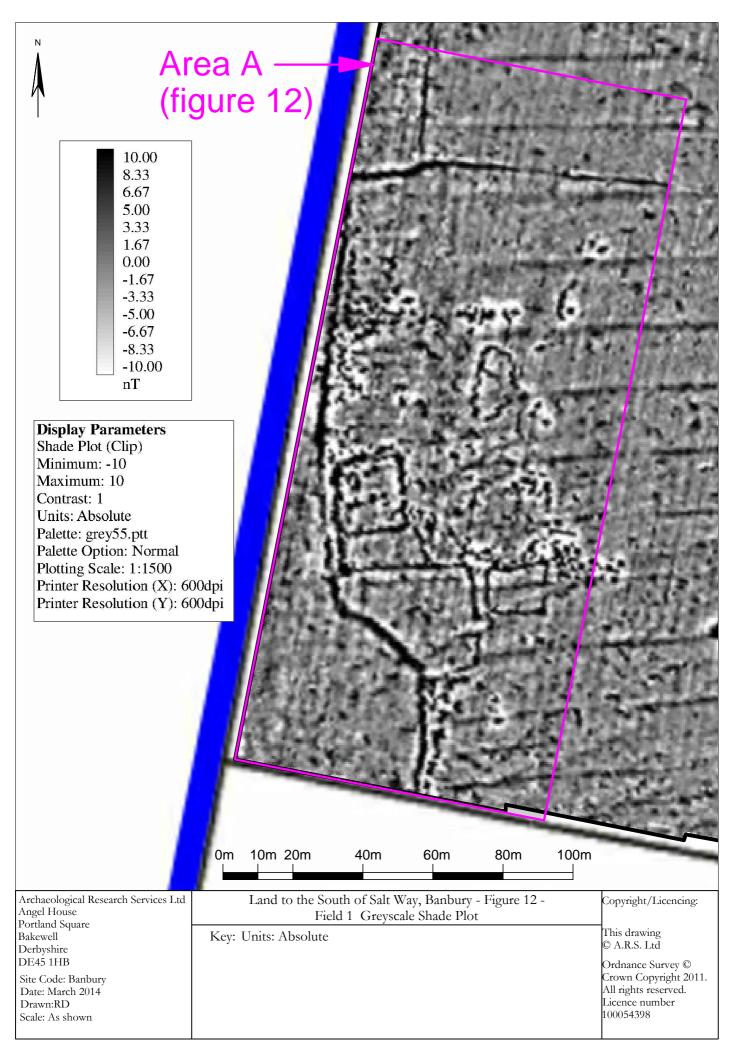


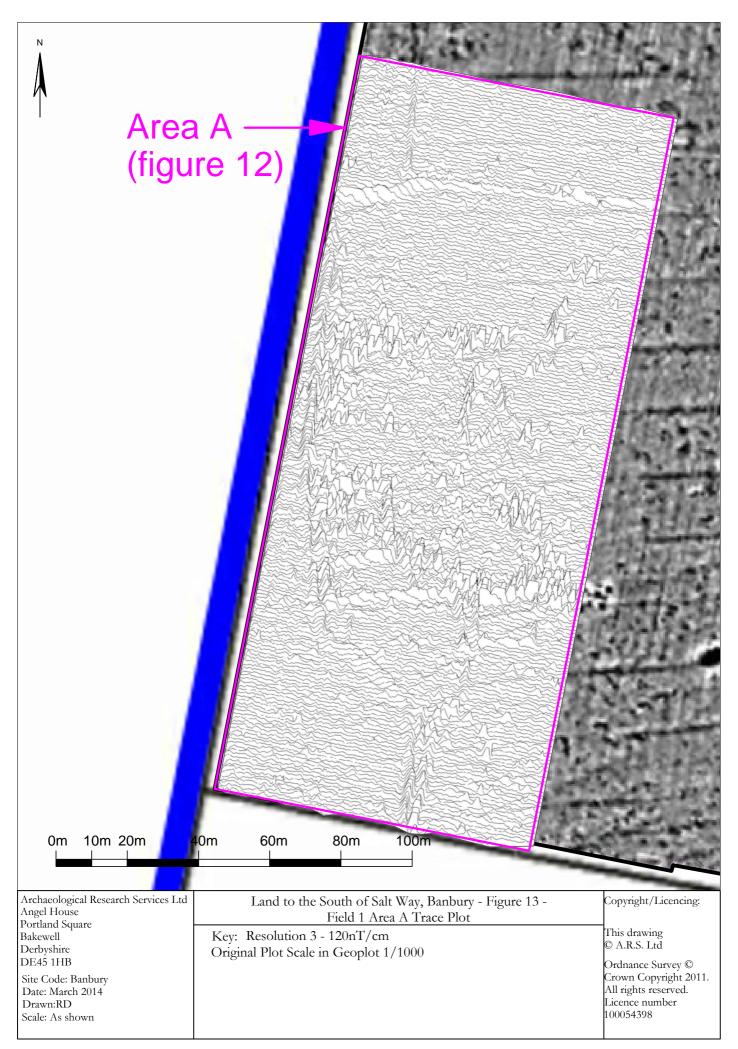


