

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Rear of 53-67 Newbury Street,
Wantage, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson and Susan Porter

Site Code: NWO10/121

(SU 3995 8752)

**Rear of 53-67 Newbury Street, Wantage,
Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd

by TimDawsonandSusanPorter
ThamesValleyArchaeologicalServices
Ltd

SiteCodeNWO10/121

May 2011

Summary

Site name: Rear of 53-67 Newbury Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 3995 8752

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 31st March - 14th April 2011

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Tim Dawson and Susan Porter

Site code: NWO 10/121

Area of site: c.0.17ha

Summary of results: A medieval buried soil layer, previously identified during the evaluation, was found although no accompanying finds were recovered on this occasion. No other archaeological deposits were observed.

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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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 31.05.10
	Steve Preston ✓ 31.05.10

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Report 10/121b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on land to the rear of 53-67 Newbury Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire (SU 3995 8752) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Cliff Buddery of Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Ltd, Abingdon Science Park, Barton Lane, Abingdon, OX14 3NB.

In October 2010 planning permission was sought from the Vale of White Horse District Council to extend the new residential development off Ormond Street. The extension consists of five houses, garages, car parking and a new access road (WAN/21361). Due to the potential presence of surviving archaeological features, an archaeological field evaluation was requested to investigate whether such deposits were present. Some archaeological features were revealed but were not of such importance as to preclude development. Subsequently, when planning permission was granted, a condition was attached requiring that an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the period of groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5 2010), and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council (Coddington 2011). The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson and Susan Porter between 31st March and 14th April 2011 and the site code is NWO 10/121.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located at the south-eastern edge of the modern town of Wantage, to the east of Newbury Street and south of Ormond Road. It is bounded to the west, north and east by residential housing and to the south by Wantage C of E Primary School (Fig. 2). The site is flat and was had been cleared and levelled in preparation for the groundworks. Wantage lies at the foot of the Berkshire Downs and is at an elevation of c.95m above

Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is recorded as Upper Greensand (BGS 1979) and this was observed in all of the groundworks.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site area has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Mr. Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (2011) drawing on the results of a field evaluation (Lewis 2010b). In summary, the site lies close to an extensive complex of archaeological deposits examined by excavation. These deposits were mostly of medieval and early post-medieval date but with some Roman and Saxon deposits present (Lewis 2010a). However, an area to the north east of the proposal site contained a Middle Bronze Age urned cremation cemetery and it is possible that contemporary occupation deposits may be present nearby. Although the site lies beyond what is thought to be the limits of the medieval and early post-medieval town (Foster 1975), it is possible that further medieval occupation along Newbury Street is present. If so, it was possible that backland usage of the properties could be present on the proposal site. The recent evaluation on the site revealed a number of linear features probably representing field or paddock boundaries of medieval date along with an area of buried soil containing medieval pottery.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular monitoring of the excavation of foundation trenches.

The foundation trenches of the four plots were excavated using a 360°-type mechanical digger with a 0.90m wide ditching bucket. The spoil was monitored as it was removed from the ground before it was taken away by dumper truck to the site spoil heap. The trenches were all shallow enough to allow safe entry for the hand-cleaning and excavation of all possible archaeological deposits.

Results

The foundation trenches were observed being excavated one plot at a time (Pl. 1), all varied in width between 0.40m and 1.30m and were dug to a depth of 0.85m below the reduced and levelled ground level (Fig. 3). Prior to its reduction, the ground was slightly higher along the northern edge of the site. This was visible in the layers exposed by the trenches in this area. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.12m of topsoil overlying 0.24m of subsoil,

which, in turn overlay the natural Greensand. Towards the southern edge of the site the topsoil had been completely removed leaving 0.10m of subsoil overlying the Greensand. The Greensand itself was fairly homogenous but in places it did appear to contain darker areas which, on excavation, proved to be natural variations in colour. The lower extents of the evaluation trenches (Lewis 2010b) were observed in their reported locations where they cut across the foundation trenches.

None of the features discovered in the evaluation were observed during the excavation of the foundation trenches although buried soil layers 52/53 and 54 were tentatively identified in the southern-most footing of the south-western plot. Layer 150 consisted of a 0.25m-thick firm light green-grey silty clay and appears to correspond in composition and position with deposit 53 from the evaluation. Above 150 was 151, a 0.25m-thick mid green-grey silt clay of medium compaction which may be the same as deposits 52 or 53 in evaluation trench 4 (Fig. 4, Pl. 2). Both of the layers extended over 2.00m east-west along the trench but then appeared to gradually peter out. No finds were recovered from 150 or 151.

