



# Archaeology: 101

## *How do archaeologists know where to dig?*

Archaeologists have several ways of locating buried sites. Historical records are consulted to ascertain if the area was inhabited in the past. Historical photos, property documents and old maps can indicate where human activity took place in the past.

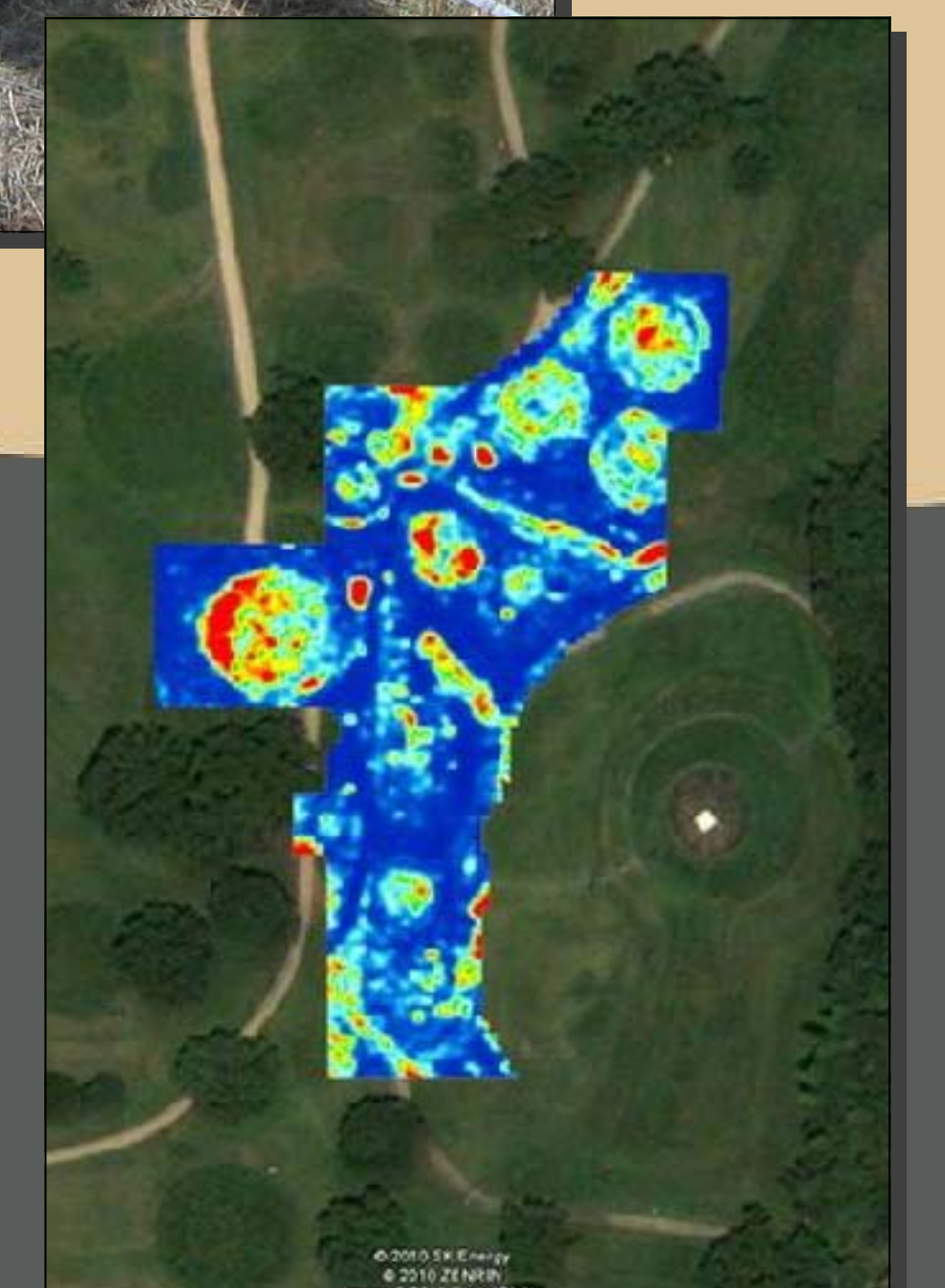
Before an excavation begins, the site is visually surveyed. Walking in grids, archaeologists scan the ground for artifacts, such as **debitage** (stone flakes), glass or **midden soil**. Midden soil indicates previous human occupation. Over time, the soil becomes darker and somewhat greasy from organic substances, ash and moisture that humans left behind.

Geophysical equipment (resistivity meters, magnetometers and ground penetrating radar) may be used to look for features, such as foundations or walls.

**Resistivity meters** can help to locate a site by measuring the electrical resistivity of the soil and any features or artifacts that might be underground. For example, a buried stone wall would show more resistivity than the soil around it.

**Magnetometers** and ground **penetrating radar (GPR)** work in a similar way. These tools print out a view of the differences measured, indicating the presence or absence of artifacts and features.

**Global Positioning Systems (GPS)** and surveying equipment, such as a total station, can provide highly accurate data about the location and position of archaeological sites in the surrounding topography.



Archaeologists using ground penetrating Radar (GPR), to look for hidden features.

GPR Image of buried features at a site