

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

S O U T H W E S T

**Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry,
Elburton, Plymouth**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Weale

Site Code: MQP12/46

(SX 5345 5395)

Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elberton, Plymouth

An Archaeological Watching Brief for Aggregate Industries

by Andrew Weale
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code MQP12/46

May 2012

Summary

Site name: Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth

Grid reference: SX 5345 5395

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 30th April to 4th May 2012

Project manager: Andrew Weale

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: MQP 12/46

Area of site: c. 1 ha

Summary of results: No archaeological features or artefacts were present within the stripped area.

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

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

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 22.05.12 Steve Preston✓ 22.05.12 |
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Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Weale

Report 12/46

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth (SX 5345 5425) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Penny of Aggregate Industries UK Ltd, Marston House, Frome, Somerset BA11 5DU.

Planning permission (06/00169/ESR10) has been granted by Plymouth City Council to extract limestone from a c. 1ha parcel of land at Moorcroft Quarry (Fig. 1). The consent includes a condition relating to archaeology and requires a programme of archaeological excavation and recording in advance of extraction.

This was in accordance with the with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16, 1990) and the City Council's policies on archaeology, in order to satisfy the archaeological condition placed on the planning permission. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Mike Daniells, Historic Environment Officer with Plymouth City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, from 30th April to 4th May 2012 and the site code is MQP 12/46. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton and will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site lies within Elburton, with the village of Brixton to the east, Plymstock to the south, and the river Plym and the city of Plymouth to the west (Fig. 1). The site was a small field of former pasture with shrub and small trees with hedges to the east and south and the active quarry to the north and west (Fig. 2). The western and northern edges of the site were bunds made out of limestone and topsoil with a drop of approximately 2m beyond to the top level of the working quarry and access road. The site sloped down from a high point in the north at 35m above Ordnance Datum towards the hedge line at the southern edge of the site (32m above Ordnance Datum). The western edge of the site had been used in the past as a temporary haul road. Shrubs and larger trees on the site had previously been removed. The underlying geology is shown as Middle Devonian Limestone (BGS 2004). A mixture of limestone and a clayey silt was observed within the stripped area.

Archaeological background

The site lies in a landscape that has significant archaeological content. To the east of the site are the remains of a prehistoric enclosure, a barrow, a Roman field system and a medieval field system all within 1.5km of the site. A little further afield to the north-east are the remains of Wasteberry Camp, an Iron Age hill fort, and approximately 4.5km to the west of the site is the site of the ancient port of Mount Batten which is believed to have been active from the late Bronze Age through to the Roman period.

The site lies within the parish of Brixton, one of three parishes of that name in Devon that were mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002). This Brixton was held by a William (who held several manors in the region) from Iudichael of Totnes (lord of a vast area of the county). There was land for 2 ploughs, a slave, 4 villans and 12 acres of pasture and the estate was worth 15s.

Objectives and methodology

The general objectives of the project were to:

- excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas affected;
- produce relative and absolute dating and phasing for deposits and features recorded on the site;
- establish the character of these deposits in attempt to define functional areas on the site such as industrial, domestic, etc; and
- produce information on the economy and local environment and compare and contrast this with the results of other excavations in the region.

Specific research objectives for the project were to seek to answer the following questions:

- When was the site first occupied?
- When was the site abandoned?
- What is the nature of any occupation of the site?
- What is the nature and date of any landscape features encountered (eg fields, boundary features, large enclosures) and what is their spatial organization?
- What is the chronology and organization details of the landscape features if found?
- How did these landscape features relate to occupied areas?
- What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

This was to involve examination of all the areas of previously undisturbed ground stripped of overburden in the excavation area. Topsoil and overburden were removed by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to expose the uppermost surface of archaeological deposits. Following machine clearance, all investigation of archaeological levels was by hand, with cleaning, examination and recorded both in plan and in section. All archaeological features were to be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective, with excavation to an agreed sample percentage.

Results

The strip revealed that the topsoil varied from 0.10m to 0.45m across the site with subsoil only existing in areas where the underlying geology was clayey silt (PIs 1 and 2).

In the eastern part of the site was an area of modern disturbance with a modern brick-built and concrete-lined structure filled with clean crushed limestone. The structure had modern glazed pipes entering and exiting and may have been used as a soak away. To the north of this structure were the foundations of a modern building made of machine brick which had been demolished within the last 15 years. The demolition fill within this building contained a military water canteen date stamped 1939.

