

Little Chesterford Manhall Manor Report

In May 2019 and November 2021 Archaeology RheeSearch Group carried out magnetometry and resistivity surveys on this site to determine whether any archaeological features were detectable.

Members participating: Brian Bridgland, Pat Davies, Richard Freeman, Liz Livingstone, Ian Sanderson, Gill Shapland, Maureen Storey and Tony Storey.

Site liaison: Peter Whalley.

Site conditions: Stubble or rolled surface.

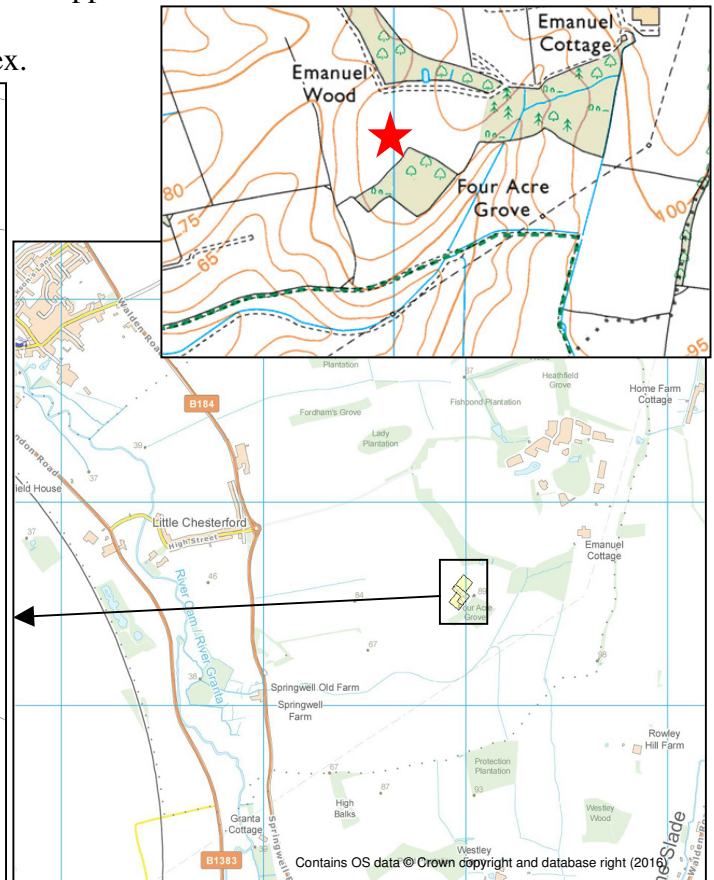
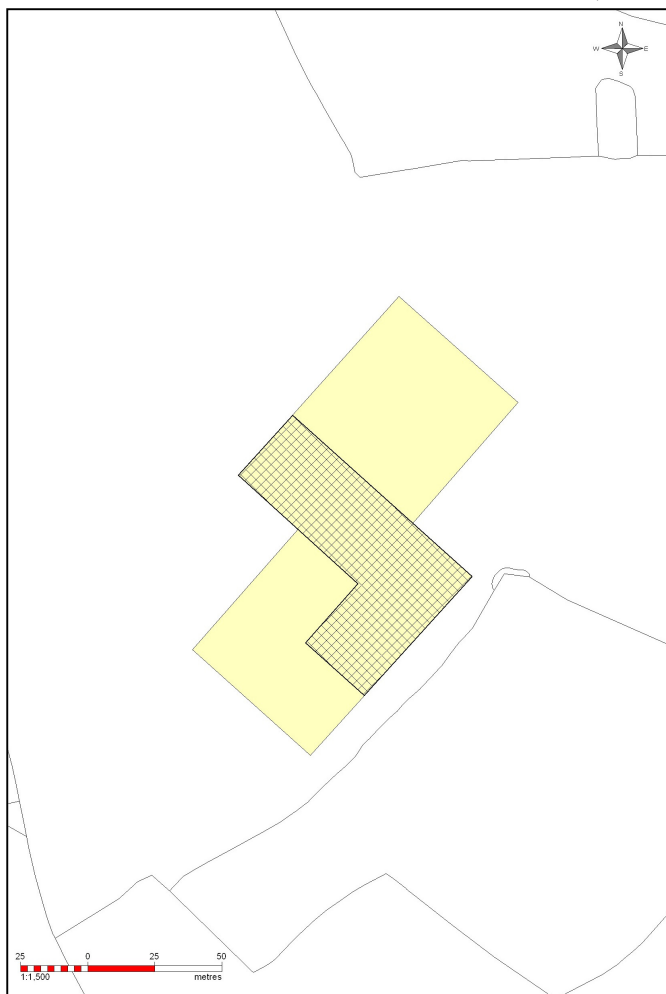
Equipment: Bartington 601 gradiometer; TRCIA 50 cm twin probe.

