

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land to the rear of 86 Windmill Road,
Headington, Oxford**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Mundin

Site Code: NCO 11/27

(SP 5468 0671)

**Land to the rear of 86 Windmill Road,
Headington, Oxford**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Haseley Homes Ltd**

by Andrew Mordin
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodeNCO11/27

April 2011

Summary

Site name: Land to the rear of 86 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 54686 06715

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 4th April 2011

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Mundin

Site code: NCO 11/27

Area of site: 492 sq m

Summary of results: One trench was dug within the footprint of the proposed development. This revealed a number of Victorian or modern cut features and a goat burial. A subsoil deposit contained ten large but abraded sherds of later Roman pottery. The proposal site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire Museum Service in due course.

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 08.04.11 Steve Preston✓ 08.04.11

Land to the rear of 86 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Muddin

Report 11/27

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land to the rear of 86 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford (SP 54686 06715) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Neil Gorton, of Haseley Homes Ltd, Charterford, 75 London Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 9BB.

Planning permission (10/01496/FUL) has been gained from Oxford City Council for the construction of a block of three small houses on the site, following the demolition of the existing garages. The consent is subject to a condition (12) requiring that a programme of archaeological fieldwork be undertaken in order to provide information to allow proposals to be made to mitigate the effects of the proposed development on any sub-surface archaeological deposits if necessary.

These works are in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the City Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, City Archaeologist for Oxford. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin on 4th April 2011 and the site code is NCO 11/27. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the rear of 86 Windmill Road, though the full site boundary would also include part of rear gardens of No's 82 and 84 to the south (Figs 1 and 2). The north-east side of the site is currently encroached on by an overgrown raised bed at the western extent of the garden of No. 86 (Fig. 3). The part of the site available to trench, is currently in use as hardstanding for vehicles in front of the five derelict garages that exist on the west side of the site. The underlying geology of the site is mapped as the Beckley Sands (BGS 1994). The site is flat at a height of 98m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

The site lies within an area of Oxford from which a wide range of sites and find-spots from various periods have been recorded. The historic core of the medieval village of Headington is a short distance to the north, though the site probably lies outside the medieval settlement zone; as the housing expansion to this part of Headington occurred in the early part of the 20th century (Tiller and Darke 2010). Recently, during the construction of a new music department at Headington School on London Road, to the north, archaeological evaluation and excavation found boundary ditches forming the corner of a probable enclosure, of early Roman date (Cass 2008).

A number of find-spots and sites of Roman date have been previously identified in the environs, including those relating to pottery production such as kilns and, possibly, small market settlements (Briggs *et al.* 1986), such as in the Bayswater Hill area near Barton (Pine 2004). This industrial zone has been projected to cover lands to the south and east of Oxford, possibly up past the Beckley ridge on Otmoor (Mundin 2009) by the Alchester to Dorchester-on-Thames Roman road (Margery 1973, route 160). These kiln sites are notable for the large quantity of *mortaria* (large, interior-gritted food-mixing bowls), parchment and colour-coat finewares whose produce was widely traded across the Midlands and southern England during Roman times (Young 2000). Several kilns are recorded in Headington such at the Churchill Hospital to the south, Headington Poor Lot and Headington Wick both to the north-east, which also belongs with a villa complex (Henig and Booth 2000; Cass 2008). There is also conjecture as to a possible Roman road following the London Road through Headington, linking on the west side of Oxford with the Roman road to the south-west that runs through Oxfordshire towards the villa complex at Frilford and beyond (Margary 1974, route 164; Dodd 2003). None of these sites though are recorded especially close to this development site.

The nearest archaeological works to the current site occurred as rescue works were carried out during redevelopment of the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre on the Old Road frontage. Quantities of waster pottery, from an unidentified kiln were noted during these works (Sutermeister 1963). More small scale phased archaeological works during expansion here and at the Churchill Hospital, failed to identify further features of Roman interest (CAT 2000; Hammond 2003).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The only ground available to sample at this

time is the land associated with the garages to the rear of No. 86, but this is within the footprint to the new development.

The specific research aims of the project are:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period area present; and
- to determine if any deposits relating to Roman occupation or pottery production are present.

