

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Summerwood and Pucksfield,
Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Porter

Site Code: PCS11/136

(SU 9478 6693)

Summerwood and Pucksfield, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Charles Church Developments Limited**

by Susan Porter
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code PCS11/136

April 2012

Summary

Site name: Summerwood and Pucksfield, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9478 6693

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 30th January – 28th March 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: PCS 11/136

Area of site: 0.7ha

Summary of results: No archaeological deposits were observed during the foundation excavations, unstratified finds from the site are post-medieval in date.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with an approved local Museum willing to accept material in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 10.04.12
	Steve Preston ✓ 30.03.12

Summerwood and Pucksfield, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Susan Porter

Report 11/136

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Summerwood and Pucksfield, Charters Road, Sunningdale, Berkshire (SU 9478 6693) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steven O'Grady, for Charles Church Developments Limited, Charles Church House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3TQ.

Planning permission (app nos 08/02599/FUL, 11/02937/FUL and 11/03557/FUL) has been gained from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of new apartments and associated landscaping and access following the demolition of the existing houses. The consents include conditions relating to archaeology, which require that a watching brief be carried out during 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 Royal Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by the Royal Borough as advised by Fiona Macdonald of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter and Steven Crabb between 30th January and 28th March 2012 and the site code is PCS 11/136.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and with consent of the landowner, will be deposited at an approved local museum willing to accept material in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on level ground, approximately 1km to the south-west of the village of Sunningdale. At the northern extent of the site it is bounded by a railway embankment and to the south by Charters Road, with residential properties to east and west (Figs 1 and 2). The underlying geology is recorded as consisting of Bagshot Beds (BGS 1981) and this was observed on site in the sections of the soakaways and foundation trenches. The site lies at a height of approximately 51m above Ordnance Datum. The houses of Summerwood and Pucksfield at the southern end of the site had been demolished at the time of this watching brief.

Archaeological background

The site lies to the south-east of the Roman road from Silchester to London (the Devil's Highway). Several large Roman sites are known to be located adjacent to the road, as at Wickham Bushes (Ford 1987, 83), and other road side sites can be anticipated. More specifically, an antiquarian reference (Hughes 1890) to the finding of a Roman mosaic floor and much brick and tile during construction of the nearby railway suggests the presence of a wealthy Roman settlement in the vicinity, though the precise locations of these observations is now not known. Evaluation trenching on the site of Summerwood revealed a shallow gully, possibly of Roman or later date, based on a small quantity of probably Roman brick (Wallis 2004). Two earlier watching briefs on the south side of Charters Road to the west of the site did not reveal any archaeological deposits (Powell 2000, Cass 2007). An evaluation to the north-west at Charters, and following watching brief also revealed no archaeological deposits (Oram 2005, Wallis and Cass 2005). A recording action and later watching brief in the vicinity of Charters School, at the north-west end of Charters Road recorded extensive drainage channelling but again no archaeological deposits (Mundin 2008, Crabb and Dawson 2010). A medieval priory is recorded in the general area at Bromhall and several Bronze Age round barrows are present to the south.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This was to involve examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for strip foundations and services. The bulk ground work excavation was carried out by machine. It was intended that the environs where the possible gully was found during the evaluation of Summerwood (at the southern extent of the site) would be searched for further evidence of its nature and date, however this area was not subjected to excavation during the watching brief.

Results

A large area at the northern extent of the site was stripped (Fig. 3) to a depth of 0.40m. This strip did not reach the level of the natural geology, which was observed in section (soakaway 1) at 0.30m below the stripped level. This watching brief was focused on the eastern half of the site (former site of Pucksfield) as the western site of Summerwood (house plots D and E, Fig. 3) had been subject to archaeological evaluation (Wallis and Cass 2005).

Soakaways (Fig. 3)

Soakaways 1 and 2 were located on the eastern side of the site. Both were 4.30m wide. Soakaway 1 was 8.80m long and soakaway 2 was 6.80m long. Both reached a depth of 1.80m and demonstrated similar stratigraphy (Fig. 4 and Pl. 1) comprising 0.40m of topsoil, overlying 0.30m of patchy mid grey brown silty sand subsoil with heavy root activity, which in turn sealed 0.20m of mid yellow brown sandy clay and gravel natural geology (Bagshot Beds). Below this layer were further geological levels consisting of 0.30m mid blue grey silty gravel (possibly Claygate Beds or an upper bed of the London clay), and 0.60m dark orange brown silty clay (London clay). No archaeological deposits were observed in either soakaway.

