ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

MAGNETOMETER SURVEY AT NORTHDOWN HENGE CROPMARK SITE, MARGATE, 1984

Survey no. G 4/84 Dates of fieldwork: 5-6 April 19 NG: TR 385 705 Plans enclosed: 1. Location of survey grid 2. Magnetometer plot

A grid of nine 30m squares positioned to correspond approximately with the area covered by the scheduled site was surveyed using a fluxgate magnetometer. Traverse at 1m intervals were plotted on a chart recorder to give the results as shown on plan 2. The survey was successful in clearly locating the main ditch of the monument, but very little else of possible archaeological significance was detected.

There is a discrepancy between the size of the cropmark, which on aerial photographs appears to be perhaps 40m across, and the magnetic anomaly which measures some 20m between ditch centres. This could be explained if the photographs record the presence of the ploughed remains of an outer bank, while the magnetometer sees only the inner ditch of the earthwork. This ditch is some 2m in width and no entrance is visible (although a narrow causeway might not be clearly detectable in the survey plot).

Soil samples from the site gave magnetic susceptibility readings in the range 60-70 (x 10^{-8} SI units/kg). These are unusually high for a site on chalk and suggest that archaeological features should be readily detectable, but within the enclosure only one very doubtful minor feature was found. This anomaly is outlined on the plot and could represent a pit, but it is not clearly distinguishable from the generally high level of soil noise and could easily be spurious. Outside the enclosure in squares 8 and 9 some small anomalies tend to align with each other and could suggest a slight ditch, but the feature again is marginal and no clear interpretation can be placed on it.

The two very strong disturbances in squares 4 and 5 are caused by buried iron and cannot be archaeologically significant. There is a certain amount of noise from iron throughout the survey, and this together with the soil noise makes the site unsuitable for scanning with the magnetometer to test for minor features elsewhere in the field. Excavation of the site should indicate whether any such features have gone undetected within the area so far surveyed.

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