

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Former Highbury College, Cosham,  
Portsmouth, Hampshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Tim Dawson and David Platt**

**Site Code: HCP09/112**

**(SU 6635 0455)**

# **Former Highbury College, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hampshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Taylor Wimpey**

by Tim Dawson and David Platt  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code HCP09/112

**July 2011**

## Summary

**Site name:** Former Highbury College, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hampshire

**Grid reference:** SU 6635 0455

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 15th January - 11th February 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** David Platt

**Site code:** HCP 09/112

**Area of site:** c.0.22ha observed within overall site of 2.7ha

**Summary of results:** No finds or features of archaeological interest were observed.

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

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 27.07.11 Steve Preston ✓ 27.07.11
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# Former Highbury College, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hampshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Tim Dawson and David Platt

Report 09/112

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the site of the former Highbury College, Dovercourt Road, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hampshire (SU 6635 0455) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Anthony Wass, formerly of Taylor Wimpey Southern Counties, Templars House, Lulworth Close, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire, SO53 3TJ.

A planning consent (06/00699/FUL) has been granted by Portsmouth City Council to redevelop the former college site for residential use with associated car parking access and open space zones. This is subject to a condition (10) which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

This was in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the City's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr John Pike Conservation and Design Team Leader, Portsmouth City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by David Platt and Rob Skinner between 15th January and 11th February 2010 and the site code is HCP 09/112.

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

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the Highbury area on the southern edge of Cosham, north of the city of Portsmouth. Ports Creek flows eastward 100m south of the site, dividing Portsea Island to the south from the mainland. The site itself is bordered by housing to the west, north and east with the A27 running east-west along its southern edge (Fig. 2). The land was previously in use as Highbury College which was demolished prior to the current works. Topographically the site is flat and its underlying geology is described as Quaternary Raised Marine Deposits: silt and silty sand (BGS 1998). This was observed onsite albeit in a waterlogged form. The site is level, at a height of 2.4m above Ordnance Datum.



## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location in a low-lying, coastal setting where there is cartographic evidence for salt production in post-medieval times and which may have much earlier origins. Coastal zones similar to the environs of the site are often rich in prehistoric and later activity as evidenced by survey work in the nearby Langstone Harbour (Allen and Gardiner 2000). Information contained within the Portsmouth Historic Environment Record notes that Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age material has been found in many locations on Portsea Island and on the islands and mud flats in Portsmouth Harbour (Roberts 2002) and there have been some Mesolithic finds from north-east of the site. Later evidence (Roman, Saxon and medieval) is less well represented in the immediate vicinity but a Saxon coin and medieval pottery are noted to the north. More remains are to be found at Portchester Castle to the north-west, Hayling Island to the east and on the peninsula further south. Much of the area's archaeological potential derives from the post-medieval period when the importance of the port and naval dockyard dominate the area.

The association of archaeology with natural deposits resulting from alluviation or peat formation in low-lying settings can also allow for the recovery of evidence to allow for the reconstruction of the contemporary environment. Although much of the site has been previously developed it is possible that some archaeological deposits still exist on the site.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks, primarily demolition works in the first instance. It was anticipated that both the demolition and the groundworks for the new foundations (piles and groundbeams) would only lead to limited exposure of archaeologically relevant horizons.

The excavation and removal of the old foundations was carried out using a 360°-type mechanical digger with a variety of buckets. Where possible, spoil was monitored as it was removed and, again, where conditions allowed, possible archaeological deposits were hand-cleaned. However, due to the low-lying nature of the site and its proximity to a watercourse, several of the excavated areas rapidly filled with water which obscured the newly-exposed ground (Pls 1 and 2).

## Results

Three areas of demolition were monitored during the removal of the previous foundations (Fig. 3). Various concrete slabs and beams were removed by digging down around them to enable the diggers and breakers to get a purchase for their removal. The depths of these excavations varied between 0.80m and 1.50m deep though the stratigraphy exposed was largely uniform across the site. This comprised 0.05m of Tarmac or loose rubble overlying 0.94m of mixed sand and rubble made ground, which in turn overlay 0.22m of rubble mixed with dark grey clayey silt. Beneath these layers a grey-brown silty sand was exposed which was interpreted as the natural geology (Fig. 4).

