

Thriplow Tumulus Site Report

Between 2003 and 2007 the Archaeology RheeSearch Group have progressively surveyed this site. The group are grateful for the owners' help, cooperation and tolerance.

Owners: Mr & Mrs N Moore.

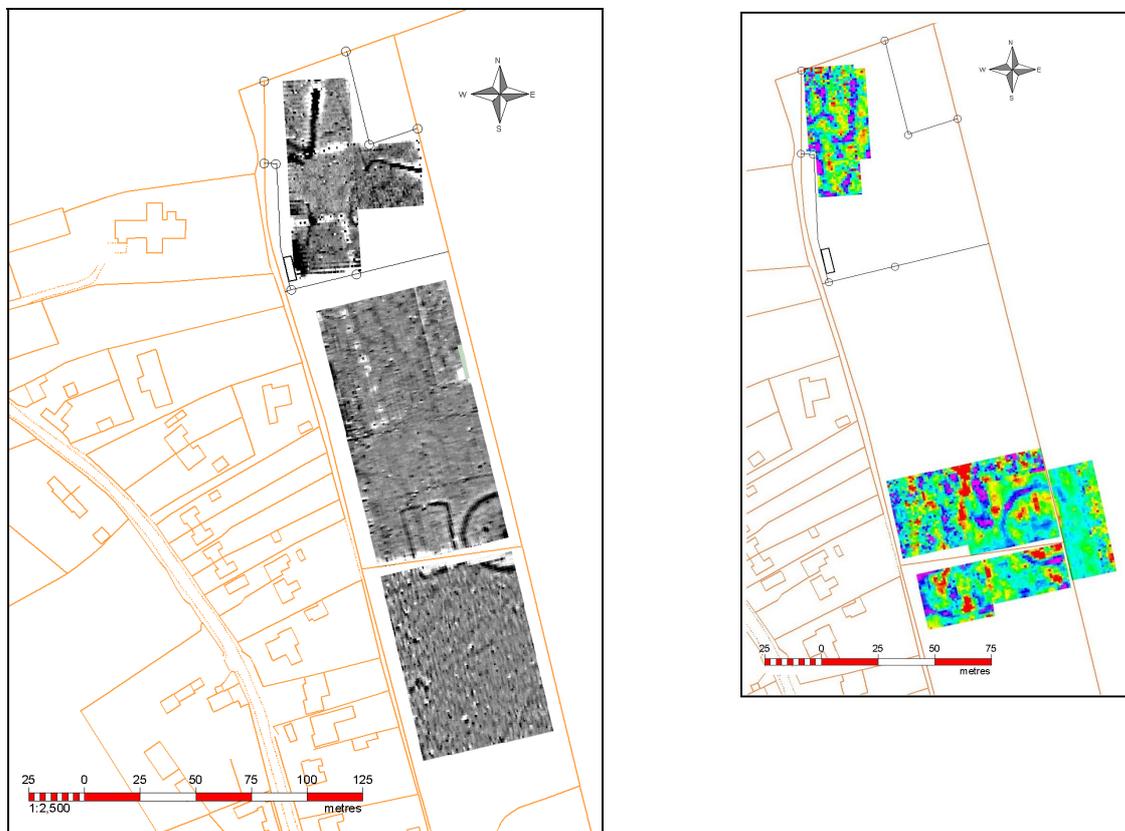
Site conditions: Close cropped paddock. Temporary electric fences used to manage horses. Wooden post and wire fencing around the perimeter. Southern boundary to a similar paddock with its own post and rail fence and some hedging adjacent. Western boundary to gardens, some with their own fencing, or hedging. Eastern boundary post and wire to fields. Northern boundary mature hedging just outside post and wire fence. Access from NW through owner's property immediately S of the church.

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

Magnetometry readings: 4/m, 1 m separation.

Resistivity readings: 1 m interval, 1 m separation.

Location: TL 443 469



Location of magnetometer and resistivity surveys.

On the ground location points (distances all in metres) Central area: from gate posts in site SE corner:

Res 2.5 S, 1.5 N, Mag 7.55 S, 5.50 N

Res; 3.3 from fence post 3(E side), 1.5 from fence post 4 (E side)

Mag Grid 1 SW corner. From the S gate post to the inner fence nearest post 35.3

From the inner reference post to: Older gatepost (GP) in old fence line E 2.40, W 1.19, between gateposts 3.52, to Peg 2.64

E GP to peg 3.51, W GP to peg 3.13, outer corners of GP used in all cases.

