

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Idstone Road,
Ashbury, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Site Code: IRA12/189

(SU 2623 8488)

Land at Idstone Road, Ashbury, Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Bower Mapson Limited**

by Susan Porter
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code IRA12/189

November 2012

Summary

Site name: Land at Idstone Road, Ashbury, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 2623 8488

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 27th–28th November 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: IRA 12/189

Area of site: 0.94 ha

Summary of results: Seven trenches were excavated within the proposed footprints of the new development. A single undated pit was observed within Trench 4. All other deposits observed on site were investigated and proved to be of natural origin. The site is considered to have low archaeological potential.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 29.11.12 Steve Preston✓ 29.11.12

Land at Idstone Road, Ashbury, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 12/189

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Idstone Road, Ashbury, Oxfordshire (SU 2623 8488) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Mapson of Bower Mapson Limited Willow House, 7 The Avenue, Stanton Fitzwarren, Swindon, SN6 7SE. Planning permission (P12/V2060/FUL) has been sought from Vale of White Horse District Council for the construction of new houses and a village green on land at Idstone Road. The results of a field investigation have been requested to determine if the site has archaeological potential and if so, produce information to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, Principal Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, advisers to the District, and based on a brief prepared by him (Coddington 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter, James Earley and Andrew MUNDIN between 27th and 28th November 2012 and the site code is IRA 12/189. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course

Location, topography and geology

The site is located immediately south west of in the village of Ashbury in the Vale of White Horse (Fig. 2). The site lies on the steep scarp slope of the Berkshire Downs. The site is currently open field and lies at a height of 131–125m above Ordnance Datum sloping down towards the north. The geology is recorded as Upper Greensand and Gault (BGS 1971), a chalky clay natural geology was observed within the trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area has been highlighted in a briefing note prepared by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Council. In summary, the site lies on the margins of the historic core of

Ashbury, which has late Saxon origins and is recorded in Domesday Book of 1086 (Williams and Martin 2002). Various prehistoric and Roman archaeology is recorded on the downland to the south (Richard 1978) with excavated Roman deposits recorded to the north (Hall 1998). The parish church has 12th century origins and to the north-west are post-medieval watercress beds.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ, or might be better excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period were present;
- to determine if any prehistoric occupation or landscape features were present on the site; and
- to determine if there were later prehistoric, Roman, Saxon or medieval deposits present on the site.

It was proposed to dig seven trenches, each 30m long and 1.6m wide (c. 3% of the site area) targeted at the footprints of the new houses. A contingency of 10m of trench was included should it be necessary to clarify the results of the initial findings.

Topsoil and overburden was removed by a small 360° type machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present they were to be cleaned and excavated using hand tools.

Results

All seven trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 3) they ranged in length from 27–31.20m and in depth from 0.47–0.75m. The spoil heaps were checked using a metal detector in order to enhance recovery of metal finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

Trench 1 was aligned NW–SE and was 29.60m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.26m of topsoil and 0.22m of mid grey silty clay subsoil overlying light grey chalky clay natural geology. A test pit was

dug at the north-west end to a depth of 0.73m to confirm the interpretation of the level of the natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 2 (Figs 4 and 5 and Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was aligned north–south and was 27.00m long and 0.72m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.29m of topsoil and 0.20m dark grey silty clay (old ploughsoil or colluvium), overlying 0.19m of mid grey silty clay subsoil which in turn overlay light grey chalky clay natural geology. An amorphous feature (1) was observed and excavated at 3m from the south end of the trench, on excavation this proved to be a natural tree bole 3.20m in width and 0.22m in depth (Fig. 5). The single fill (54) was a firm dark brown grey humic clay with frequent charcoal and chalk flecks, this suggests that the tree may have been burnt out. Another feature (2) was observed at 14m. As this appeared similar to feature 1 both in its irregularity and the nature of its fill, this was also considered to be of natural origin and was recorded but not excavated. No finds were recovered.

Trench 3 (Figs 4 and 5, Pl. 3)

Trench 3 was aligned NE–SW and was 30.00m long and 0.64m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil and 0.25m dark grey silty clay subsoil overlying light grey chalky clay natural geology, this changed to chalk natural geology at 18m from the south west end. A possible linear feature was observed at 3m, but on excavation this was proved to be a root hole (3). The fill (53) was similar to that observed in feature 1 and again suggests a burnt out tree. No finds were recovered.

