

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at 1 St Ronans Road,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Site Code: RRR11/64

(SU 6888 7343)

**Land at 1 St Ronans Road, Reading,
Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for The Keen Partnership**

by David Platt
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code RRR11/64

July 2011

Summary

Site name: Land at 1 St Ronans Road, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6888 7343

Site activity: Field evaluation

Date and duration of project: 29th June - 1st July 2011

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: David Platt

Site code: RRR 11/64

Area of site: c.0.14 ha

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits or finds were uncovered and the site is considered to have no archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 04.07.11 Steve Preston ✓ 04.07.11
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Land at 1 St Ronans Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by David Platt

Report 11/64

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 1st Ronan Road (SU 6888 7343) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Dennis Matthews, of The Keen Partnership, The Courtyard, Edinburgh Road, Reading, RG30 2UA.

Planning consent (08/00879/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council to construct four new houses on a c. 014 ha parcel of land off St Ronans Road, Reading, Berkshire. The consent was subject to a condition (4) relating to archaeology, which required the implementation of a programme of archaeological works prior to the commencement of groundworks. This was to take the form, initially, of a field evaluation, based on the results of which, a further phase of investigation might be required. This was in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), which it is acknowledged has since been superseded by the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mrs Mary Neale, Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the borough on matters relating to archaeology.

The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Jacqui Pitt on 29th June and 1st July 2011 and the site code is RRR 11/64. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies within suburban Reading on an irregular plot of land accessed from St Ronans Road to the north (Fig. 2). The site includes 1 St Ronan Road which was extant at the time of the survey. Extensive scrub in the garden area to the rear had recently been cut down but with piles of timber and other debris still present. The site lies on the side of the Thames Valley and the ground slopes gently down to the north. However, a steep drop lies just to the south, perhaps indicating the presence of a former quarry or clay pit. The underlying geology is Reading Beds (BGS 1946) and this was observed in the trenches as a mixed orange clayey sand with pebbles which graded to a cleaner sand with depth. The site lies at a height of c. 64m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the margins of the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wide variety of sites and finds recorded in the area. It's more detailed location, however, is in a part of Reading not much explored archaeologically (Lobb and Rose, 1996). An isolated Roman coin find is recorded 100m or so to the west, and a Neolithic flint axe 300m to the south. Further to the south-east, Bronze Age and Roman deposits have been recorded during 19th- and early 20th-century quarrying (Grovelands Pit), from which a large volume of Palaeolithic flintwork was also recovered from beneath and within the gravel.

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 specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if there are prehistoric or Roman deposits present on the site.

Four trenches were to be dug, all 1.6m wide, three 10m long and one 5m long, using a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, under constant supervision by an archaeologist. The spoil heaps were to be monitored for finds. The trenches were to be targeted at the areas of the proposed new buildings and access road turning head. A contingency of 5m of trench was included within the proposal should this be required to clarify the initial findings.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas would be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would then be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the project, without compromising the integrity of any deposits that might better be excavated under the conditions of full excavation..

Results

All four trenches were excavated and ranged in length from 7m to 10m (Fig. 3). Some adjustment to their positions took place due to the presence of debris piles and trees on the site. Trenches 1, 3 and 4 were slightly narrower than intended (1.50m wide) due to the use of a tracked mini-digger for their digging.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 4 and Plate 1)

This trench was 1.5 wide and 9.5m long, aligned SW–NE. It was 0.50m deep at the north end, 0.40m at the south. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil (dark brown-grey sandy silt containing fragments of modern brick, chalk flecks, charcoal flecks, moderate pebbles and numerous roots) up to 0.26m deep overlying subsoil (yellow-grey/brown sandy silt with a similar range of inclusions) up to 0.22m deep, which in turn overlay the natural gravel which consisted of yellow-brown clay sand with occasional chalk, pebbles, and flint. An area of root disturbance was observed at 6.5m from the south-west end of the trench and a subsoil patch at 8.5m was simply filling a natural hollow. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were present.