No archaeological finds or features, nor deposits with palaeoenvironmental potential (eg peat) were identified during the demolition works. In the light of the confirmation of the presence extensive and deep modern made ground across the site, it was determined that the groundworks for the new development would not be deeper than the made ground (piles excepted) and no further useful archaeological monitoring of the groundworks could be achieved.

## Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were recovered.

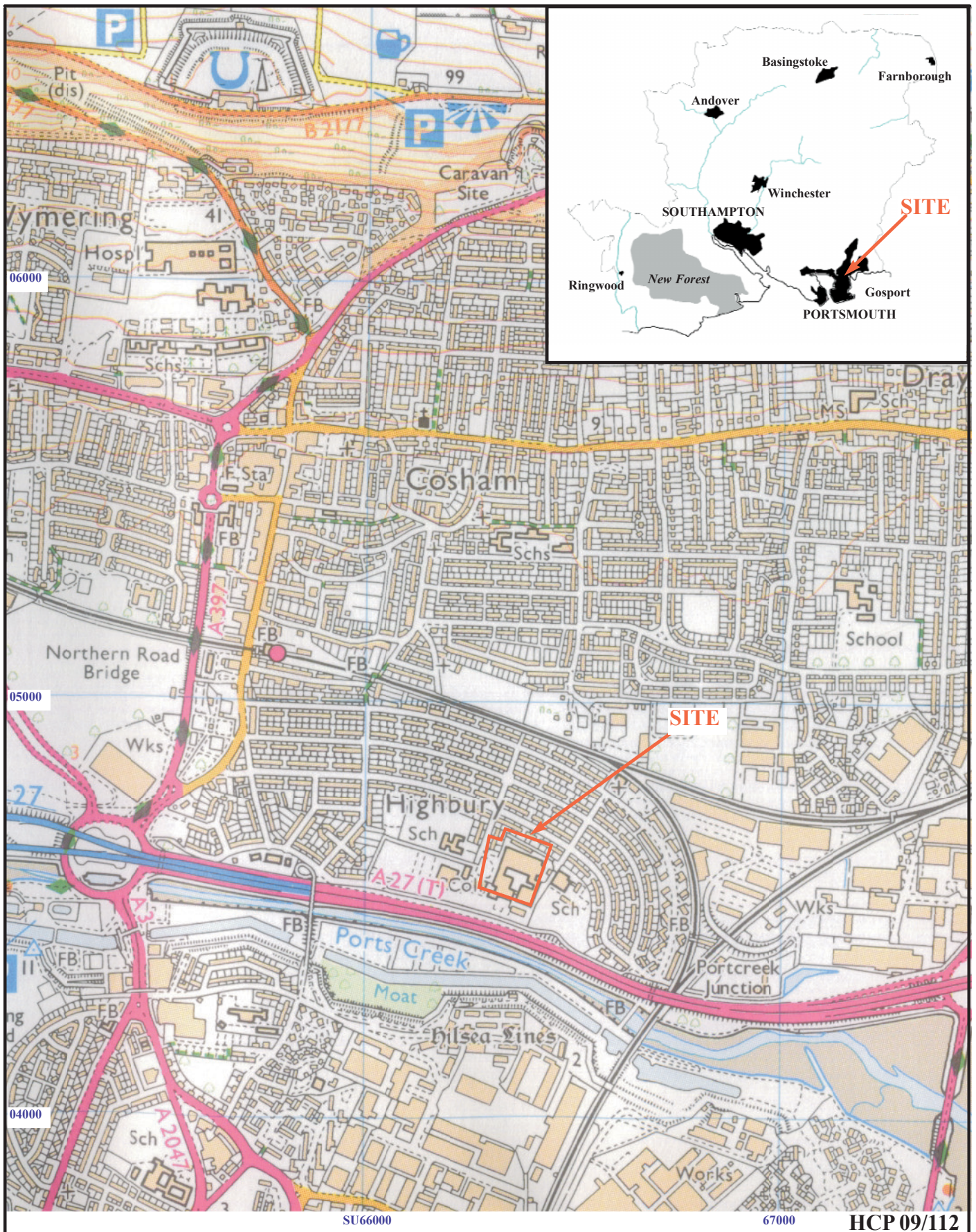
## Conclusion

Despite the location of the site in a low-lying coastal area with cartographic evidence of salt production no archaeological finds or features were present. The waterlogged state of the ground and frequent flooding of the trenches limited the visibility of the excavated areas but no features were evident and finds were recovered from the spoil removed from these areas.