It was proposed that a single trench up to 15m long was to be dug on hardstanding in front of the garages. This was curtailed in length to 8.7m, due to overgrowth and other site restrictions to the north and east (Fig.3). It was excavated with a bladed bucket on a back-acting mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. Any possible archaeological deposits were hand defined and excavated using hand tools. Investigations of features were carried out in such a way as to not compromise the integrity of any that would warrant preservation *in situ* or might better be investigated under the conditions of full excavation. All trench spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results

A description of Trench 1 giving length, breadth, and depth and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4; Pl.1 and 2)

Trench 1 was 8.7m long. Across its length a layer of gravel hardstanding (50) was removed to uncovered a dark brown silty clay (51), which contained Victorian or early 20th-century tile or brick, glassware, white china pottery and ferrous metal. This was seen to a maximum depth across the trench of 0.43m. This deposit also dipped to infill small pits (cuts 2 and 3), two drain trenches and a soakaway (Fig. 3). A small curving truncation (4) was also noted at the south eastern end of the trench. Cut 2 was sectioned to sample this group of features, which identified two sherds of white china pottery (not retained), within a dark brown grey clayey silt which contained frequent charcoal flecks. This was 0.48m wide and 0.12m deep (Fig. 4).

Cut 1 was partially exposed, with the remainder under the NE trench side. The section recorded its north-western edge was truncated by a modern soakaway. Its maximum thickness was 0.25m and the exposed section was 0.52m wide. Of the exposed base of the feature, fill 56 was fully excavated. This was a mottled yellowish brown sandy clayey silt. This fill contained no datable material. At the base of the cut a cluster of articulated animal bone was identified (53). Though this pit cuts layer 52, it is thought that this feature is also of recent date.

Subsoil layer 52 beneath layer 51 and all the cuts seen in this Trench, was noted to be between 0.43m and 0.68m deep. Ten sherds of Roman pottery were recovered, along with a piece of cement. This light yellowish brown sandy silt layer was present across the entire trench length, above the natural sand geology

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The archaeological evaluation resulted in the recovery of ten sherds of Roman pottery weighing 230g (Appendix 3). Although the sherds are of a moderately good size they are quite abraded with some post-deposition accretions adhering to the surfaces. The sherds are all from the local Oxfordshire industry and indeed one of the manufacturing locations for these wares is thought to have been based at Headington where pottery wasters and kiln debris have previously been recorded (Young 2000, 249). The group of pottery here was recovered from a subsoil/ploughsoil (52) but appears to form a fairly cohesive group dating to the later Roman period although accompanied by a fragment of modern building material (cement).

Animal bone by Matilda Holmes

A small group of articulated goat bones was recovered from context 53. They were generally in fair condition, although the surface of some was considerably more weathered, suggesting that they were not completely buried following burial, but some were left exposed to the elements. All bones were complete, and no typical butchery marks were observed. However, a metacarpal had a 'notch' sawn into it just below the proximal end, possibly evidence for preliminary bone working. There was no evidence for gnawing, burning or other signs of disarticulation.

The group comprised a mandible, six cervical vertebrae (including the axis), two thoracic vertebrae; a humerus; two radii (left and right), one with the ulna attached; and two metacarpals (left and right). The animal was old, having a mandible wear stage of 45 (Grant 1982) and fully fused vertebrae, indicating it was over 7 years of age (Silver 1969). It stood *c.*575mm at the shoulder (using indices from Schramm 1967).

The absence of foot bones, hind legs and skull may either be due to limitations in excavation, or that only the restricted suite of bones had been buried originally. It is unlikely, given the processing of the carcass that must have occurred while the bone was fresh, that this was a 'ritual' deposition, but probably discarded for another reason. The absence of butchery marks suggests, although not conclusively, that the meat was not removed, and it was not given to dogs to eat.

Conclusion

This evaluation has revealed a small collection of later Roman pottery but no cut features of similar date. The seven-year-old goat burial in Cut 1 is also somewhat peculiar as it is not what would be expected in this setting, but it is possible that this can be classed as a domestic pet, as the meat was clearly not consumed. The keeping of goats as pets is a relatively recent phenomenon. The Roman pottery comprises moderately large sherds, which is usually indicative of a derivation from close to where it was first deposited (such as adjacent to an occupation site) and that if redeposited, it may not have been subject to many such episodes, but in this case the material is notably abraded, suggesting that it has been derived from a garden or ploughsoil. However, both the numbers and the relative size of the sherds is not typical of simple manured arable land, which could be at some distance from the occupied areas. It is concluded that the trenching has demonstrated that the proposal site itself has low potential but that there may be greater potential for an occupation site or kiln site in adjacent areas.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at NW end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	8.7	1.6	NW - 0.73 SE - 0.65	0–0.16m gravel hardstanding; 0.16-0.43m dark brown silty clay made ground (Victorian/20th century); 0.43m-0.68m yellowish/brown sandy silt subsoil; 0.68m+ mottled orange/brown yellow clayey sand (natural geology). Animal burial [1] and pits [2, 3], and linear truncation [4] (all Victorian/20th century). [Plates 1 and 2]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	1	56 53 (sk)	Animal burial	Pre-20th century	-
1	2	54 (top)	Pit	Victorian/modern	Pottery (not retained)
1	3	55 (top)	Pit (unexc)	Victorian/modern	Pottery, glass, CBM (not retained)
1	4	57	Linear truncation (unexc)	Victorian	Pottery, CBM (not retained)
1	-	50	Gravel Handstanding	Modern	-
1	-	51	Made Ground	Victorian/modern	Pottery, glass, CBM, metal (non retained)
1	-	52	Ploughsoil/subsoil	Post-Roman	pottery