Trench 2 (Plate 2)

This trench was 1.6m wide and 9.0m long, aligned SE–NW. It was 0.36m deep at the north end, 0.47m at the south. The stratigraphy comprised 0.26m of topsoil above 0.14m of subsoil above the natural geology,. Within the topsoil, at 3.6m from the south-east end was the remains of a brick pigsty, 2.1m long and 0.13m deep. At 7.70m from the south-east end of the trench was a tree bole with roots still evident. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were present.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 10.0m long, 1.5m wide and aligned NW–SE. It varied from 0.31m to 0.36m deep. It had to be positioned further west than intended to avoid a large debris pile. The stratigraphy in this trench consisted of 0.19m of topsoil over 0.12m of subsoil, over the natural geology. At 7.90m from the west end was a linear orange sandy patch up to 0.70m wide. A slot through this revealed it to be nothing more than a brighter sand band in the natural geology. Nothing of archaeological interest was recorded.

Trench 4

This trench was 1.5m wide and 7.0m long, aligned SE–NW. It was 0.30m deep at the north end, 0.58m at the south. At the north end the stratigraphy comprised 0.15m of topsoil above 0.15m of subsoil above the natural geology, whereas at the southern end topsoil deepened to 0.25m and subsoil to 0.3m. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were present.

Finds

No finds of any archaeological interest were recovered from the trenches or the spoilheaps.

Conclusion

Although the archaeologically relevant levels had survived in all four trenches, nothing of archaeological interest from any period was noted. On the basis of these results, the site can be considered to have no archaeological potential.

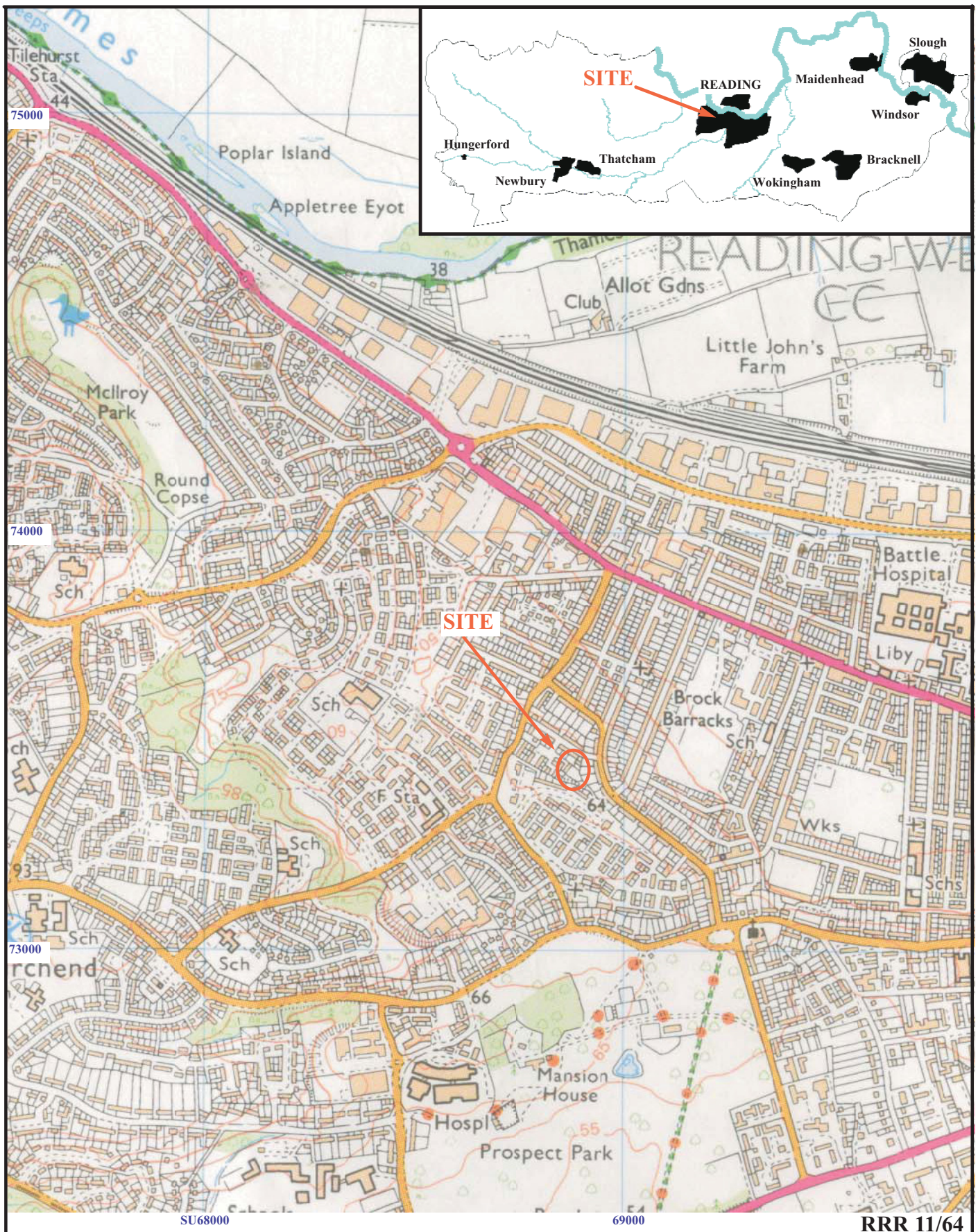
References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Lobb, S J and Rose, P G, 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol Rep 9, Salisbury
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
PPS5, 2010, *Planning for the Historic Environment*, The Stationery Office, Norwich