## References

- Allen, M J and Gardiner, J, 2000, *Our changing coast: a survey of the intertidal archaeology of Langstone Harbour, Hampshire*, CBA Res Rep **124**
- BGS, 1998, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 316, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, DoE Planning Policy Guidance note 16, (HMSO).
- Roberts, E, 2002, *An Extensive Urban Survey of Hampshire's and the Isle of Wight's Historic Towns*, Hampshire County Council and English Heritage





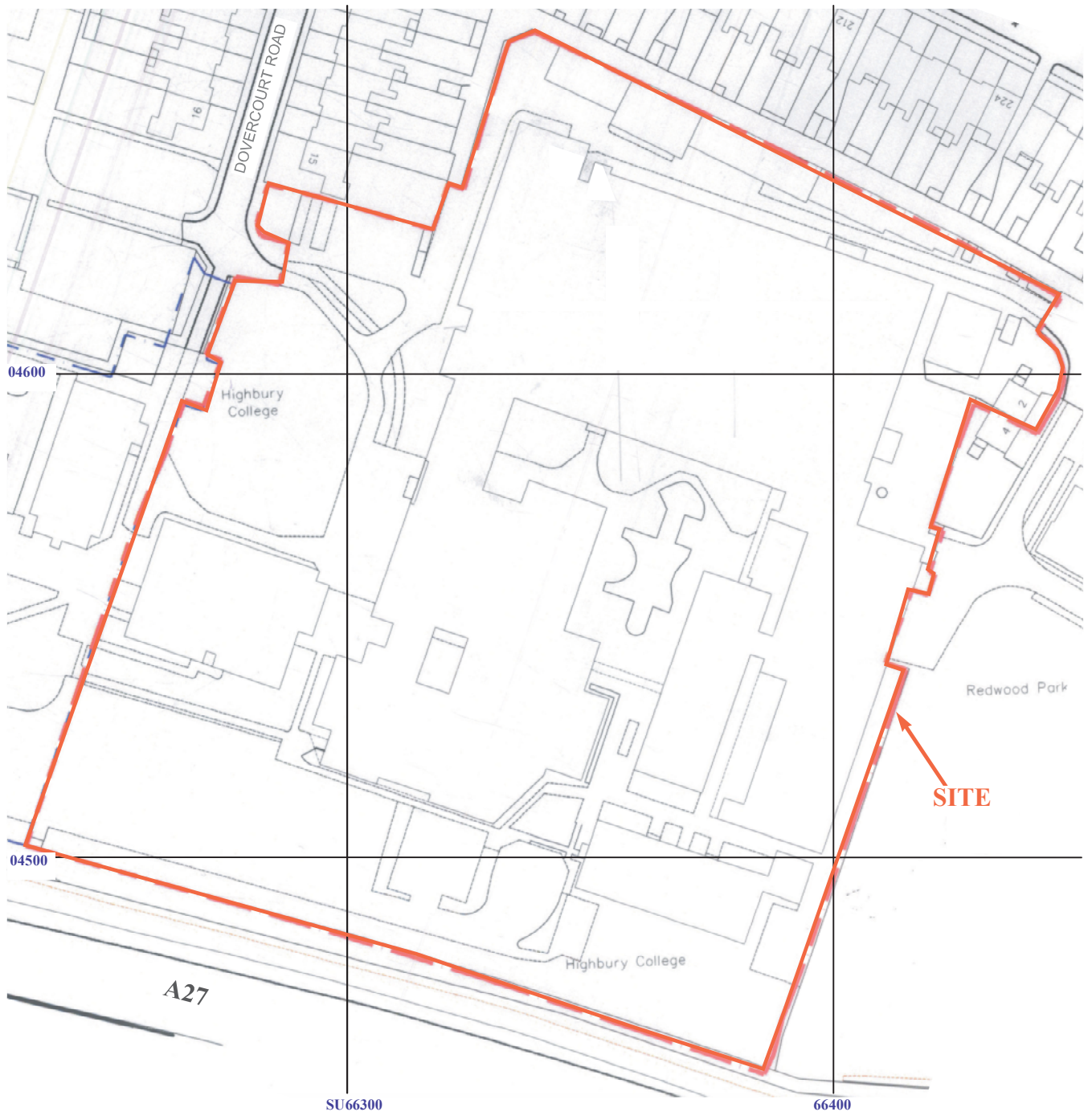
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Figure 1. Location of site within Portsmouth and Hampshire.