APPENDIX 3: Pottery Catalogue

<i>Context</i>	<i>Ftype</i>	<i>Desc</i>	<i>No sherds</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Date range</i>
52	Subsoil	base sherd in oxidized orange Oxfordshire ware. Possibly originally white-slipped.	1	29	mid 3rd-4th century.
52	Subsoil	bodysherd Oxfordshire grey sandy ware	1	11	Roman
52	Subsoil	Four bodysherds and three rimsherds of Oxfordshire white ware <i>mortarium</i> , Young (2000) type M22.	7	180	mid 3rd-4th century.
52	Subsoil	bodysherd Oxfordshire white ware	1	10	Roman

APPENDIX 4: Animal bone table



**Land to the rear of 86 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford, 2011
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Figure 1. Location of site in Headington and Oxfordshire.

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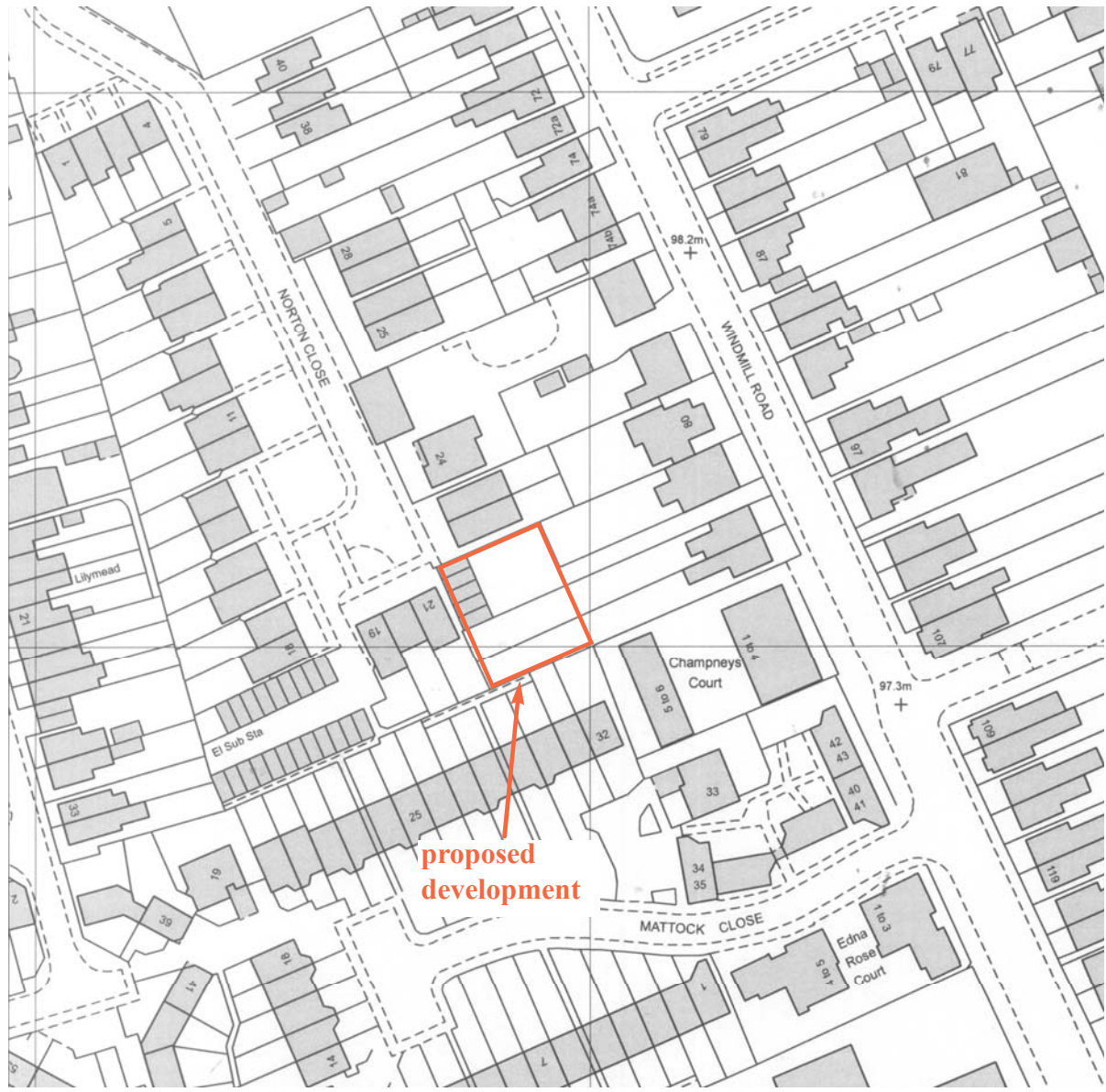
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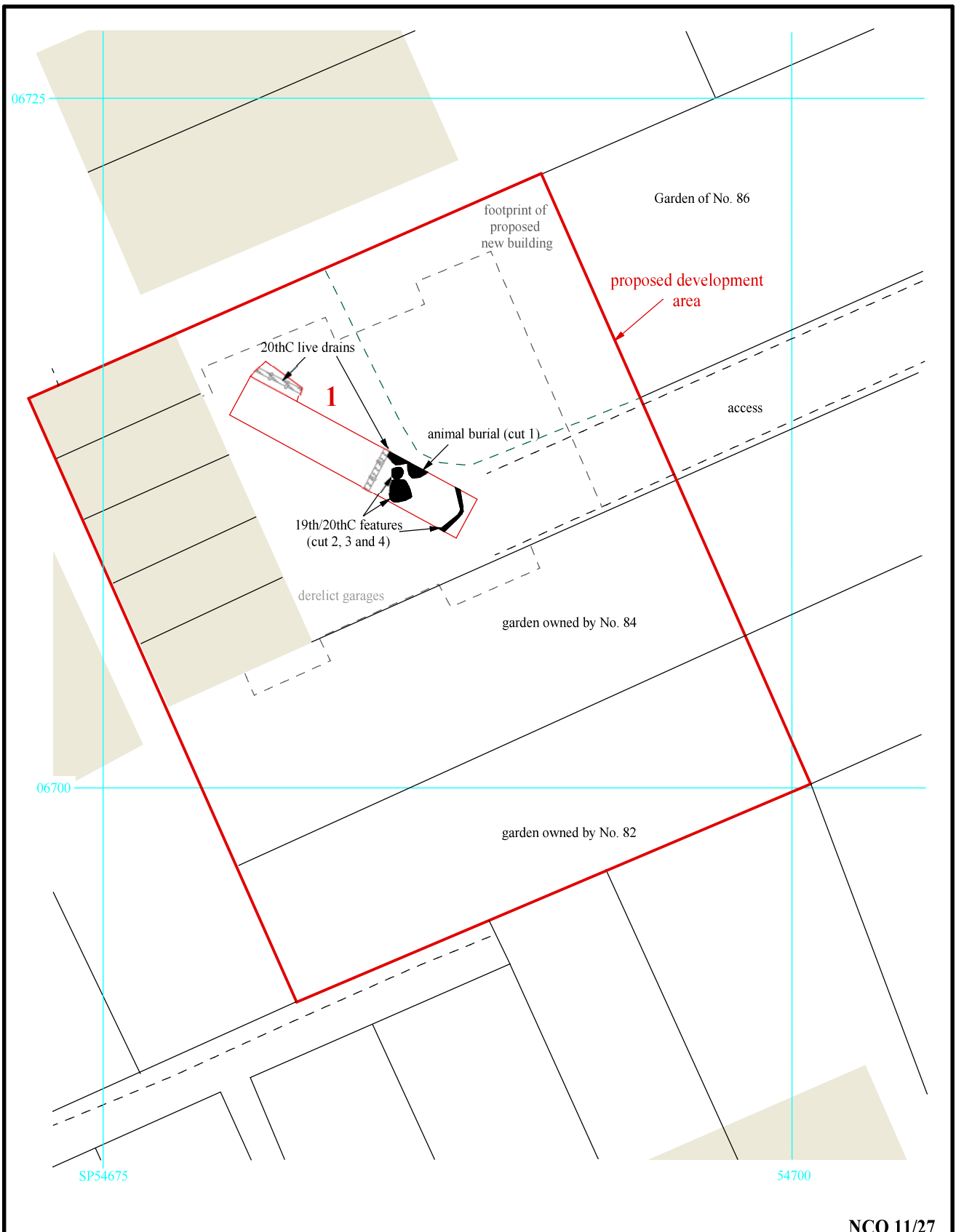
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Windmill Road.