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	9.50	1.50	SW: 0.45 NE: 0.50	0–0.26m topsoil; 0.26–0.48m subsoil (yellow-grey/brown sandy silt with brick, chalk and charcoal fragments; 0.48m+ natural geology (yellow-brown clay sand with pebbles). Some root disturbance at 8.50m. [PI. 1]
2	9.00	1.60	SE: 0.47 NW: 0.36	0–0.26m topsoil; 0.26–0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ natural geology. Treebole at 7.70m. Brick pig sty at 3.60m within topsoil. [PI. 2]
3	10.00	1.50	0.36m	0–0.19m topsoil; 0.19–0.31m subsoil; 0.31m+ natural geology.
4	7.00	1.50	NW: 0.30 SE: 0.58	NW: 0–0.15m topsoil; 0.15–0.30m subsoil; 0.30m+ natural geology. SE: 0–0.25m topsoil; 0.25–0.55m subsoil; 0.55m+ natural geology.

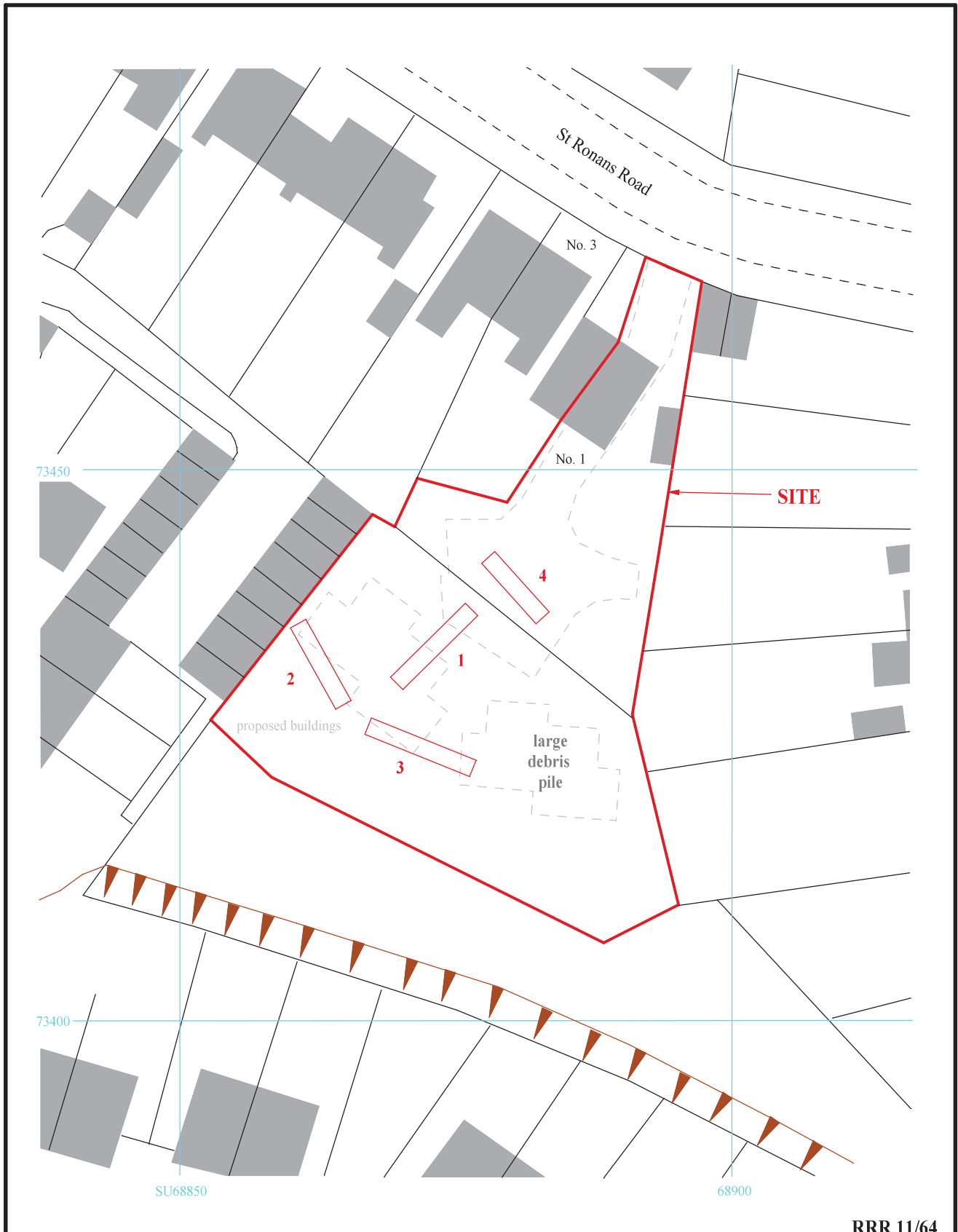


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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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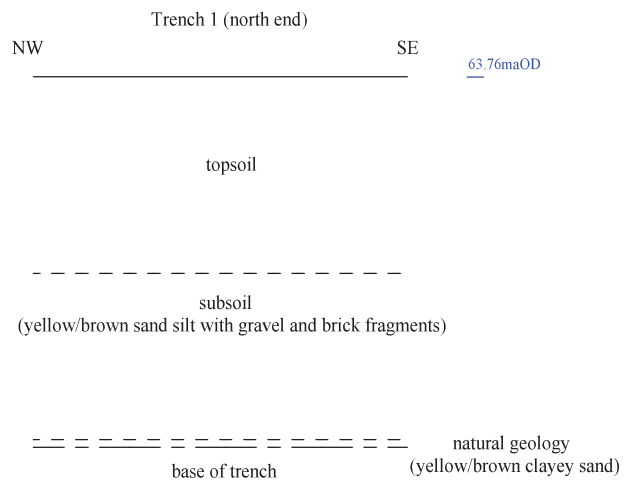
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north-east, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north-west, Scales: 2m, 1m and 0.5m