Soakaways 3 and 4 were located towards the south of the site. Both were 3.50m wide and 1.50m deep. Soakaway 3 was the longer of the two at 15.50m, soakaway 4 being 14m in length. The stratigraphy was similar to that observed in soakaways 1 and 2, no archaeological deposits were observed, although a piece of 19th century semi-circular ceramic field drain was recovered from soakaway 4.

House Plot A

House plot A consisted of foundation trenches for three houses located to the north of the site (Fig. 3). It was excavated as a complex series of foundation trenches varying in width between 0.70m and 1m. The deepest trenches were 3m at the northern extent rising to a depth of 1.20m at the southern extent of the plot. The stratigraphy observed was consistent with that observed in the soakaways with the dark orange brown silty clay extending to a depth of 3m where the water table was encountered. A few field drains but no archaeological deposits were observed within the foundation trenches.

House Plot B

House plot B consisted of foundation trenches for four houses and was located to the south of plot A. The foundation trenches were the same in layout and size as those in plot A, the depth was 1.20m and the stratigraphy was the same as that observed elsewhere on the site, however towards the southern end the natural geology was seen to be rising and was observed at 0.10m below the stripped area. No archaeological deposits were observed within the foundation trenches.

Plot C (Pl. 2)

Plot C also consisted of foundation trenches and was located to the south west of plot B. The foundation trenches of plot C were only partially observed as the majority were to lie below the site of the former house Pucksfield,

which was a zone of extensive disturbance from the previous foundations. Where observed the depth of the footings were 1.20m and the stratigraphy was the same as that observed elsewhere on the site. No archaeological deposits were observed within plot C.

Access Road

The area of the road (Fig. 3) was stripped to a depth of 0.50m but the natural geology was not encountered. From this level the roadway was then built up to a height of 0.20m above the current ground level in order to accommodate the drainage below the road surface. The natural geology below, and hence the archaeologically relevant level, remained undisturbed and any features present in this area were therefore be preserved *in situ*.

Finds

Pottery by Susan Porter

A single unstratified sherd of pottery was recovered from the stripped area at the north of the site. This is a piece of a tin-glazed earthenware dish of at least 120mm diameter with an opaque white finish. It is an undiagnostic piece and may date anywhere between the mid 16th to late 18th centuries when tin-glazed wares were common in Britain.

Glass by Susan Porter

A single unstratified piece of mirrored glass was recovered from the stripped area, and is most likely to be post medieval in date. The base of a cylindrical green glass bottle, 75mm in diameter, was recovered from the stripped area as an unstratified find. The base has a deep bulb and suggests hand-blown manufacture using a pontil, indicating a date prior to c.1840. Cylindrical bottles become common c.1735 giving a date range from the mid 18th to mid 19th century.