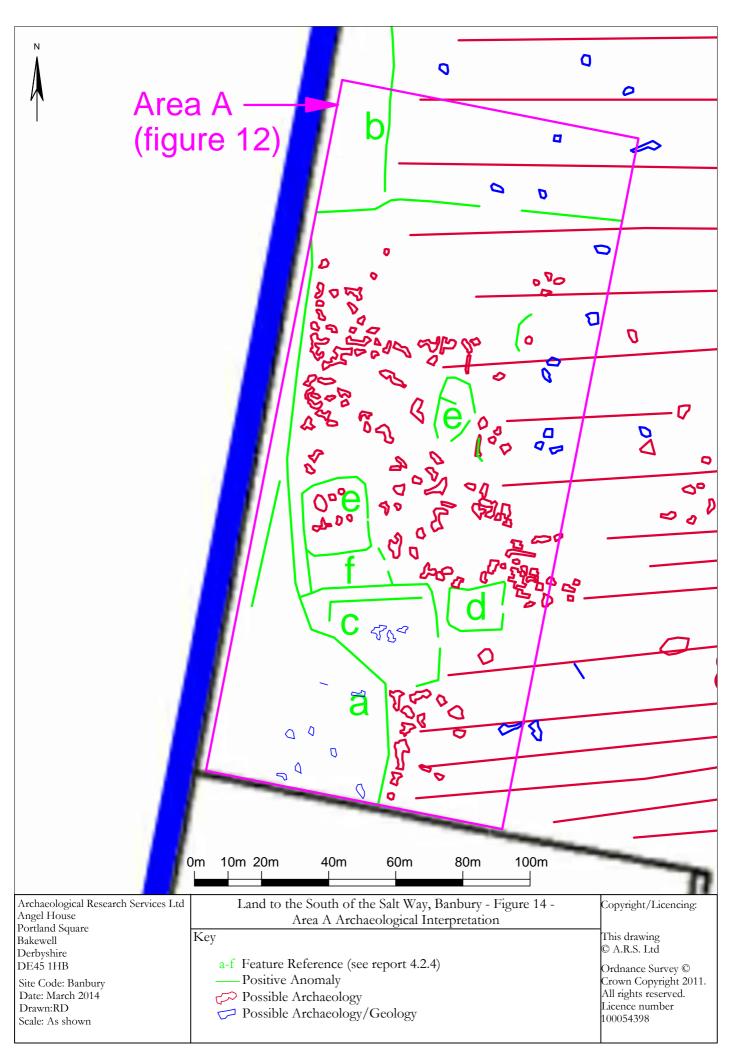


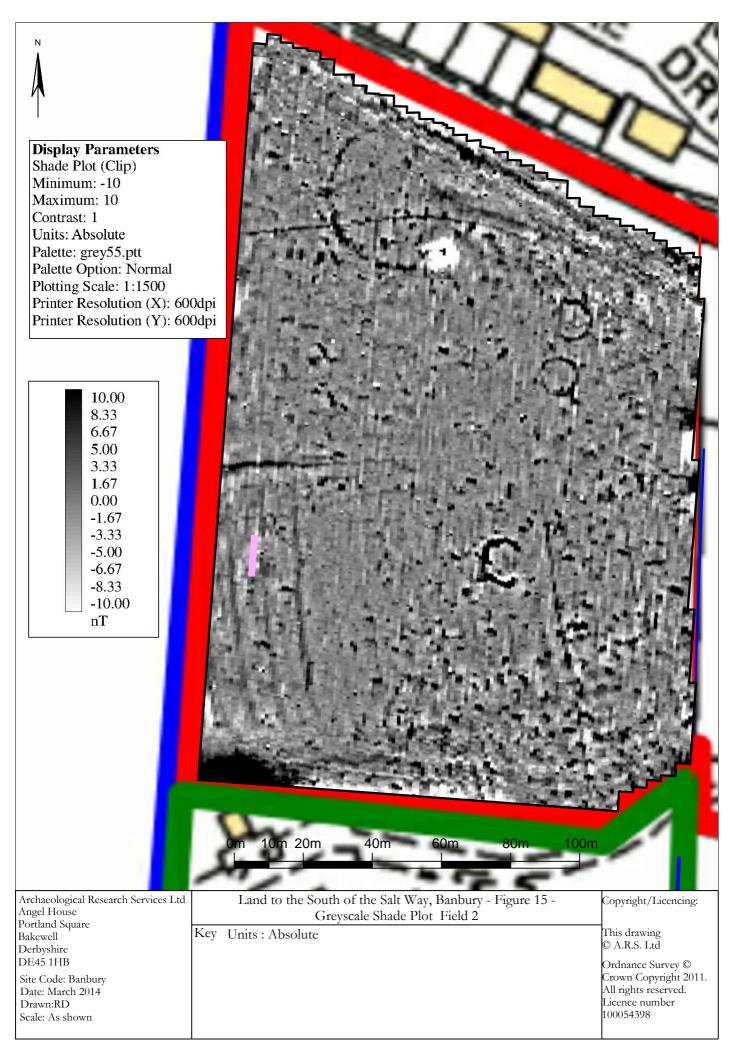