Three modern metal service pipes crossed the site from the northern limit to the southern limit and appeared to be water pipes.

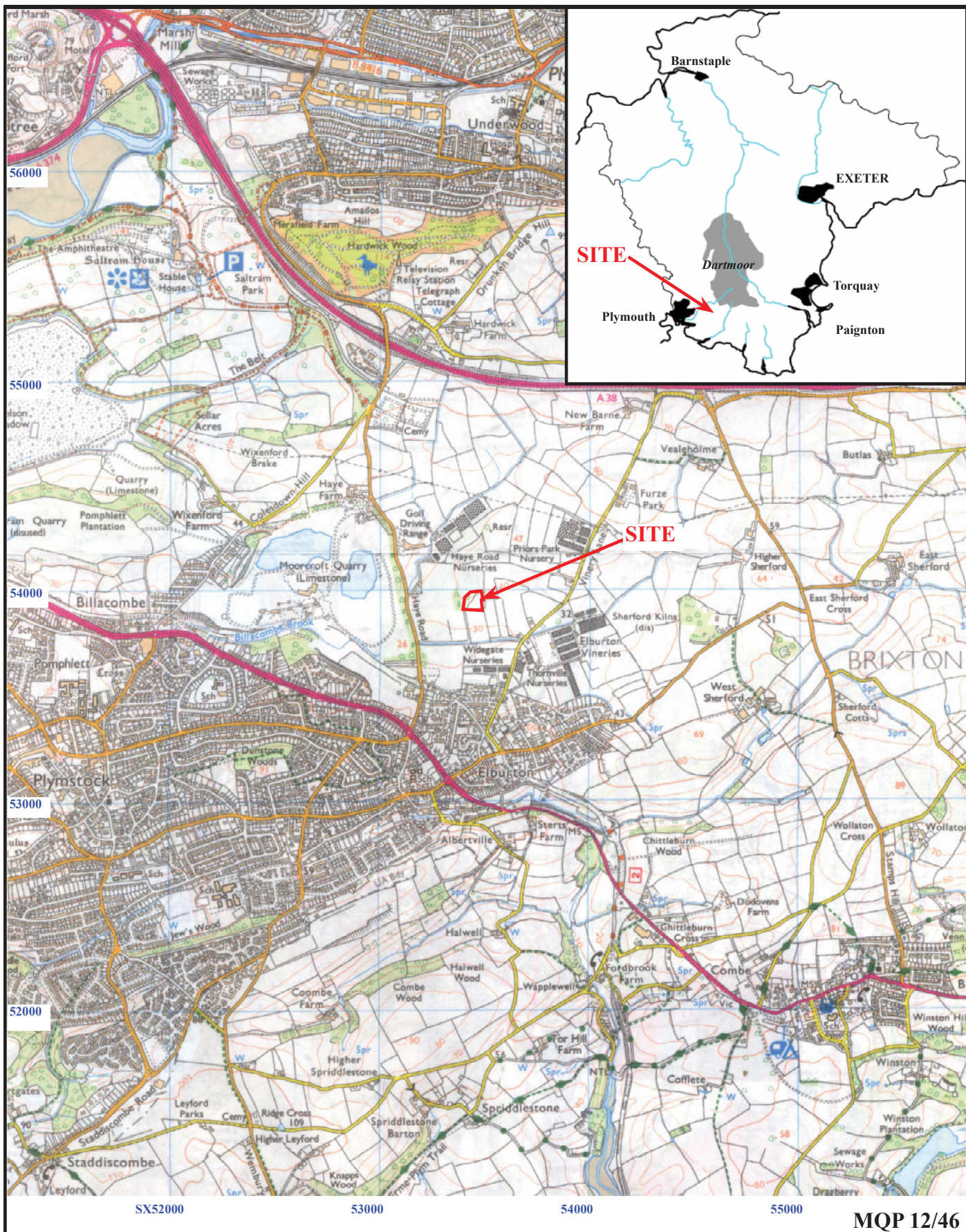
No other features were seen within the area and no pre-modern artefacts were present within the top- or subsoils.

Conclusion

No archaeological features or artefacts were present within the stripped area. The hedgerows to the south and east of the site were kept as screens to hide part of the quarry from local residences. These hedgerows were observed to be made up of two parallel dry stone walls with soil between them with the hedge planted within the retained soils. It is proposed to extend the quarry though the southern of these two hedges at a later date and so a date for the construction of the field boundary may be obtained at that time. The presence on site of noted modern services and modern structures cut into the underlying natural geology would suggest that if any archaeological features had been present then the topsoil and subsoil strip would have revealed them.