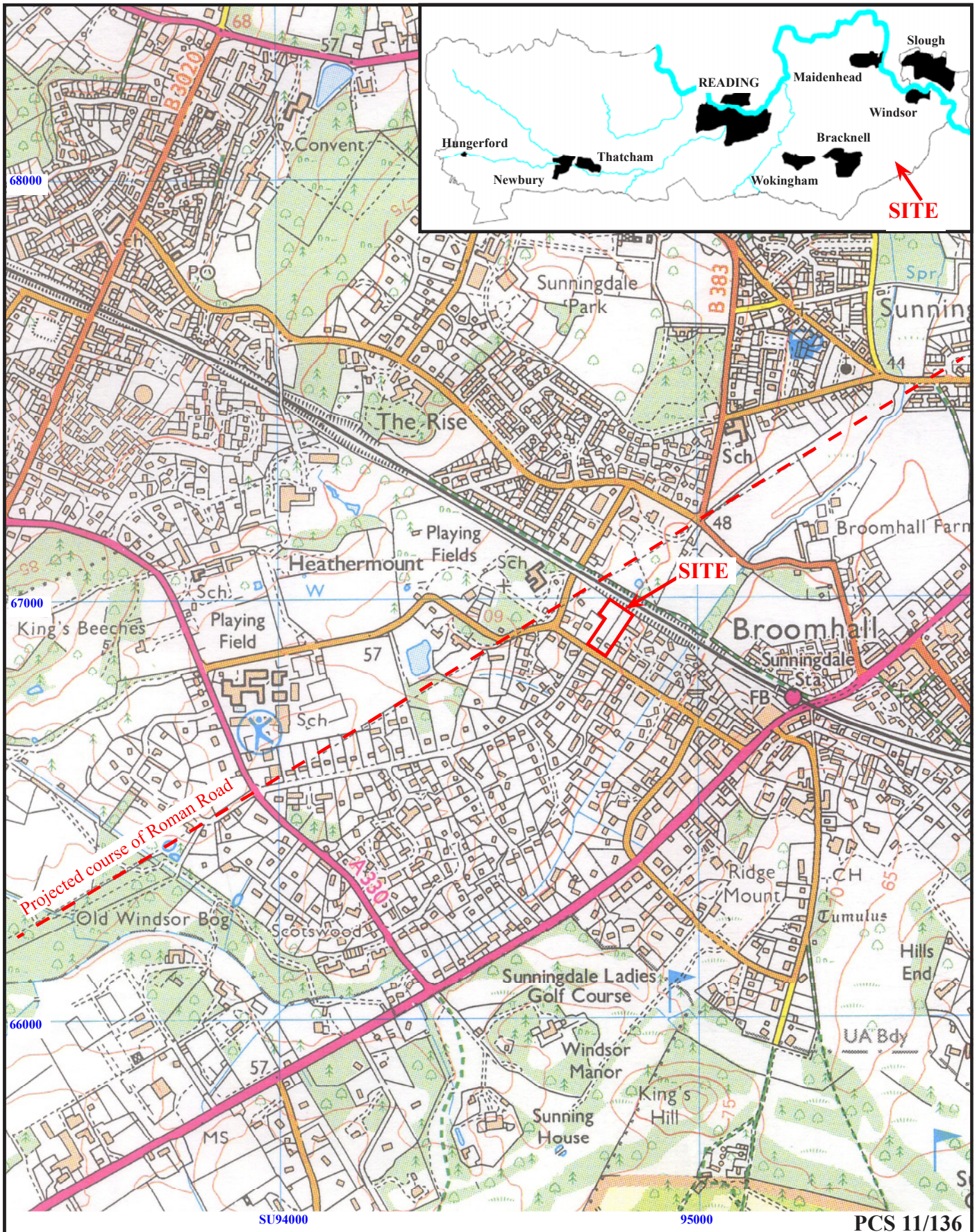
Conclusion

If, as was originally considered, the site contains, or lies close to, a Roman settlement such as the one known in the area with a mosaic floor and masonry structures, it is surprising that neither cut features, foundations nor quantities of pottery, tile, rubble, etc, were found. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed during the groundworks. The environs of the gully found during the evaluation of Summerwood (Wallis 2004) were not subject to excavation as there is to be no excavated development in that area, and as such it was not possible to obtain further evidence of its nature and date. The recovered finds are unstratified modern or post-medieval

material. Despite the anticipated high archaeological potential of the area the results of the watching brief showed that nothing of archaeological interest was disturbed by the development.

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Figure 1. Location of site within Sunningdale and Berkshire showing the projected course of the Roman road.
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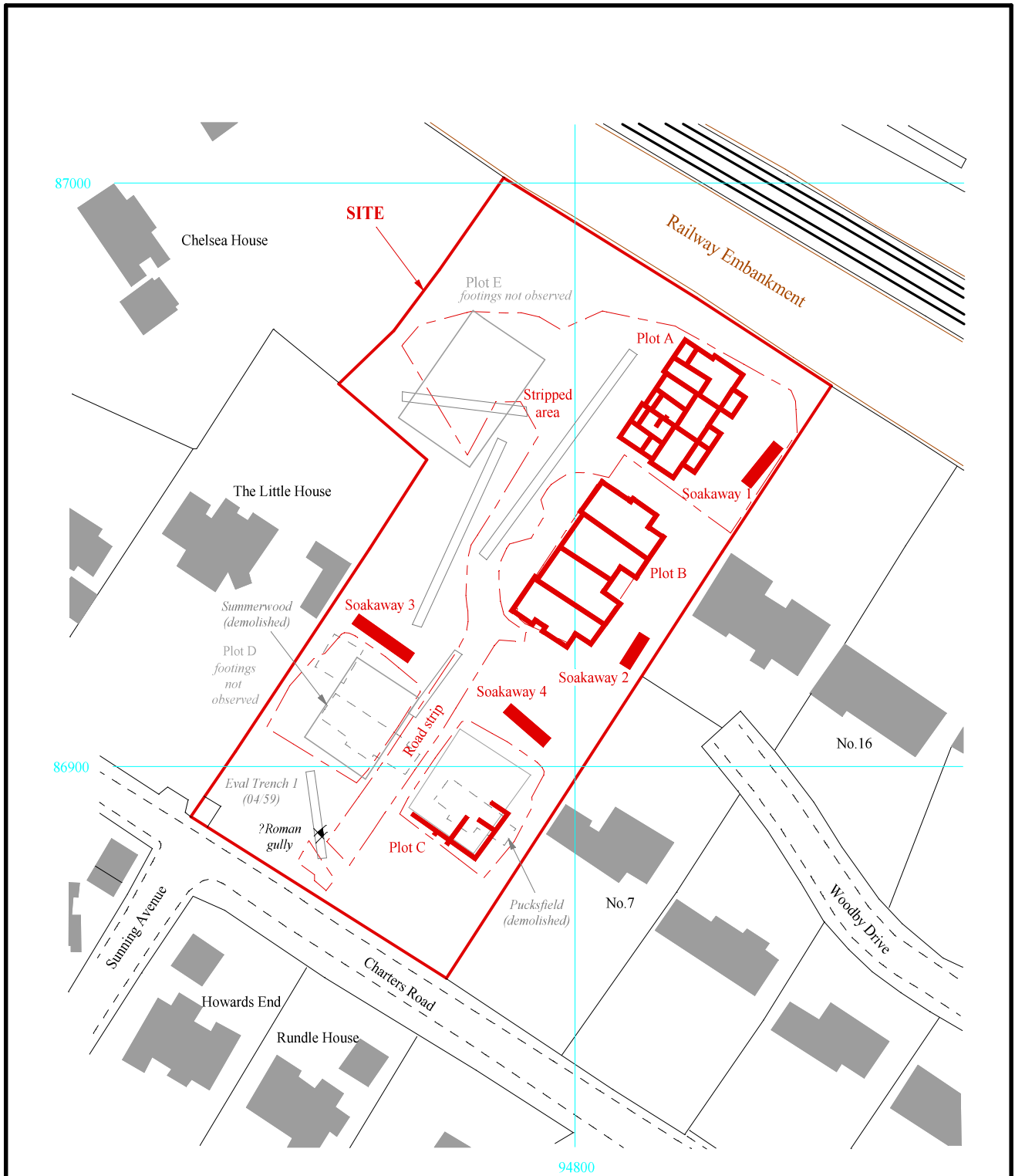
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Charters Road.