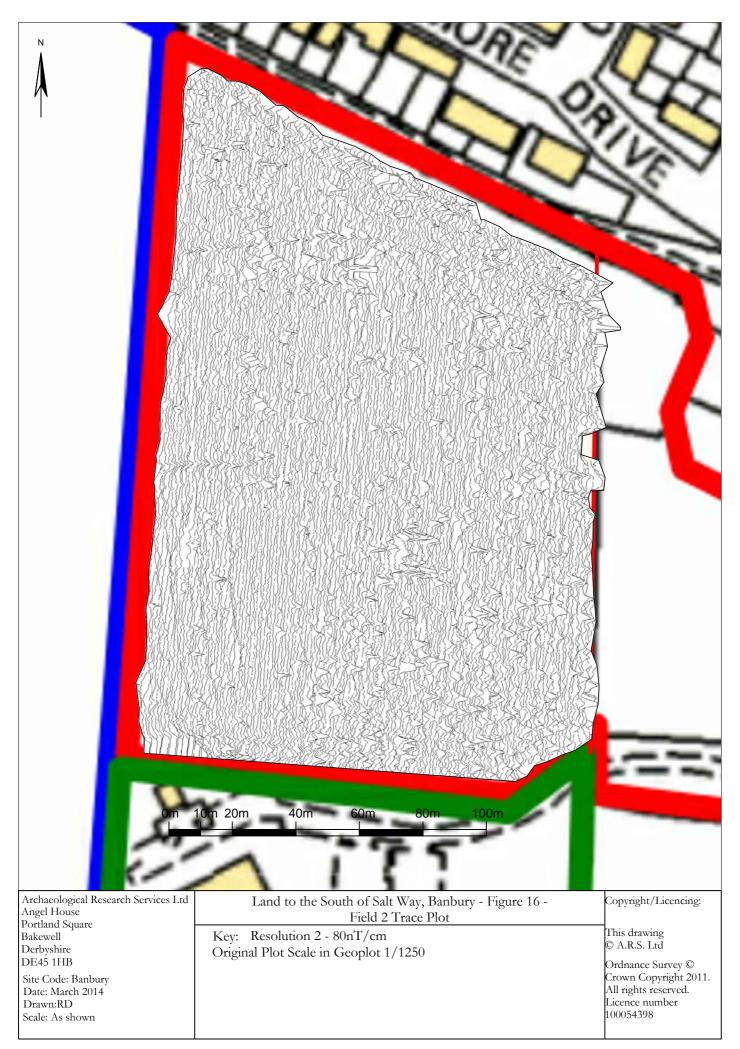




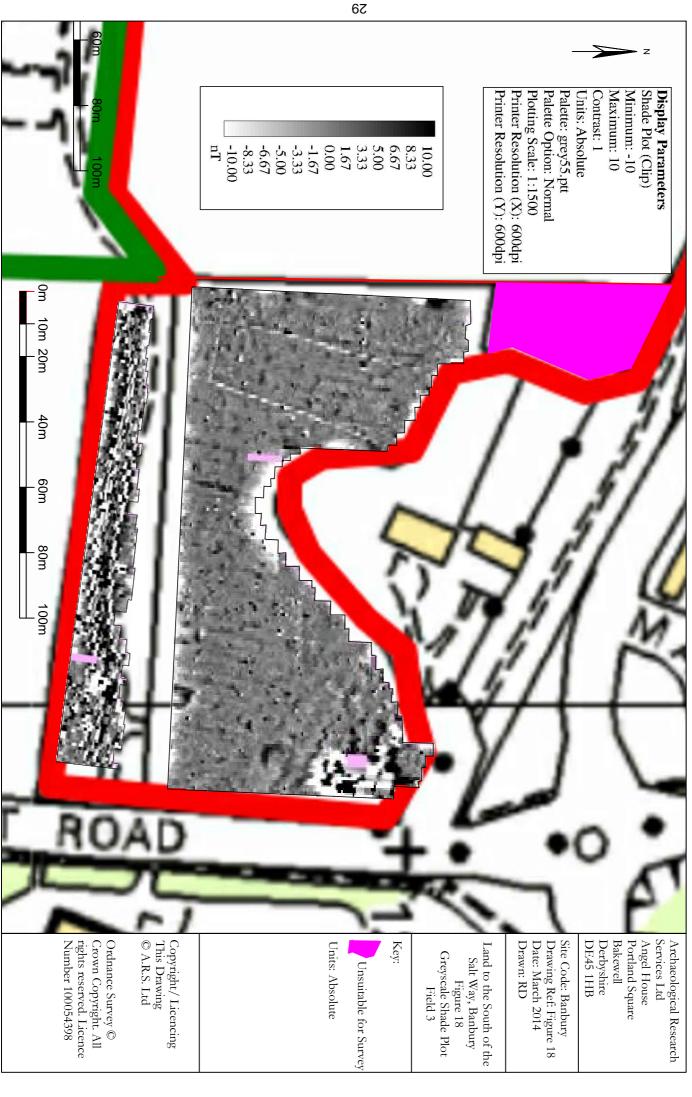


