ALINGTON AVENUE, DORCHESTER, DORSET

REPORT ON GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY REPORT No: G. 6/85

This survey, centred on SY 702 899, covers the greater part of a field immediately to the south of Alington Avenue on the southeastern outskirts of Dorchester. The area is shortly to be developed for housing, and trial trenching by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology in 1984 has revealed parts of many features dating from the prehistoric to medieval periods. Further finds to the north of the road over the last hundred years contribute to the considerable evidence in favour of the archaeological significance of the site (TWA Interim Report, 1984).

The field was surveyed by 30 m. (fluxgate) magnetometer traverses spaced at 1.0 m. intervals over a 30 m. grid. The magnetometer signal was plotted with a field chart recorder and the resultant traces are reproduced here at a reduced scale on plan (2). Apparently significant anomalies are outlined on plan (1) and compared with the distribution of excavated features.

RESULTS:

The magnetometer traces suggest that detectable archaeological activity is concentrated in the NW half of the field and is characterized here mostly by ditches and occasional pit-like features. Nowhere are the anomalies particularly strong and it is probable that many features have not been detected.

There is no coherent pattern amongst the linear and subsidiary anomalies, although an arcuate ditch, perhaps part of a circle or enclosure, has been faintly detected in squares 17, 18 and 24 and is probably also that seen in trench G and thought to be prehistoric in origin. The other ditches in the field tend to run N-S or radiate eastwards or northeastwards from the latter and several of these would appear to coincide with excavated features of Roman and Iron Age date. Localized anomalies are also present, and, along with a slight

increase in general disturbance, tentatively suggest more widespread activity, for instance in sqs. 1-5, 9-13 and 17-20, although there are no obvious local concentrations of features within this area. Individual pit-like features of substantial size are visible in sqs. 3 & 6.

Scanning to the South and West of the field over areas also threatened by development (see TWA Interim report, fig. 7 for location) did not suggest the presence of significant anomalies. However, given the weak response to features in this area a plotted survey of the possible barrow cemetary to the west would be advisable.

CONSLUSIONS:

The 1985 results are consistent with those obtained by AML to the north of Alington Avenue in 1982 (AML Report no. G 2/82), although the latter results were much masked by soil noise and interference from iron debris.

Topsoil magnetic susceptibility at both sites is high, at 68 x 10^{-8} SI/kg., and with a chalk background would suggest that well preserved features ought to be detectable. To the south of the road, such features are plainly concentrated in the areas indicated above and suggest that archaeological activity is correspondingly slight over the rest of the field. In most cases, however, the anomalies are weak and their collective detail poor with little or no pattern emerging from the background soil noise. This suggests, as has been indicated by the trial trenching, that plough damage may have considerably reduced many of the features. In places, also, a chalky fill may be responsible for only a weakly detectable magnetic contrast with the natural.

Surveyed and reported by : A. David 19th March 1985

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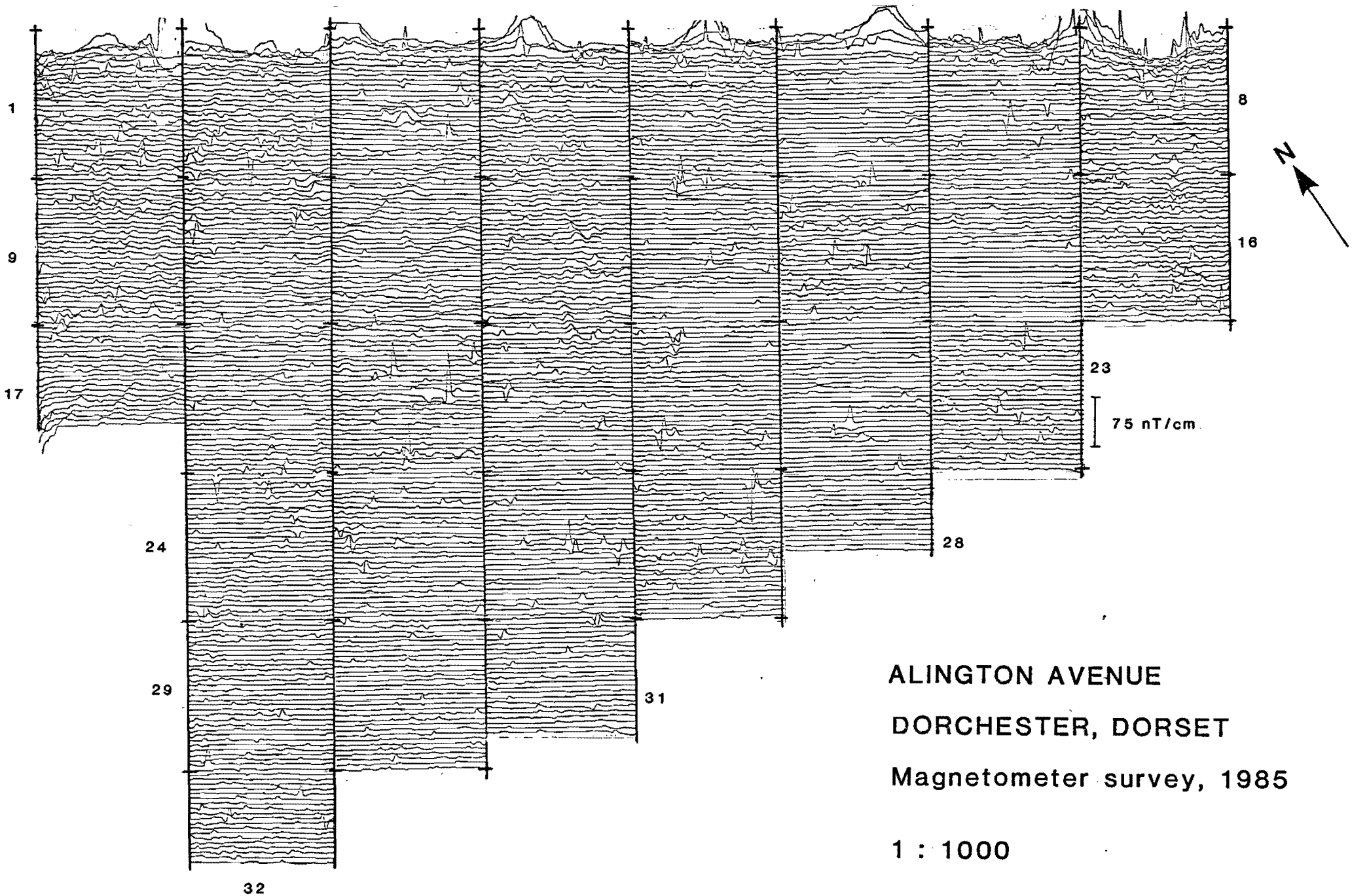
Note: the coincidence of linear anomalies and excavated ditches on plan 2 is not perfect, and this may be due either to an inconsistency in grid or trench location, or to accumulated inaccuracies of re-drawing and enlarging a reduced copy of the original site plan. Two wooden grid pegs left on site accurately locate the magnetometer survey grid. Details of location measurements made to the fields boundaries could be provided if required.



ALINGTON AVENUE

DORCHESTER, DORSET

Magnetometer survey, 1985

1 : 1000

N

900

899

898

SY 701

702

703

704

A M LAB

survey grid

ALINGTON AVENUE
DORCHESTER, DORSET

Magnetometer survey, 1985

1 : 1000

excavated features

magnetic anomalies

survey grid pegs left in