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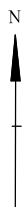




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Figure 3. Location of Trench 1, within the proposed development area.



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Plate 1. Trench , looking north west, horizontal scales 2m and 1m, vertical scale 0.5m.



Plate 2. Trench 1, animal burial (pit 1), looking north east, horizontal scale 0.1m, vertical scale 0.5m.

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Rear of 86 Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford, 2011
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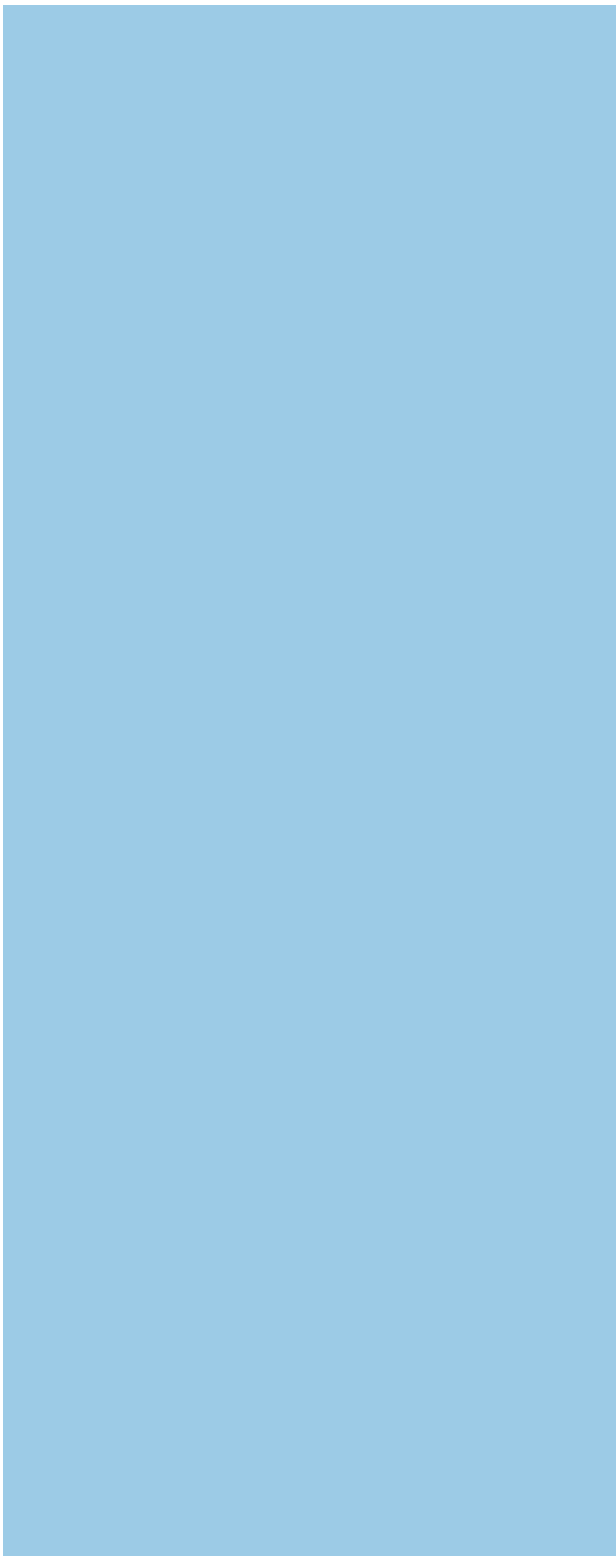
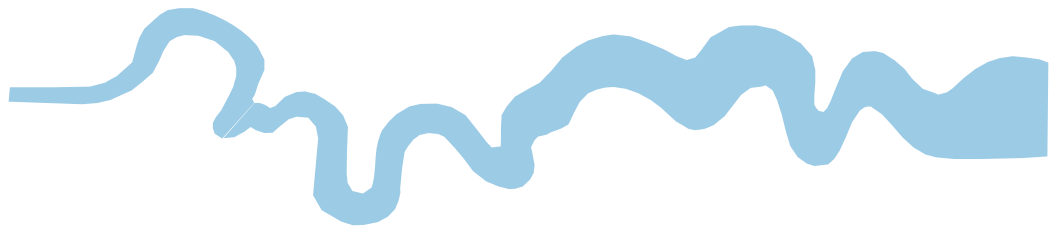
Plates 1 and 2.

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
Iron Age _____	BC/AD 750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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