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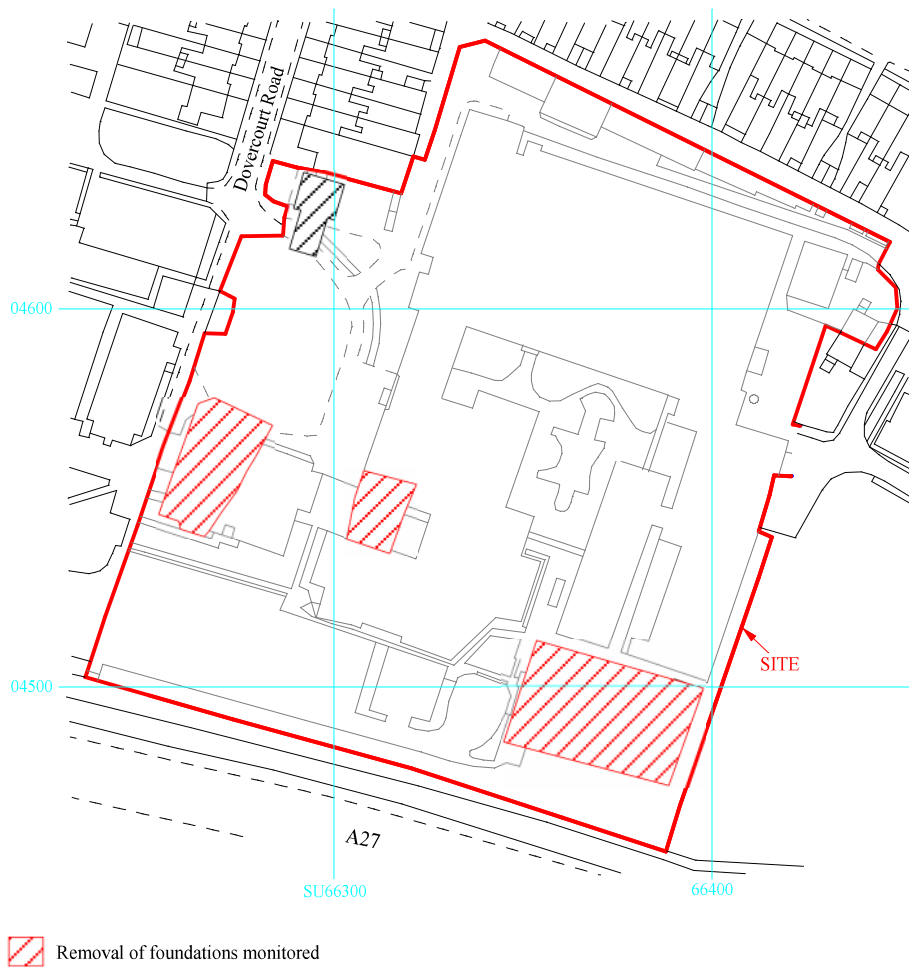
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Figure 2. Location of site off Dovercourt Road, showing land use prior to new development.

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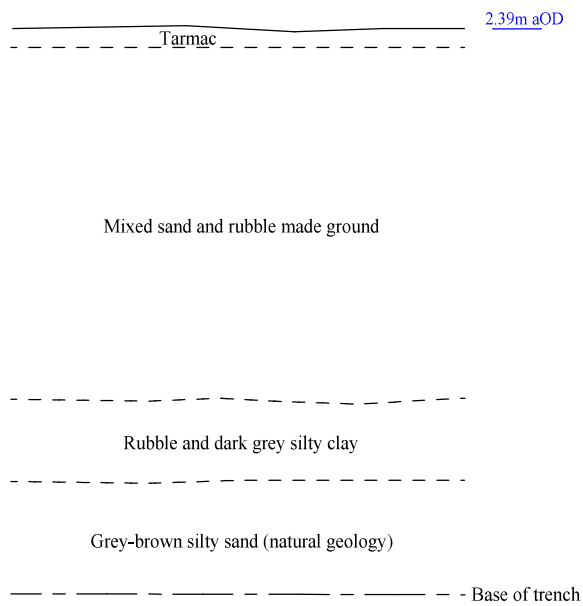


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Figure 3. Area of watching brief.