References

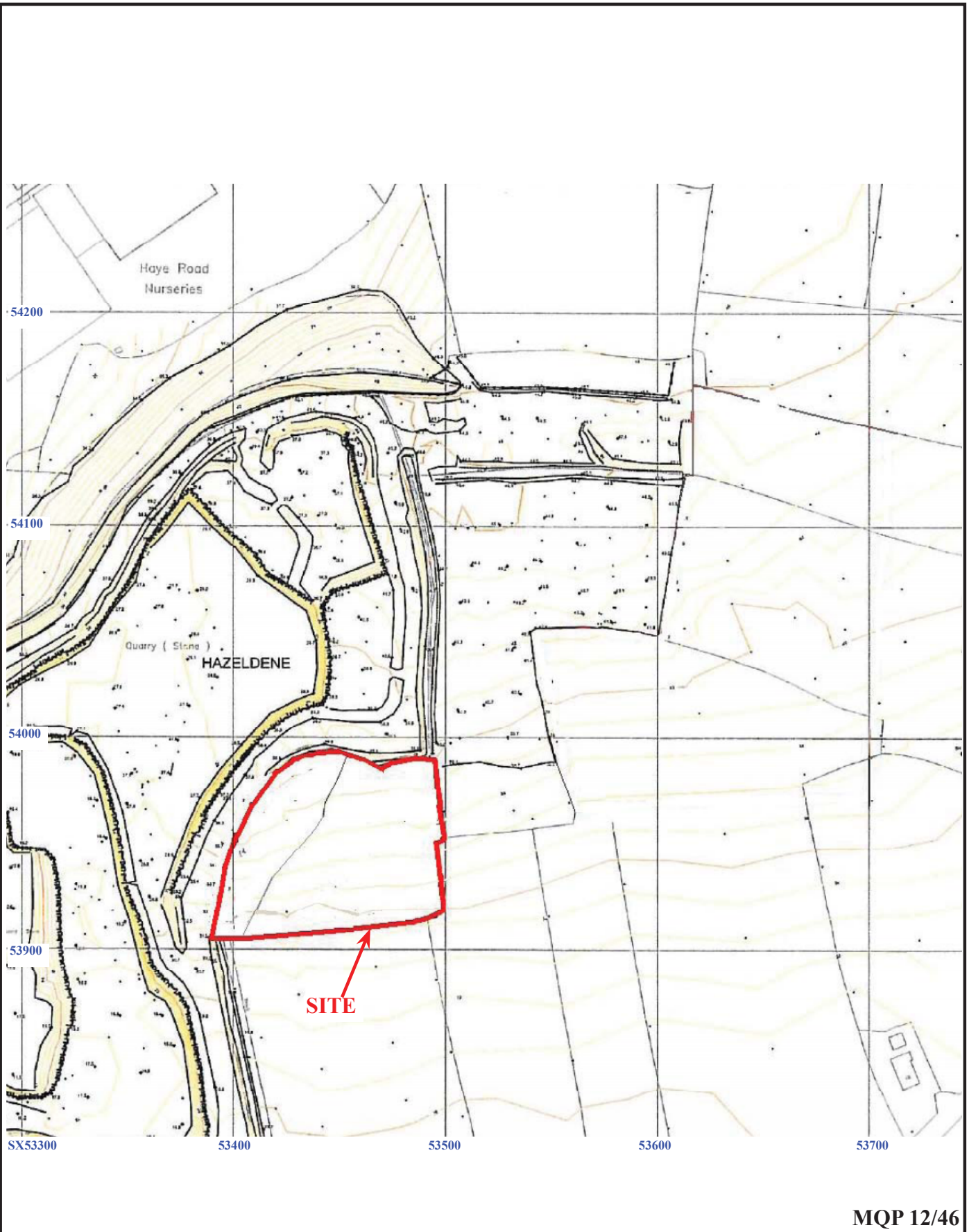
- BGS, 2004, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 350, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth.
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London