N area: N & S ends of W side of NE wildlife enclosure to NE & SE corner of N 30 m grid.

N enclosure reference 11.96, 41.98; S enclosure reference 31.54, 7.37 respectively.

Purpose of survey: To determine the location of subsurface structures possibly associated with Saxon activity. The known barrow site was excavated in 1953 by Dr Trump. Two excavations based on these results were made by Scarle & Hughes in 2007.

Results:

All the images in this section have been individually orientated and scaled for presentation. Size and location are given in the context plans above.

<p>Magnetometry north area, four 30 x 30 m grids</p>	<p>Magnetometry central area, eight 30 x 30 m grids</p>

Magnetometry.

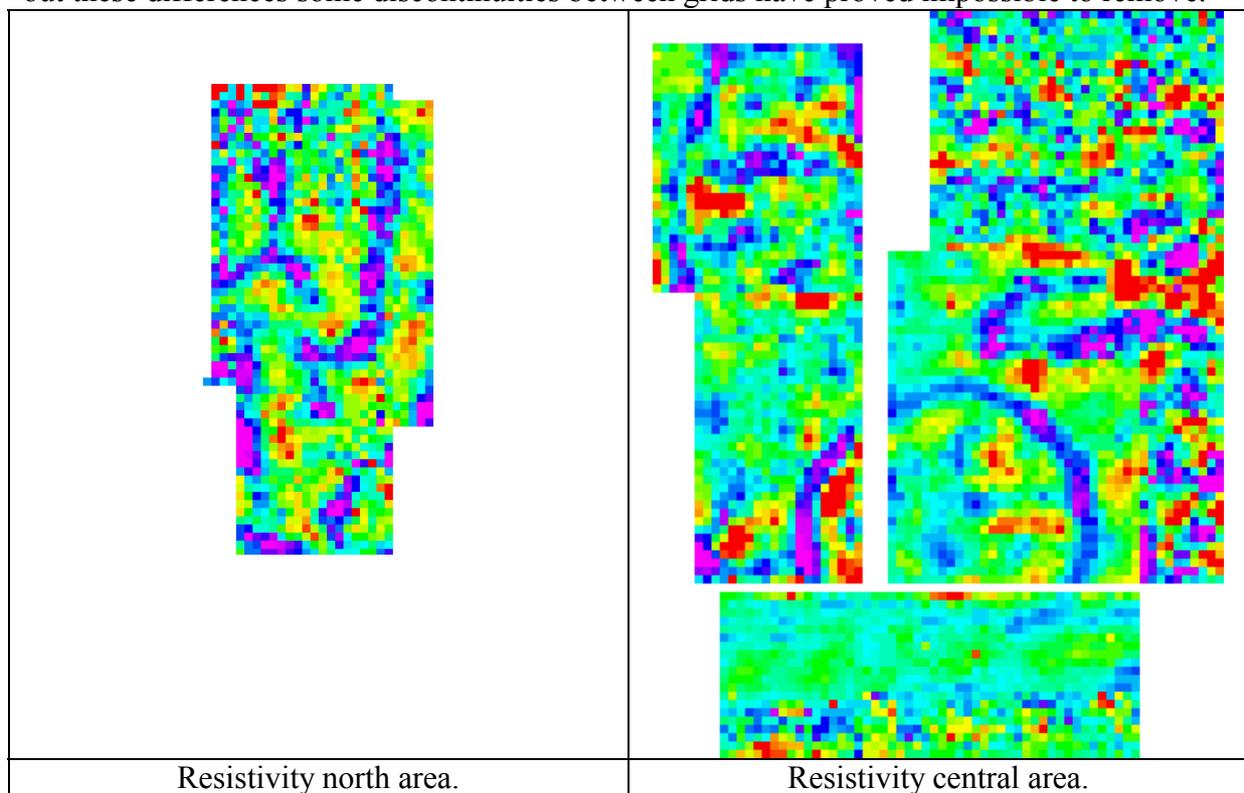
The magnetometry images of the survey of the site are scattered with rectilinear and linear features comprising black points with a white framing. This is a characteristic effect caused by ferrous point sources. They actually represent the steel spikes under plastic posts used to support stock control electric fencing and should therefore be ignored.