Magnetometry readings: 8/m, 1 m separation.

Resistivity readings: 1 m interval, 1 m separation.

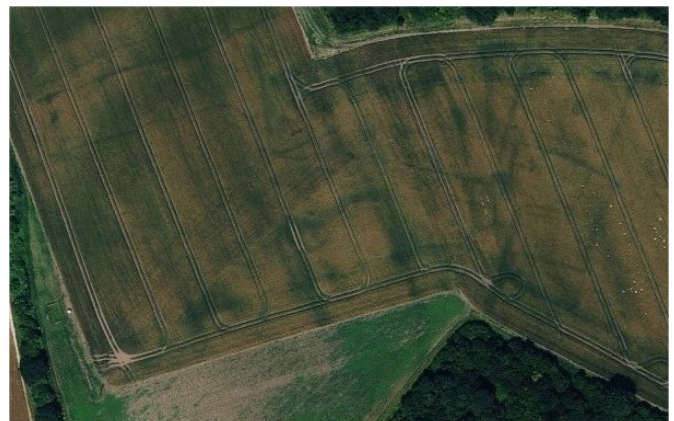
Raw data are available as separate appendices.

Location: TL530415 Little Chesterford, Essex.



Location plan: Survey areas
(resistivity survey areas hatched,
magnetometry area solid,)

Purpose of survey: To determine if any subsurface features could be detected that might confirm the presence of the moated manor of Manhall and clarify the cropmarks shown on aerial photographs of the site.





Site topography:

The site was a relatively level spur with the ground rising slightly to the north and northeast, but falling steeply in the other directions. There was a track around a wood to both the north and the south. Temporary metal fencing was stored at the edge of the southern wood during the first visit.

Results:

The images in this section are orientated for presentation. The images are not to a common scale.

The resistivity surveys are divided into two parts, one made on each of the two site visits. The northern arm was carried out in 2021 when the ground was well consolidated. The southern arm was carried out in 2019 when the surface was noted to be poorly consolidated.

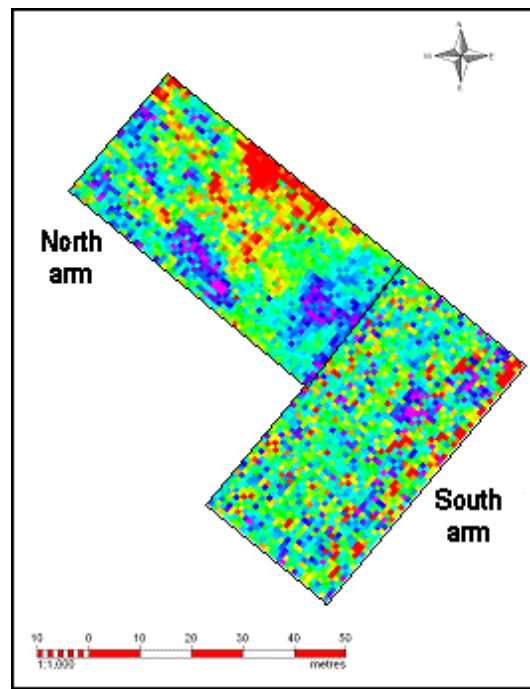
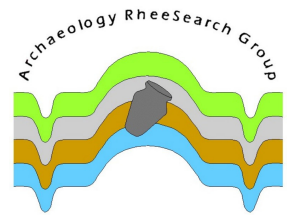
The results from the southern arm are therefore unlikely to reflect whatever might be detected under more favourable conditions.

Northern resistivity survey, 30 m x 60 m

		Resistivity Raw data N ↙
		High pass filter 7 N ↙
(black – low, white – high)	(purple/blue – low, red – high)	