Trench 4 (Figs 4 and 5)

Trench 4 was aligned NE–SW and was 30.10m long and 0.75m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil and 0.25m dark grey silty clay, overlying mid grey silty clay subsoil, which in turn overlay light grey chalk natural geology. A pit (5) was excavated at 4m from the south-west end. This was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.60m and depth of 0.29m, with a single fill (56) comprising firm mid grey brown silty clay. No finds were recovered. Possible linear features at 6m and 15m along with a possible terminus and possible pit at 17m and 23m were investigated but proved to be natural root features with fills similar to those recorded above (53 and 54). These features were not recorded in detail. No finds were recovered.

Trench 5 (Fig. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned NW–SE and was 31.20m long and 0.55m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.26m of topsoil and 0.23m mid grey silty clay subsoil overlying light grey chalky clay natural geology. A possible feature

was observed at 19m but this was proved to be of natural origin and not further recorded. No finds were recovered.

Trench 6 (Figs 4 and 5 and Pl. 4)

Trench 6 was aligned roughly north–south and was 30.90m long and 0.70m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.20m mid grey silty clay overlying 0.25m dark grey silty clay which in turn overlay light grey chalky clay natural geology. Possible features were observed at 2, 5, 8, 21, and 23m. One of these (4) was excavated and proved to be a natural spread, 2.60m in length, 0.80m wide and 0.20m in depth with an undulating base. A single fill (55) firm dark brown grey humic clay with frequent charcoal and chalk flecks. The other possible features within this trench had similar fill and as such were concluded to be of natural origin. No finds were recovered.

Trench 7 (Fig. 3)

Trench 7 was aligned east–west and was 30.00m long and 0.47m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of topsoil and 0.09m of mid grey silty clay subsoil overlying light grey chalky clay natural geology. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

Conclusion

Despite lying on the margins of historic Ashbury the trenches revealed only a single deposit of possible archaeological interest, pit 5 in Trench 4. Unfortunately this pit produced no finds and as such is undated. All the other deposits observed within the trenches were investigated and proved to be of natural origin with several mostly likely to be the remains of burnt out tree roots. The result of the evaluation suggest a low archaeological potential for this site.

