

# Geophysics at Chickwell Farm

**More landscape research in the same valley close to Upper Row Farm**

**C**hickwell Farm is about 1 km west of Upper Row, further up the valley, also on the north side. Some years ago, while we were working on Lower Row Villa, we had espied a field in the distance, below Chickwell Farm, which appeared to be rich in earthworks, and determined that it should be surveyed in due course.

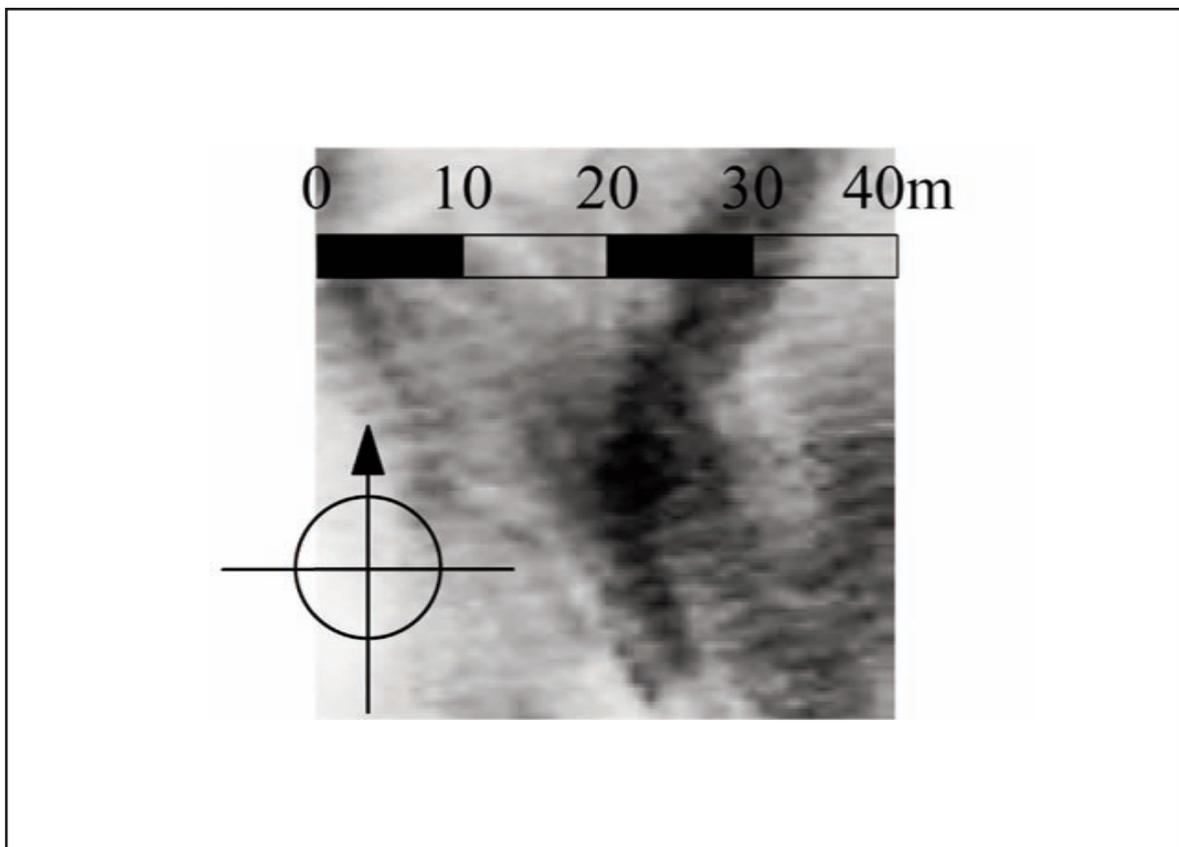
**John Oswin**

January 2009 arrived, and through several months, first wet and then very dry, we carried on our survey with magnetometer and resistance, but could not quite finish it by the time the wheat grew too fast and too high in May. The survey was disappointing in that there was no spectacular villa which we had hoped for, but we did elucidate a pattern of 'Celtic Fields' which extended over this and neighbouring fields. This is in itself useful landscape archaeology, as there have not been any similar features found in all the acres surveyed around Upper Row. Perhaps even in Roman and prehistoric times, Chickwell was the arable region, while the Upper Row area concentrated on rearing stock.

There was one feature of great interest, a possible Roman temple site. The picture obtained was not clear enough to be definite, but there appeared to be a small square cell with an outer square wall around it, with a metallised track leading diagonally to it (see *Figure 1*). The inner and outer square walls are reminiscent of temples at Jordan's Hill and Maiden Castle in Dorset; the presence of masonry just below the surface was confirmed by resistance profiles. There seemed to be a ditched enclosure around it, but otherwise it was just in the middle of fields.

That was in a nice sheltered valley. At the end of 2009, we started on a field on the exposed hilltop above the farm. On walking along the footpath through the field from Chickwell to Faulkland some years ago, I and others had observed very dark soil with a scatter of pottery, so it needed investigating. It was very exposed, it was a long way from any parking and it was cold.

**Figure 1**  
**The pattern of the possible temple**



Indeed, we had to suspend the survey for a month around Christmas as the ground was frozen too hard to use the resistance meter.

The pottery looked at first glance like Roman black burnished ware, but turned out to be early Medieval. However, we were able to get a good picture of a modest building associated with it, and it had a later field boundary going through the middle of it. Right in the middle of the field, we found a building which seemed to be associated with this enclosure, along with a scatter of post-Medieval pottery. The resistance plot for this field is shown in Figure 2. Magnetometry added a little extra detail to it.

Again we were disappointed by the lack of a spectacular villa, but in terms of the Medieval landscape, we got two for the price of one.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to the Francis family of Chickwell for allowing us on their land, thanks to Mark Corney for identifying the pottery, and to all those volunteers who braved two winters. A full report is available on request.

**Figure 2**

**The upper field at Chickwell, with farmstead at the western end, later enclosure and the later farmstead amongst the high resistance signals in the middle**