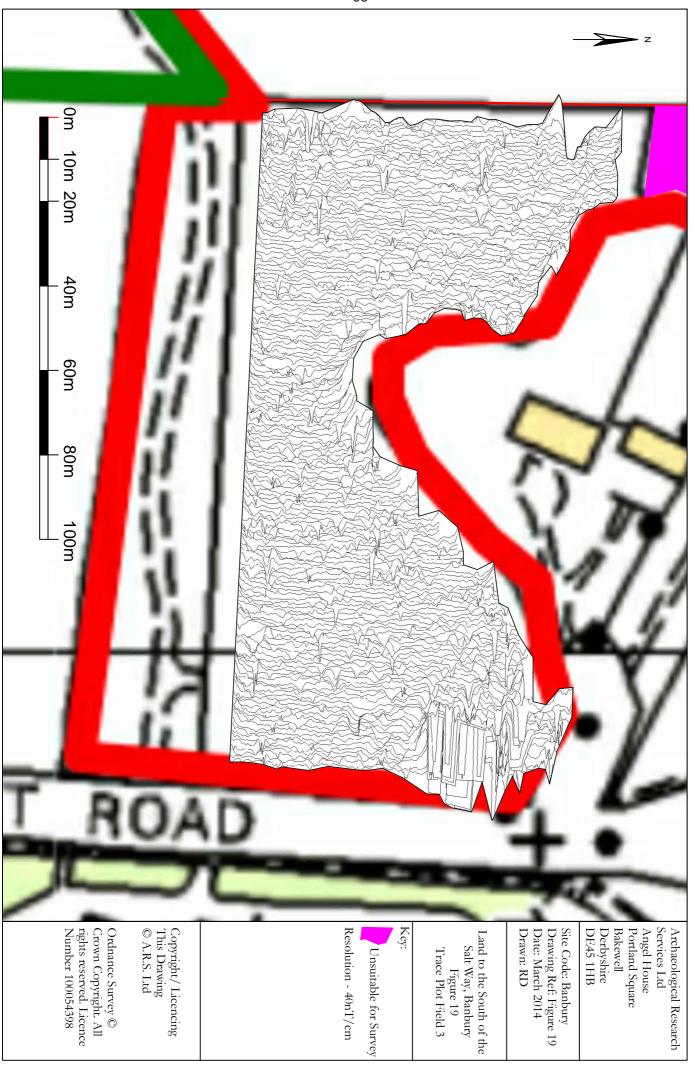


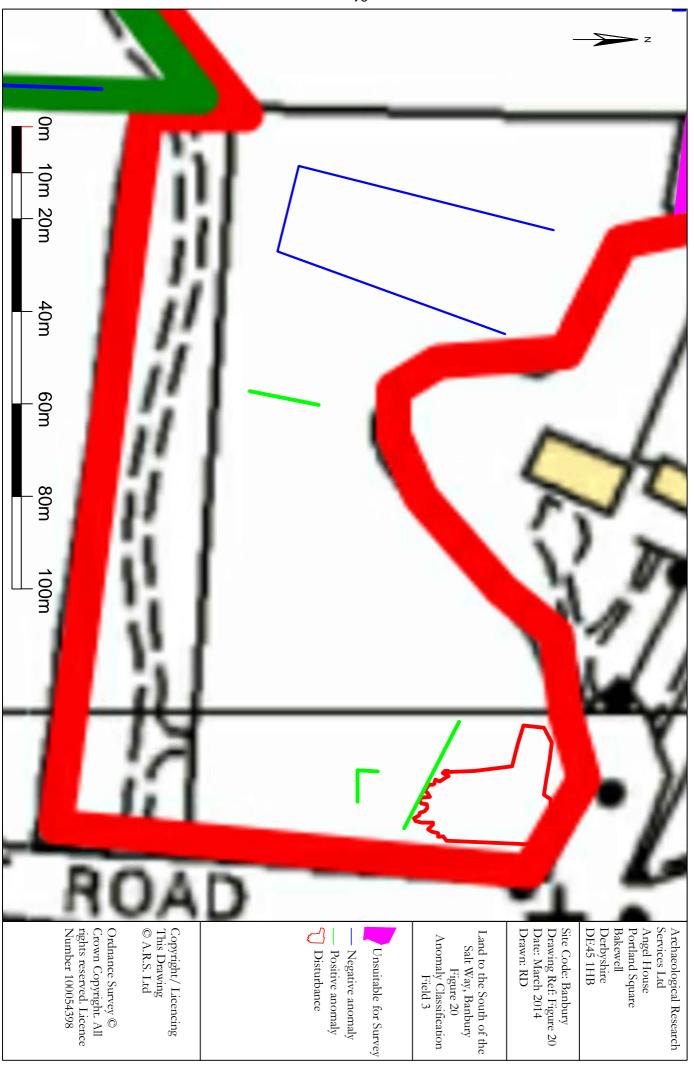












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