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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. Flooded trench looking NE showing the disturbed nature of the ground. Scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Area F, Excavated ground.

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Plates 1 and 2.

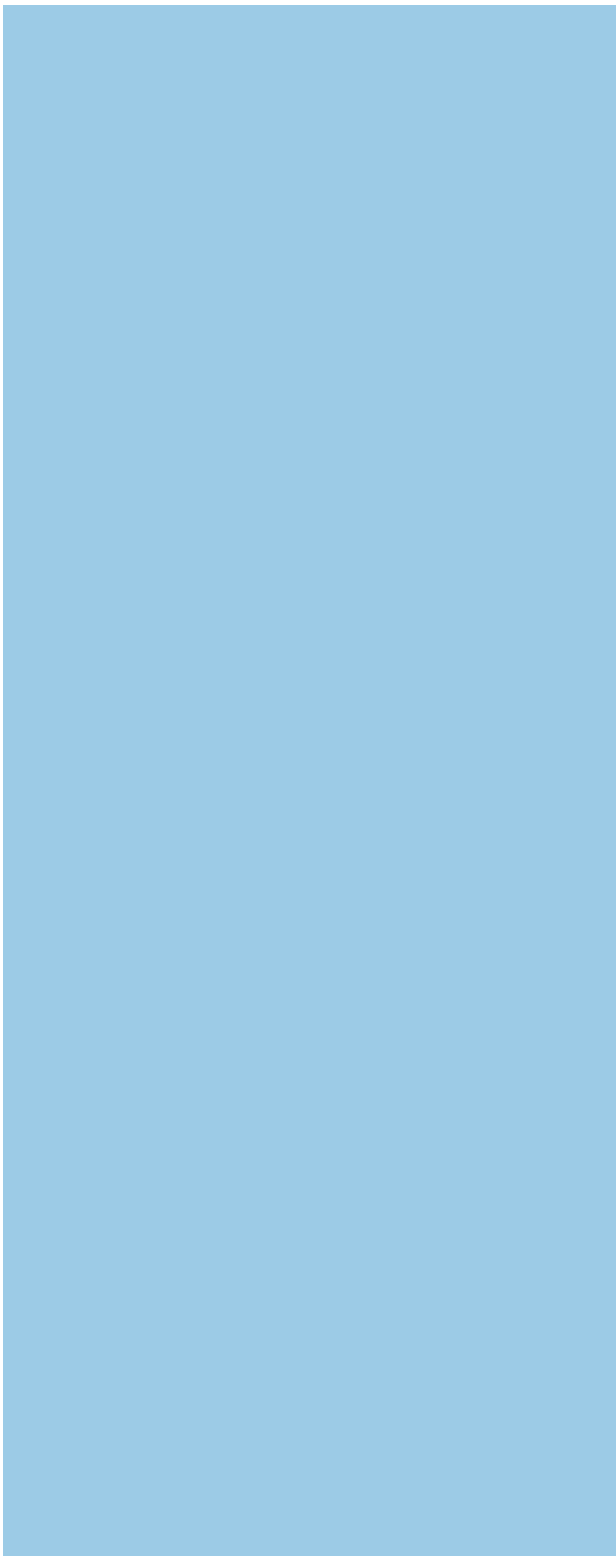
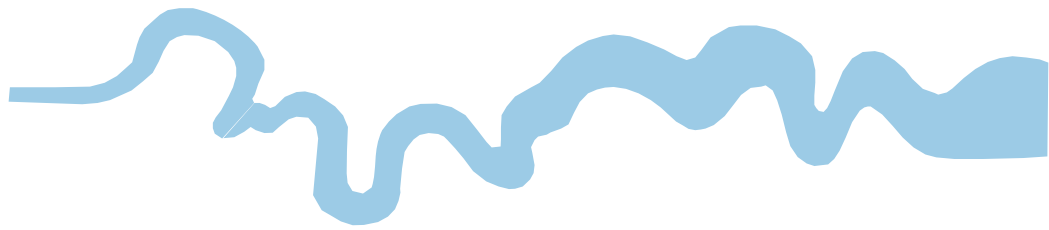
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## TIME CHART

	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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