The western end of the site was criss-crossed by several chalk-filled drainage gullies at right-angles to each other, all of which measured 0.12m wide and 0.19m deep. These had been identified as modern by the evaluation and so were discounted in the watching brief. A modern drainage pipe cut southwest-northeast across the north-western corner of the site.

Finds

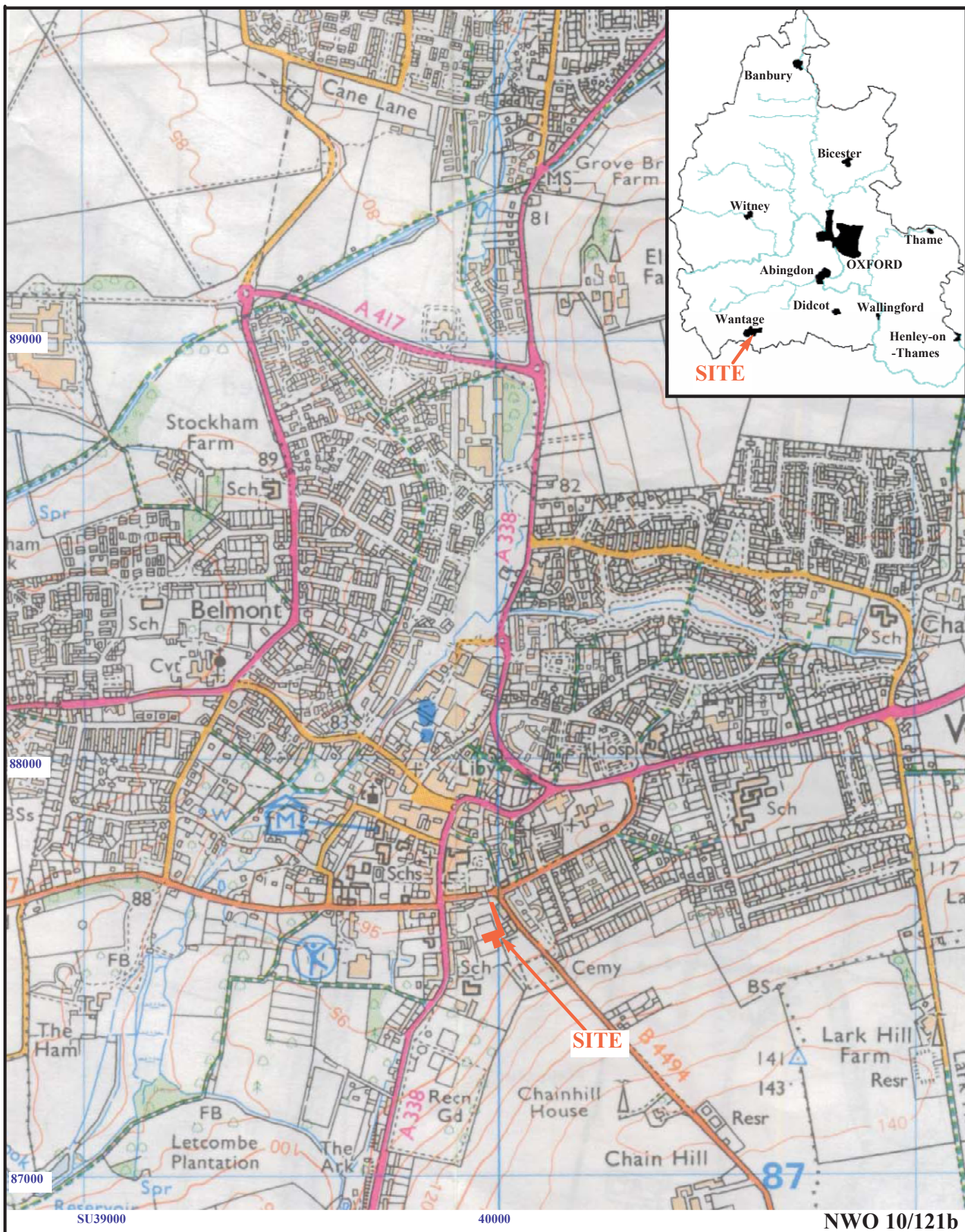
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the site.

Conclusion

Despite several features of medieval date being identified on the site during the previous archaeological evaluation (Lewis 2010b), none were observed during the excavation of the foundation trenches monitored in the course of the watching brief, though an area of buried soil was noted again. One explanation for this paucity of remains is the shallow nature of the archaeological deposits that were recorded in the evaluation, they being too ephemeral to be clearly recognised during the more limited extent of watching brief excavations.