References

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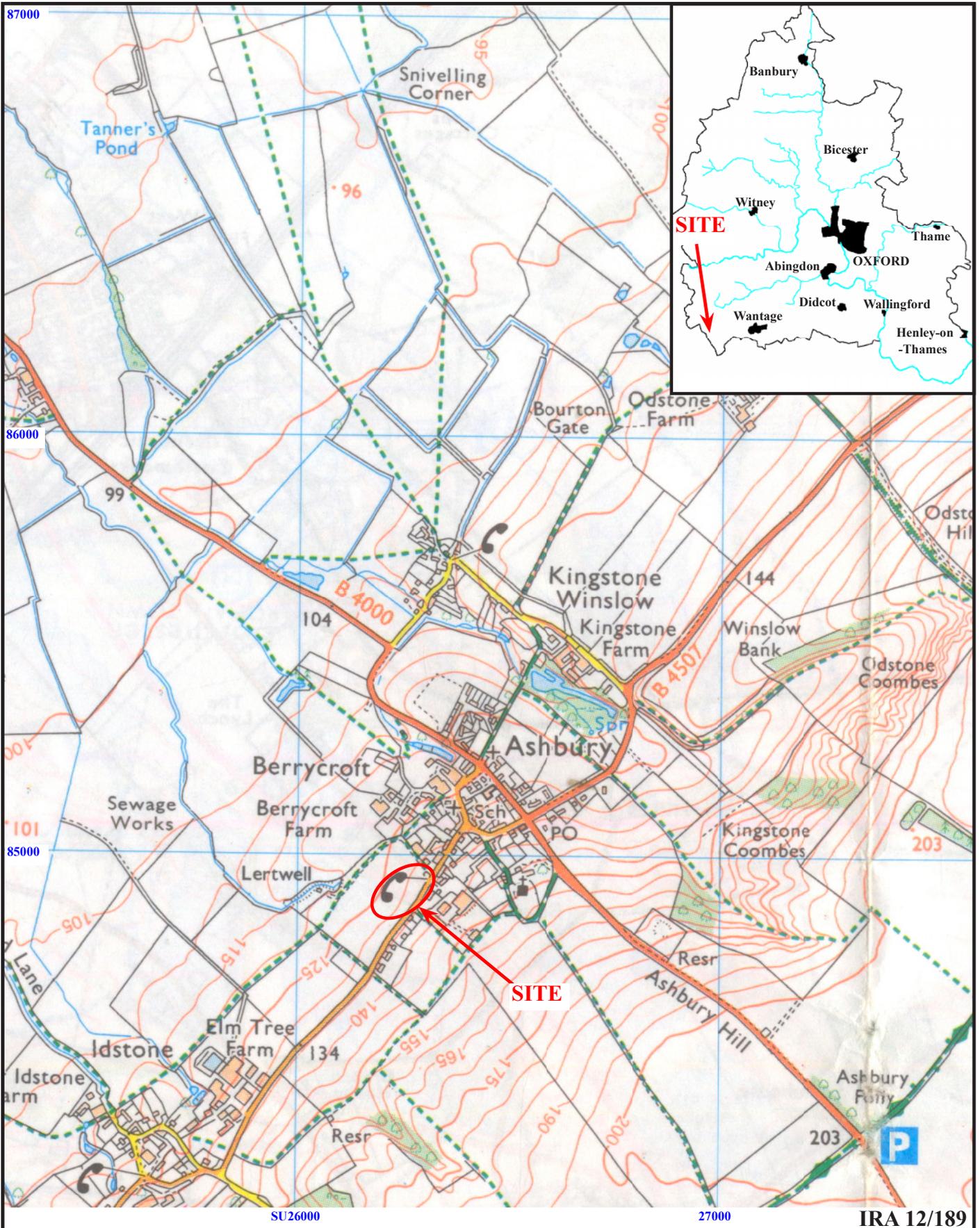
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at south or west end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	29.60	1.6	0.51	0–0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.48m mid grey silty clay subsoil; 0.48m+ light grey chalky clay natural geology.
2	27.00	1.6	0.72	0–0.29m topsoil; 0.29-0.49m dark grey silty clay colluvium; 0.49-0.68m mid grey silty clay subsoil; 0.68m+ light grey chalky clay natural geology. Natural features 1 and 2 at 3m and 14m. [PI. 2]
3	30.00	1.6	0.64	0–0.35m topsoil; 0.35-0.60m dark grey silty clay colluvium; 0.60m+ light grey chalky clay natural geology changing to chalk at 18m. natural feature 3 at 14m. [PI. 3]
4	30.10	1.6	0.75	0–0.30m topsoil; 0.30-0.55m dark grey silty clay colluvium; 0.55-0.69m mid grey silty clay subsoil; 0.69m+ natural geology. Pit 5 at 4m and natural features noted at 6, 15, 17, and 23m.
5	31.20	1.6	0.55	0–0.26m topsoil; 0.26-0.49m mid grey silty clay subsoil; 0.98m+ natural geology. A natural feature at 19m.
6	30.90	1.6	0.70	0–0.25m topsoil; 0.25-0.45m mid grey silty clay subsoil; 0.45-0.70m dark grey silty clay colluvium; 0.70+m light grey chalky clay natural geology. Natural features at 5, 8 21 and 23m. [PI. 4]
7	30.00	1.6	0.47	0–0.35m topsoil; 0.35-0.44m mid grey silty clay subsoil; 0.44m+ light grey chalky clay natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
4	5	56	Pit	Unknown	None