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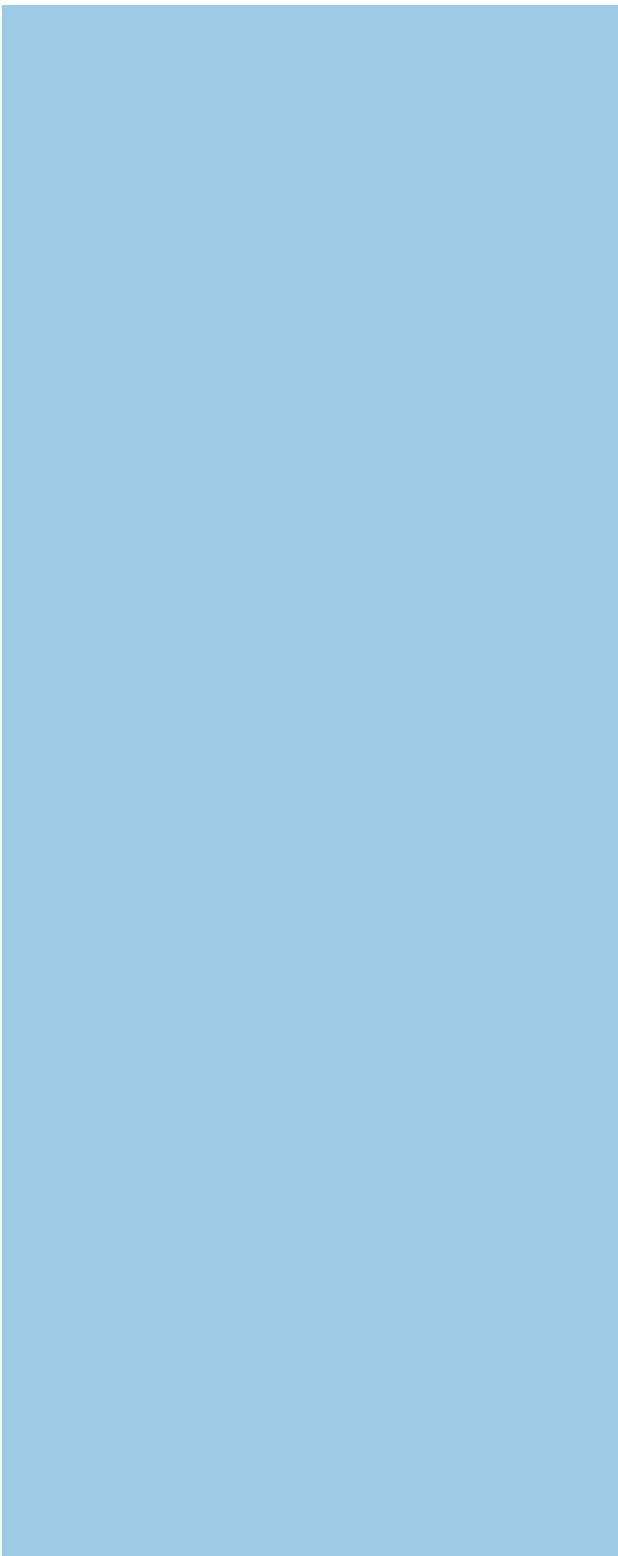
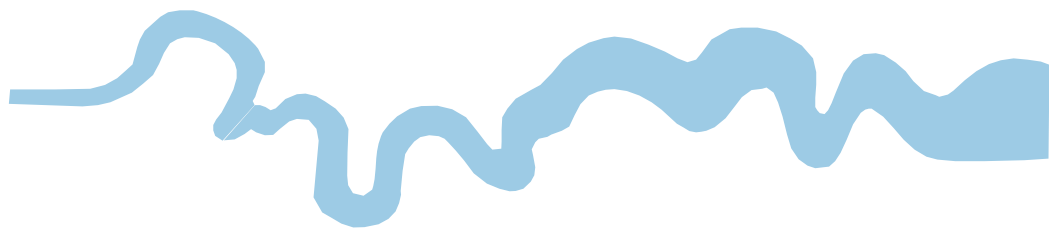
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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