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Figure 1. Location of site within Plymouth and Devon.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Plate 1. Looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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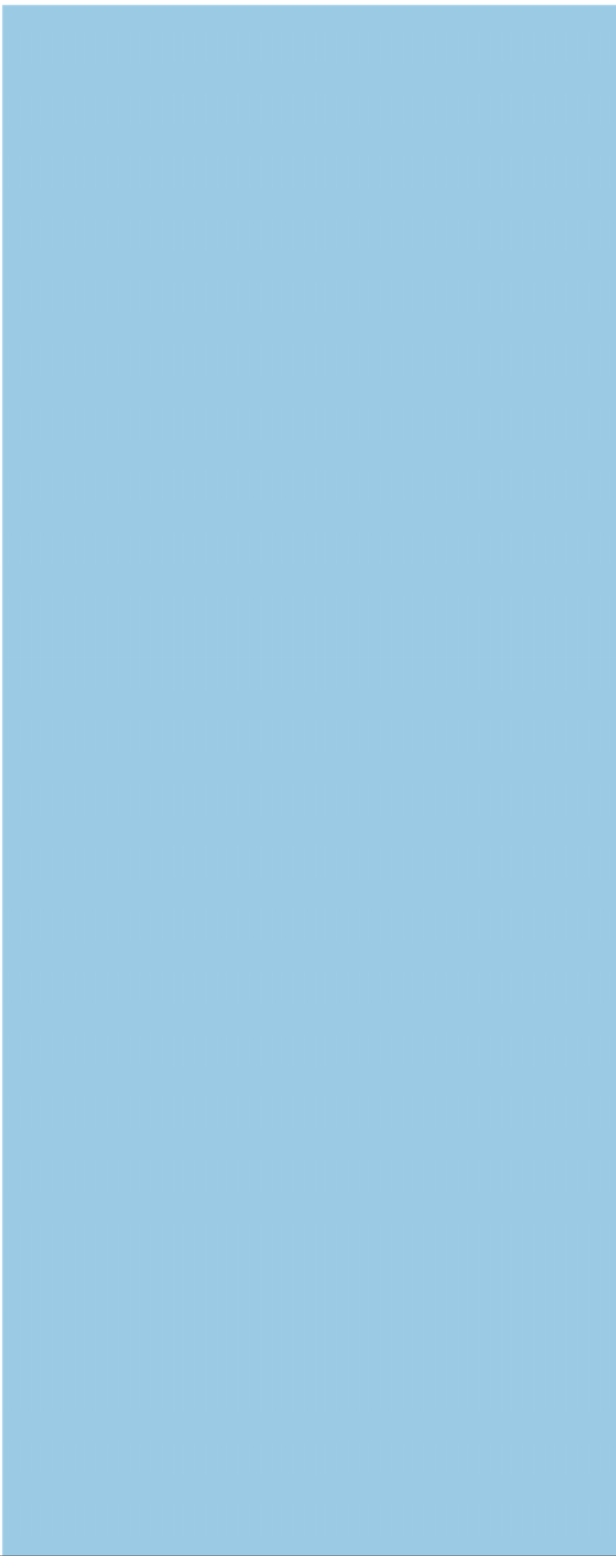
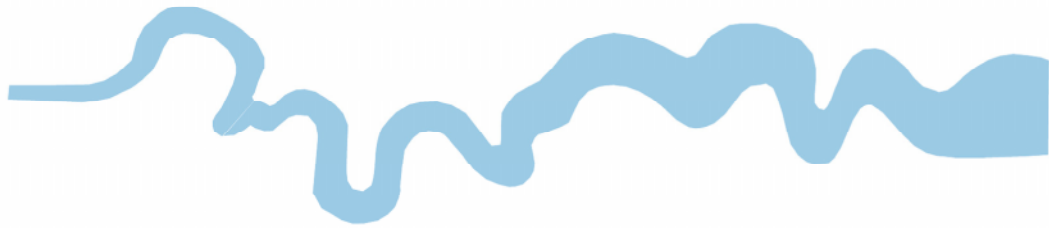
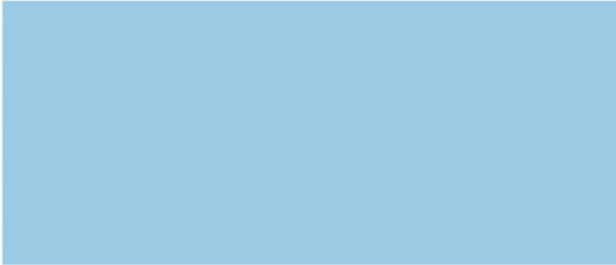
Plates 1 and 2.

THAMES VALLEY
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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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