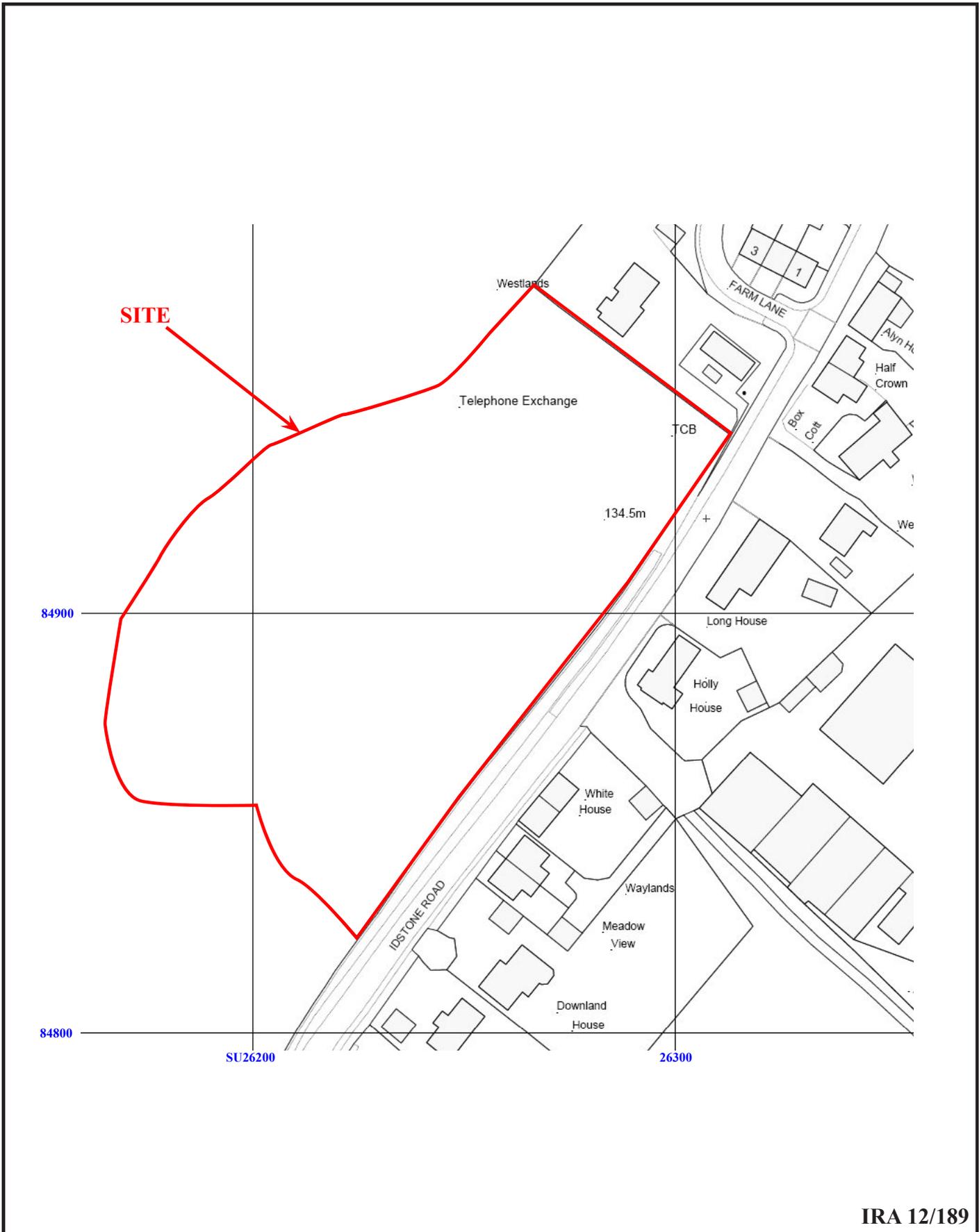


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Figure 1. Location of site within Ashbury and Oxfordshire.