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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.



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SW NE

Topsoil

Subsoil

Mid yellow-brown sandy clay with gravel

Mid blue-grey silty gravel

Dark orange-brown silty clay

Natural geology

Base of excavation

PCS 11/136

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Berkshire, 2012
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 4. Representative section as recorded in Soakaway 1.



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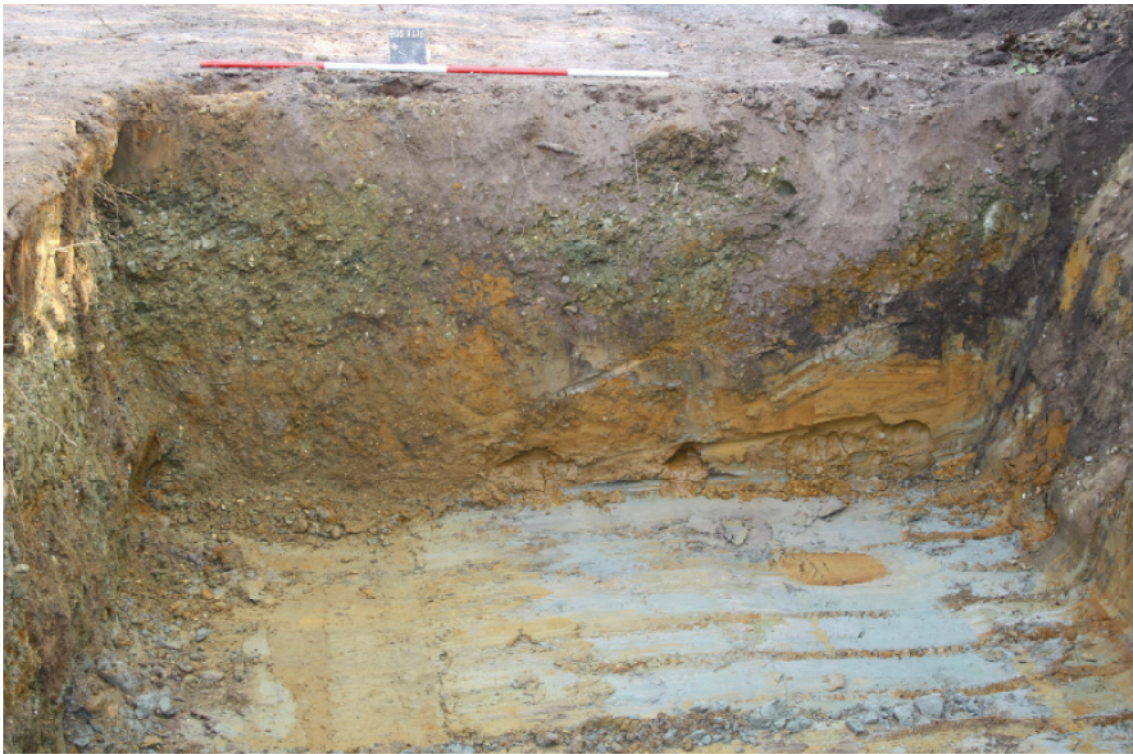


Plate 1. Soakaway 1 showing site stratigraphy, looking north east, Scale: 2m.