References

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- Foster, R, Rodwell, K, Squires, R and Turner, H, 1975, 'Wantage', in K Rodwell (ed), *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, Oxford Archaeol Unit Survey 3, Oxford, 163–9
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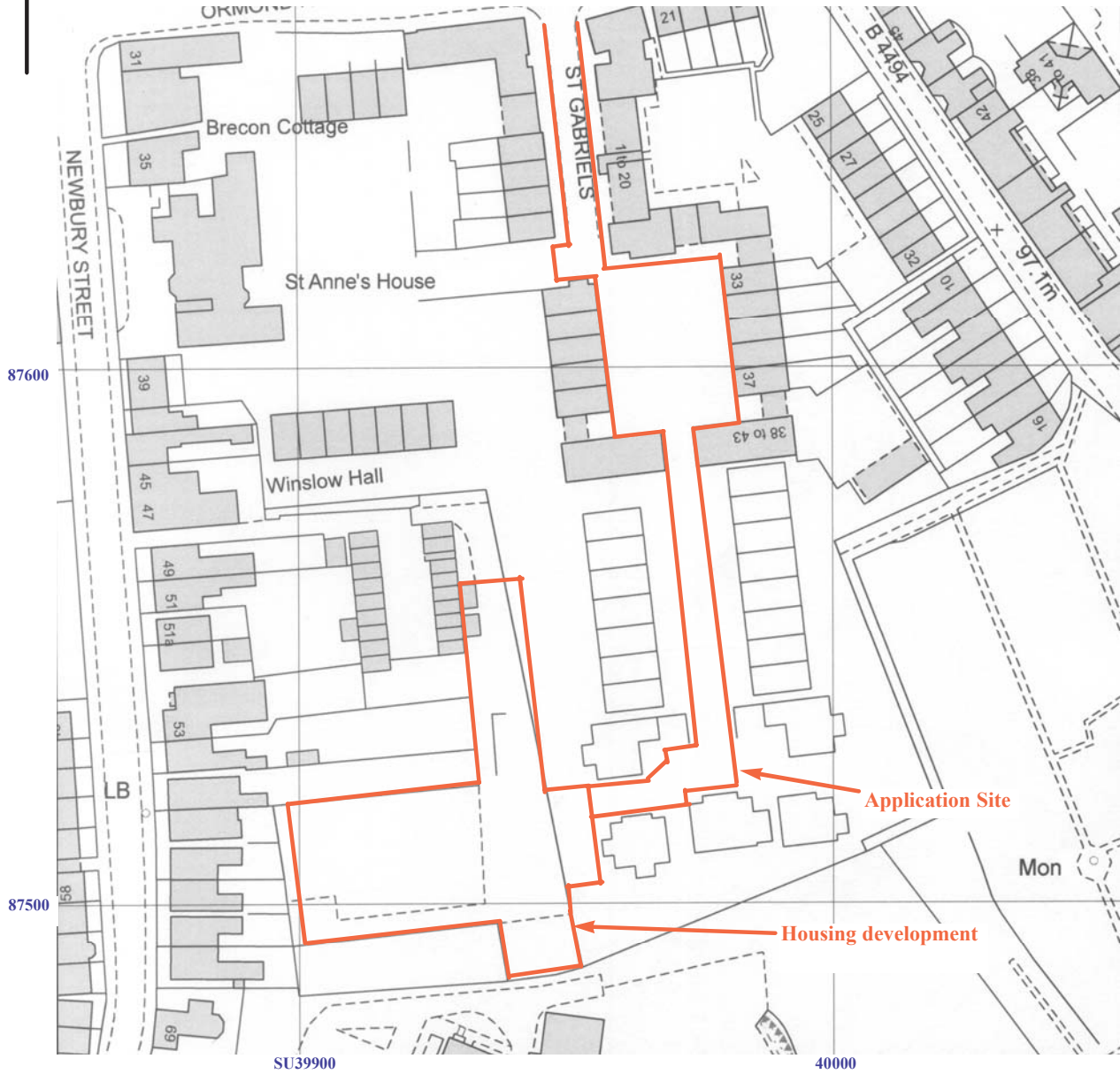


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Figure 1. Location of site within Wantage and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Newbury Street.

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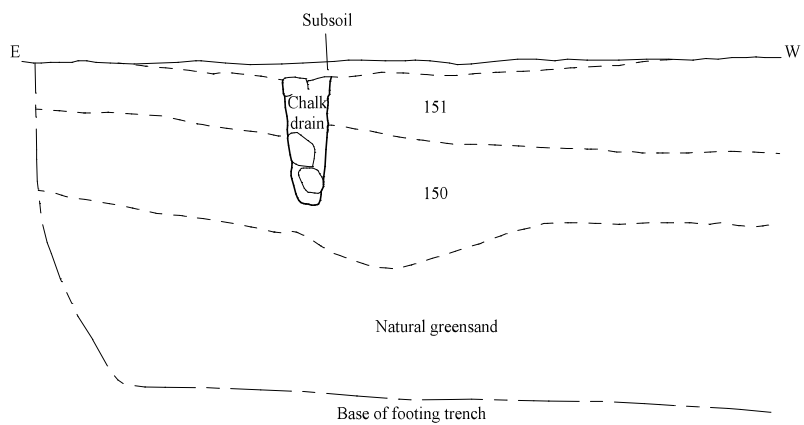


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Figure 3. Observed areas of the site in relation to the previous evaluation (Lewis 2010).