The principal features in the central area are a ring ditch and a rectangular enclosure. A slight curvature in the E side of the enclosure indicates that it is respecting the ring ditch. There are discontinuities in the N and E side of the rectangular enclosure which may be entrance points. The rectangular area to the top right of the central area image reflected a region where a few inches of topsoil had been removed. Interference from metal fencing is noticeable to the bottom left of the image,

In the N area there is an elongated ‘J’ shaped feature, the stem running NS, with a doubling at the base. The intensity of the signal is sufficient to obscure the stock control fencing signal. To the right (E) of the image there is another strong linear feature curving to the S at its W end. This may continue to the S as a fainter signal which then turns to the E. Another faint linear feature runs NNW–SSE across the N and E grids. There is a suggestion in the N grid of another line at right angles to the latter line which is truncated by the major ‘J’ feature. A complex area of responses was detected to the bottom left of the survey area but these may be associated with a stable block in this area.

Resistivity

The resistance based surveying results presented here comprise data gathered in a variety of different sized grids collected over a four year period. During this period the soil moisture content has varied with the weather. Whilst considerable effort has gone into trying to even out these differences some discontinuities between grids have proved impossible to remove.

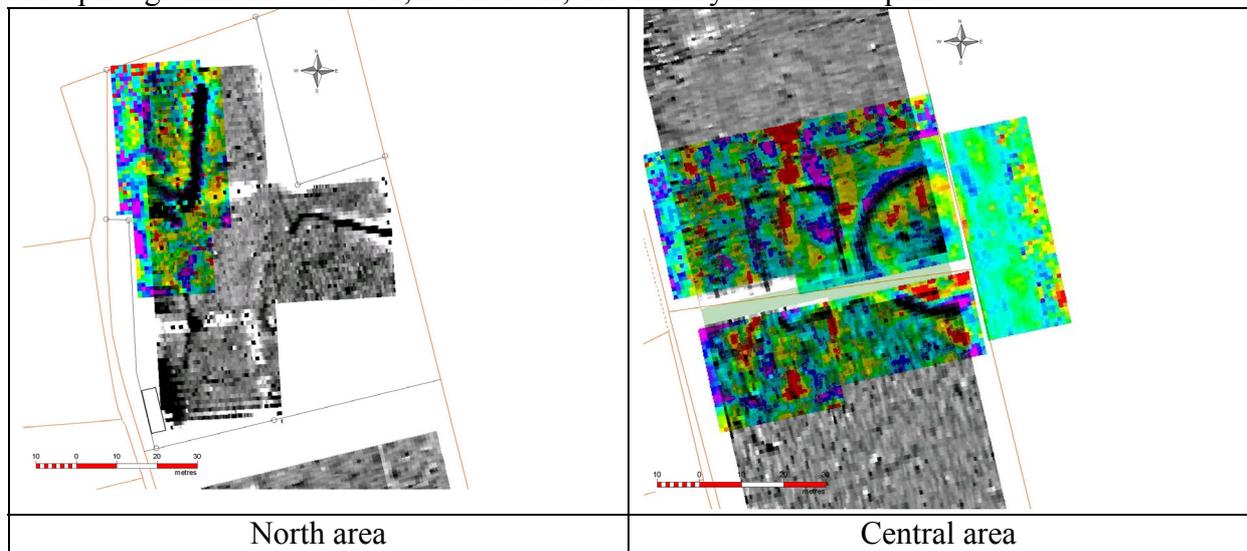


The central area resistivity results show a clear ring ditch within the two paddock areas with only a suggestion of it continuing in the grids at the bottom of the image from the adjacent ploughed field. The definition in the lower part might have been improved if the survey had taken place after a prolonged rather than a short period of soil consolidation. On the other hand it might reflect a combination of degradation due to of ploughing and obscuration due to salting with agricultural chemicals. A low resistance line runs horizontally above and to the right of the ring ditch feature turning to the top at the right hand end. A high resistance feature runs in a similar alignment above this.

The north area resistance survey shows a ‘J’ shaped low resistance feature with an inverted ‘Y’ shaped low resistance feature to the left.

Resistivity and magnetometry superimpositions

Resistivity and magnetometry detect different physical attributes of the environment. Sometimes it is possible to derive more information about that environment by comparing features which are, and are not, detected by both techniques



Magnetometry and resistivity results superimposed.

North area

The major 'J' shaped feature was detected by both techniques, having a low resistivity value. The strong magnetic signal parallel to the base of the 'J' had only one small area of low resistance associated with it. A minor magnetic response was associated with one arm of the inverted 'Y' shape noted in the resistivity data. A small area of low resistivity was coincident with the end of the truncated magnetometry signal aligned to the WSW.