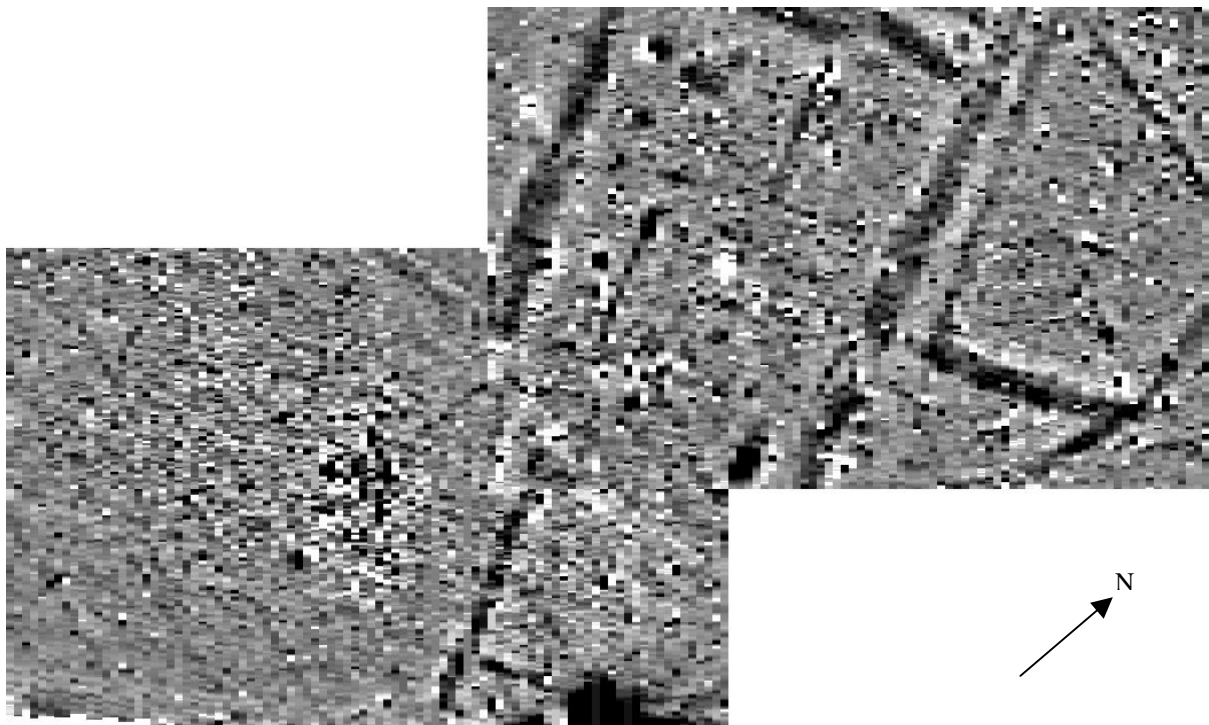
Southern resistivity survey, 30 m x 60 m

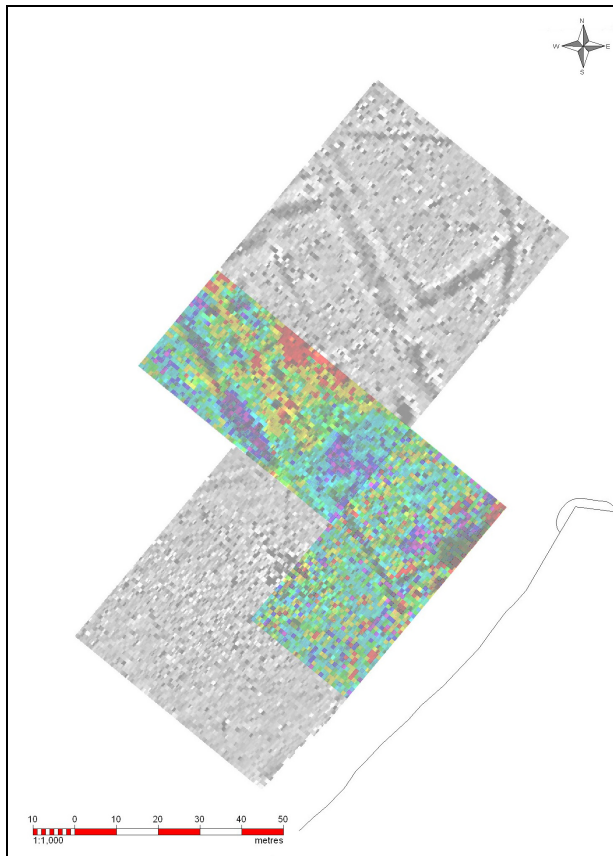
		Resistivity Raw data N ↗
		High pass filter 7 N ↗
(black – low, white – high)	(purple/blue – low, red – high)	



Resistivity arms

Magnetometry survey 150 m x 90 m range +3 to -3 nT





Magnetometry and resistivity surveys



Magnetometry survey with cropmarks in red

Discussion:

The magnetometry results show multiple linear and rectilinear features with very little of the noise that is associated with ceramic demolition debris. The widest linear features are up to about 5 m wide. The width between the two strongest features running NW—SE is about 40 m (including those features 50 m). The concentration of features in the N part of the survey, coincident with a change in crop, suggests that farming practices may have obliterated some of the underlying archaeology.