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Figure 4. Section.



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Plate 1. General view across the western end of the site, looking north west, Scales: 1m and 2m



Plate 2. Footing trench with layers 150 and 151, looking south, Scales: 1m and 2m.

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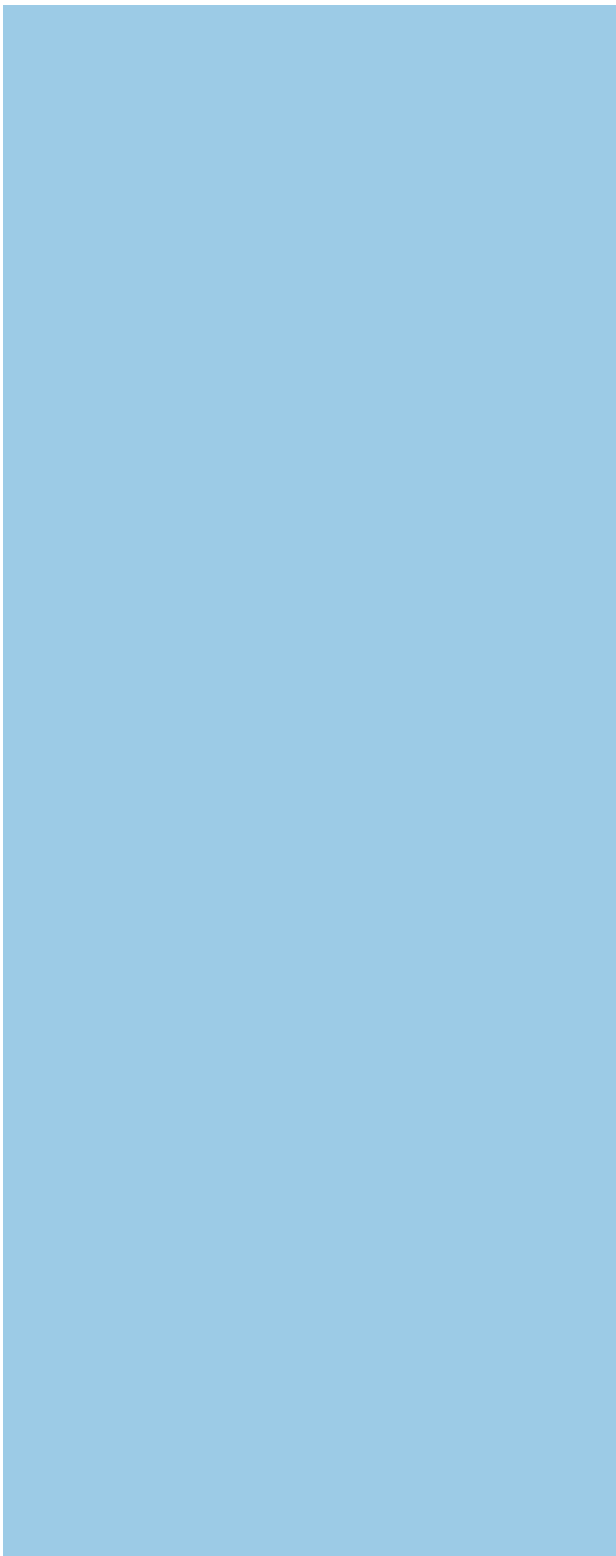
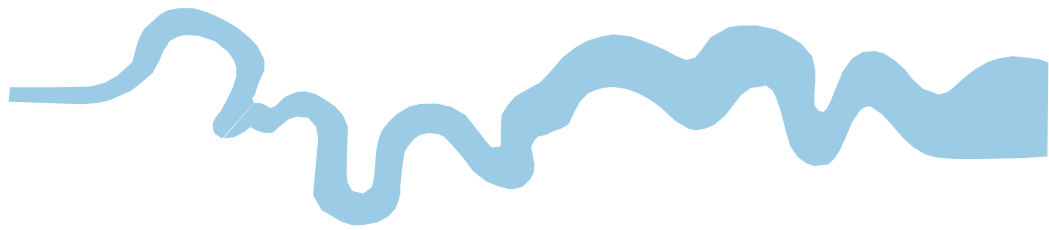
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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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