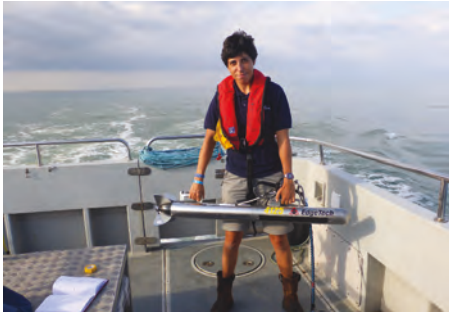


EDITORIAL

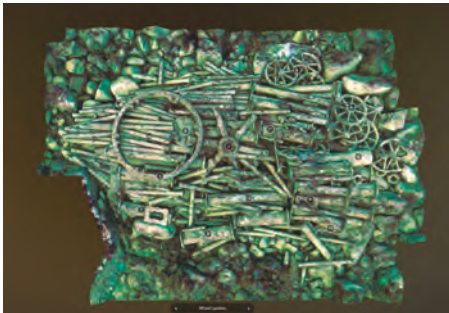
Lucy Parker MSc MCIfA (4972), Archaeological Projects Team, Historic England



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For over 30 years, geophysical survey has played a major role in archaeology: in developer-led investigations, and as a fundamental element of research and community projects. I personally love the unassailable scale of access it gives to archaeological landscapes, and the detail that is achievable without damage. In planning this edition, I was drawn to a paper given by Aspinall and Haigh in 1997 reviewing 25 years of terrestrial archaeological prospection. They felt the future focus lay in the ‘development of instrumentation and interpretative methodology’.

Almost 25 years later, have we fulfilled their expectations? Acquisition speed has increased exponentially through hardware advances. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects are collecting magnetic data equating to thousands of hectares of coverage over their lifecycles. Processing and interpretation methodologies keep pace, automatic processes are commonplace, and with advances in artificial intelligence for the interpretation of remote sensing there is real potential for their employment in the future.

No single approach suits all geologies, archaeological remains or research questions. We are led primarily by standards and guidelines, but are geophysical ones keeping up? The White Paper *Planning for the Future* and recommendations 11 and 21 in the *Tailored Review of Historic England* suggests revisions will need to include technical advances as well as potential changes to the planning system. In this *TA*, Alison James highlights the work updating Historic England’s guidance document *Marine Geophysics Data Acquisition, Processing and Interpretation*.

Geophysical survey is often used within the UK planning process to establish the

presence or absence of archaeological remains. Wessex Archaeology give a precis of the usage of geophysics in both terrestrial and marine environments. The possibilities of geophysical survey reach further than the planning process; Stefan Sagrott demonstrates how geophysics is used in assessing archaeological sensitivities of HES’s properties. Ken Hamilton goes beyond site investigation, presenting the visualisation of historic shipwrecks to allow new audiences access to these protected wreck sites.

Is the perception of geophysics keeping pace with our advances? Nick Hannon discusses the five-year project to embed geophysical survey techniques within HES and to promote its use and best practice throughout Scotland’s heritage sector, which has historically been cautious of these techniques because of variable geology and specific research questions, eg in the case of battlefield archaeology. Hannah Brown demonstrates the importance of the appropriate technique for the survey objectives which can provide crucial information to allow project designs to be more effectively complied. Kimberley Teale’s reflection on a recent training session shows that the appetite for a broader understanding of geophysical capabilities spans the sector; demystifying archaeological geophysics can only lead to improved discussion and more successful geophysical surveys.

I am about to embark on a research project to examine the increased use of geophysical survey within England and how collaboration benefits our discipline. My ‘future focus’ is to maximise the effectiveness of the interpretation of geophysical datasets and to improve the integration of geophysical survey into archaeological investigation. In a small way I hope this aids the development and reliability of archaeological prospection in line with Aspinall and Haigh’s aspirations.