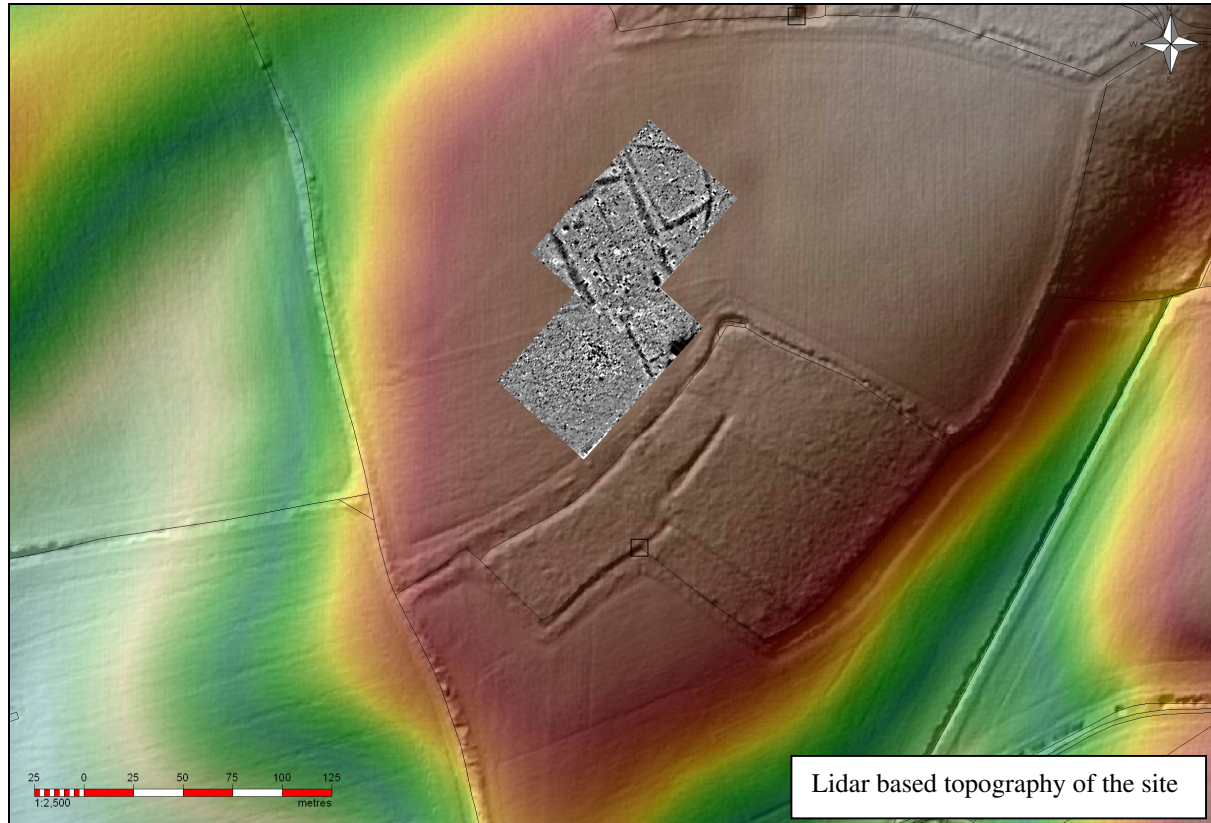
The S arm of the resistivity shows little of archaeological interest apart from a small line of high values about 9 m in from the centre of the SE side which is coincident with a magnetic response. The high values along the SE side probably reflect the track around the wood.

The N arm of the resistivity results has a band of low values extending NW from the centre of the SW edge of the survey. It is crossed by about 6 m of high values before reaching the NW edge of the survey. The band corresponds with one of the more distinct cropmarks and a strong magnetic response. A band of high values runs parallel to the low band about 7 m to the E. On the NE side of this survey there is a large block of high values which breaks up into rectilinear forms on its SE side. This area produced very few magnetic responses although one line runs parallel to the band of high values between that band and the block of high values.

The results are consistent with a moated manor. The lack of magnetic noise suggests very little brick or tile. The band of low resistivity with the coincident strong magnetic response, and the similar parallel magnetic response to the NE are likely to be the remnants of a moat. A possible third side of the moat is shown on the NW edge of the magnetometry but the E side of the NW – SE strong lines appears to continue past the branching point.



Both sides of the moat have breaks which are probably entrance points. The band of high resistance values may be the foundations of an outer wall. The block of high resistance values is probably the remains of a floor. The thinner magnetic response lines within the moat area might be the foundations of internal walls or robber trenches, but this would only be resolved by excavation.



Further details of the site history are given below (accessed December 2022).

References:

<http://www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/1148.html>

http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=374293

Report by Dr I Sanderson for Archaeology RheeSearch