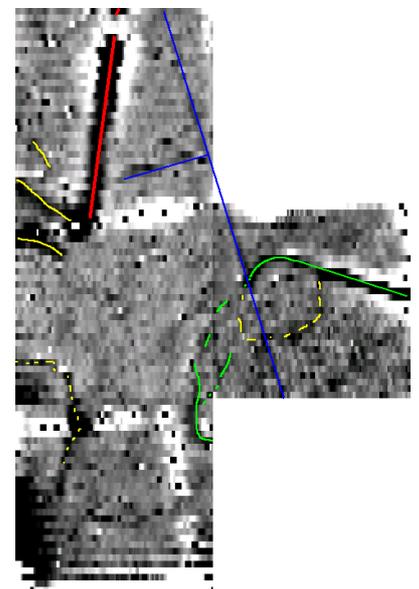
Central area

The ring ditch was clearly delineated in both types of survey, having a low resistivity value. The rectilinear feature seen clearly by magnetometry, was only partially detected by resistivity with particularly low values in the NE corner of the feature, but extending well beyond the line detected by magnetometry. A line of high resistivity runs through the discontinuity detected by magnetometry in the N side of the rectilinear feature.

Discussion:

The central area has two features, the ring ditch of a bronze age barrow and a much later, probably Roman, rectangular enclosure with an entrance next to the barrow. The lack of other signals within the S survey area suggests that whatever the function of the pair it was deliberately kept at a distance from other activities, at least those that required building works. The variability of the resistance signal around the enclosure ditch is unexpected given the clear magnetic response. More surprising is the area of low resistance extending N from the NE corner of the enclosure which gave no strong magnetic response. This could arise from geological variation or the burial of material which increases soil moisture retention (or salt content) where the hole is only open for a short length of time.

The variation in alignments in the northern area suggests multi-period use. The possible enclosure feature with its N side aligned just off



EW (green) has a similar signal width (1.8 m) and rounded corners in the same manner as the central area enclosure although the alignments of the two features are different. The base lines (yellow) of the 'J' shaped feature are on the same alignment again with a similar width. The stem portion (red) of the 'J' shaped feature runs very closely to NS and is about 3 m wide. This suggests that the 'J' shaped feature is actually two or more separate features rather than one.



Crop marks in the field to the N and W of the paddock (local.live.com 2008) suggest a distinct almost square (60 m x 60 m) enclosure with similar, though less distinct features to the NW. The bottom part of the 'J' shaped feature fits this line almost perfectly, but the NS segment is, even given the imprecision of fitting photographs to surveys, skewed to the square. The (green) ditch feature to the E matches the alignment but its N edge is displaced to the N whilst the small portion of return to the S matches a crop mark line to the SW of the square cropmark. The yellow dotted line shown in the SW of the magnetometry results, matched by low resistivity areas, respects the major alignments, but has not been emphasised because of its proximity to fencing and other modern structures.

Without dating evidence interpretation of the features is uncertain but a plausible hypothesis, based on its size, position (on top of a hill), and shape is that the 'J' shaped feature is a part of the enclosure of a Roman way fort. The other cropmarks to the NW and magnetometry responses to the E suggest that other structures developed around it. The noticeably more rounded corners of the eastern magnetic responses combined with fact they respect the sharply joining linear alignments suggest a post Roman origin. The skew of the magnetic responses recorded to the square shape of the cropmark remains unexplained.

The N end of the 'J' shaped feature is tantalising in that there is an apparent interruption in the signal which could indicate an access point leaving the feature which continues N just beyond the survey area as a crop mark.

The faint signal running to the NNW-SSE (blue) suggests a smaller and therefore perhaps earlier ditch, particularly given that its offshoot at right angles appears to not quite meet the large NS ditch. This gap suggests that the digging of a large ditch caused enough soil displacement to disrupt any signal due to an earlier smaller ditch. If the smaller ditch had come later it would be expected to reach and perhaps modify the signal from the large ditch. This line if extended, crosses the centre of the barrow in the S area, further suggesting an earlier provenance.

As a very speculative conclusion therefore it could be that the last described feature is Iron Age or earlier, and the strong 'J' shaped feature is Roman with the E enclosure being a little later.

report by Dr I Sanderson, 2008