Plate 2. Excavating the footings for Plot C, looking northeast. Scales: 2m and 1m.

PCS 11/36

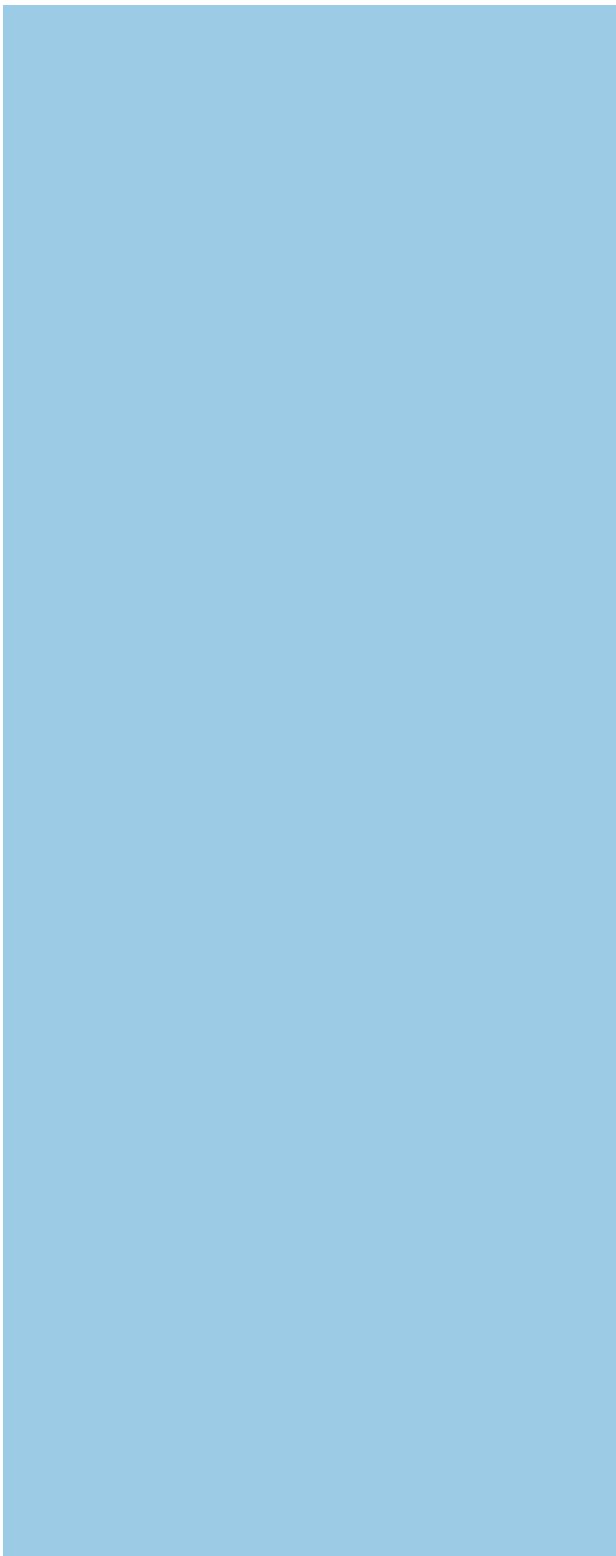
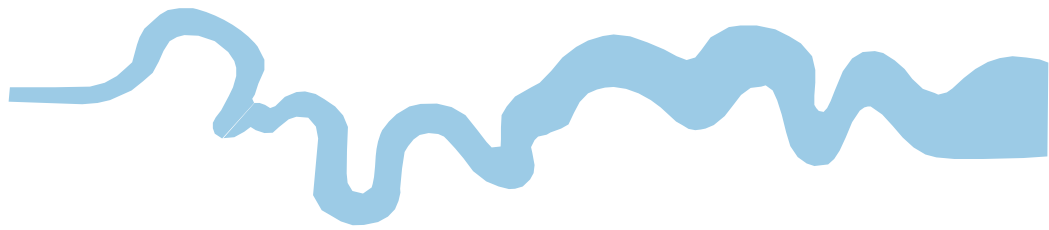
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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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