

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 174/88

STONEHENGE CURCUS, WILTSHIRE:
REPORT ON MAGNETOMETER SURVEY AT
THE EASTERN END OF THE CURCUS, 1988

A Payne & D White

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Summary

This Survey examined the ground to the east of the terminus of the Stonehenge Curcus, under threat as a possible access route to the new Visitor Centre. The eastern flanking ditch of the long barrow (Amesbury 42) 40m from the end of the Curcus was located, along with a substantial portion of ditch some 70m further to the east. No further substantial features were detected with any certainty.

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STONEHENGE CURSUS, WILTSHIRE

Magnetometer survey at the eastern end of the Cursus, 1988

Introduction

The area of land lying between the eastern end of the Cursus and the army housing estate of Strangways has been considered as an option for the access route to the proposed Visitor Centre at Larkhill to the north. A geophysical survey was undertaken to assess the archaeological potential of the area under threat from this development.

Method

The survey area covered 12,500 square metres, as indicated on the enclosed location plan. This area was sub-divided into 30m grid squares and was surveyed with a Geoscan FM18 fluxgate gradiometer: traverses were walked with this instrument at 1m intervals across the grid. The resulting data is displayed as a series of graphical traces on the enclosed plot.

Results

There is a general lack of significant anomalies visible on the plot, except for two pronounced alignments indicating buried ditches. The first of these was detected on the west side of grid squares 15 and 16, and is the ditch associated with the adjacent long barrow. The definition of this is interrupted both by the nearby wire boundary fence, and also, probably, from the remains of former excavations. However, the anomaly appears to curve around towards the south end of the barrow.

The other linear anomaly, running north-west through squares 3 and 5, is probably also a response to a ditch. It was observed, though, that it runs towards a paddock disturbed by modern drains and may therefore be of recent origin.

Indicated more tentatively on the plot (broken lines) are some weak and ill-defined anomalies which may be of archaeological significance. These include an alignment of small positive anomalies running north-south in square 13 which may represent a small ditch or recent cultivation. Throughout the survey area there is also a general spread of spurious magnetic disturbance from iron debris.

Conclusions

Overall, this survey has produced only limited results, with little useful new evidence having been detected. However, scanning over a ring ditch (visible as a soil mark) to the south of the survey grid indicated that features of at least this type are clearly detectable, with an anomaly strength of about 15 to 20nT. It should be stressed, though, that minor features,

especially post-holes, would probably not have been located because of their relative smallness.

On the evidence above, therefore, it would appear that the threatened area between the Cursus and Strangways is relatively free of (detectable) substantial archaeological features.

Surveyed by A Payne and D White

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