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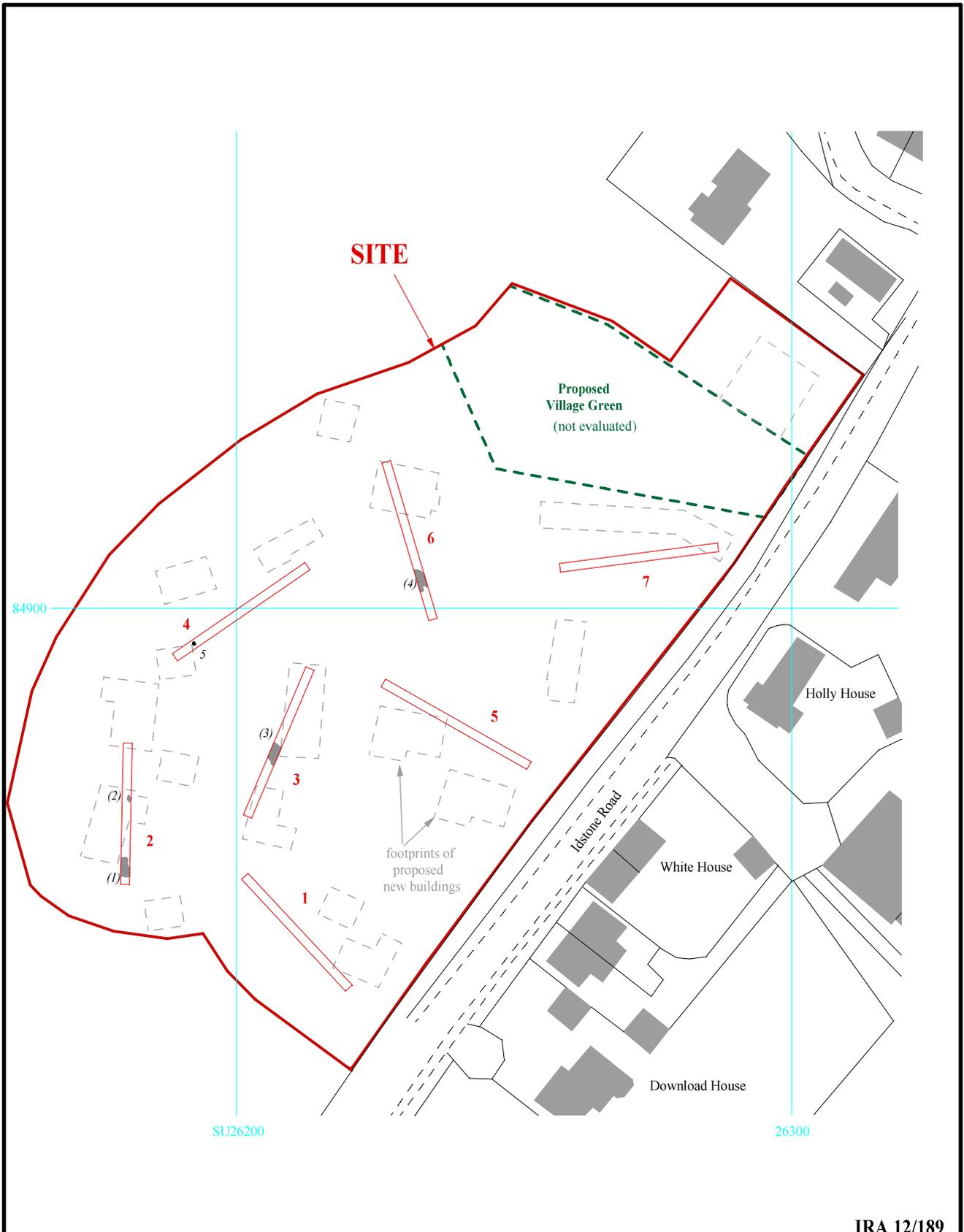


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Idstone Road.

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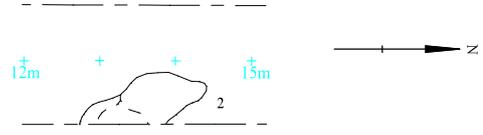
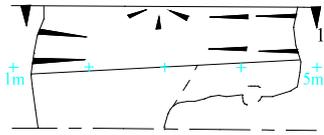
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

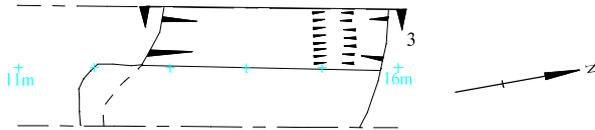
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0 50m

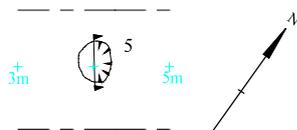
Trench 2



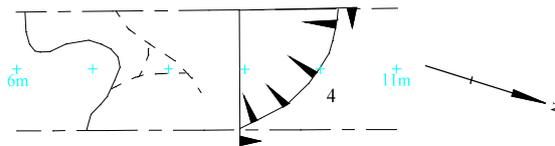
Trench 3



Trench 4



Trench 6



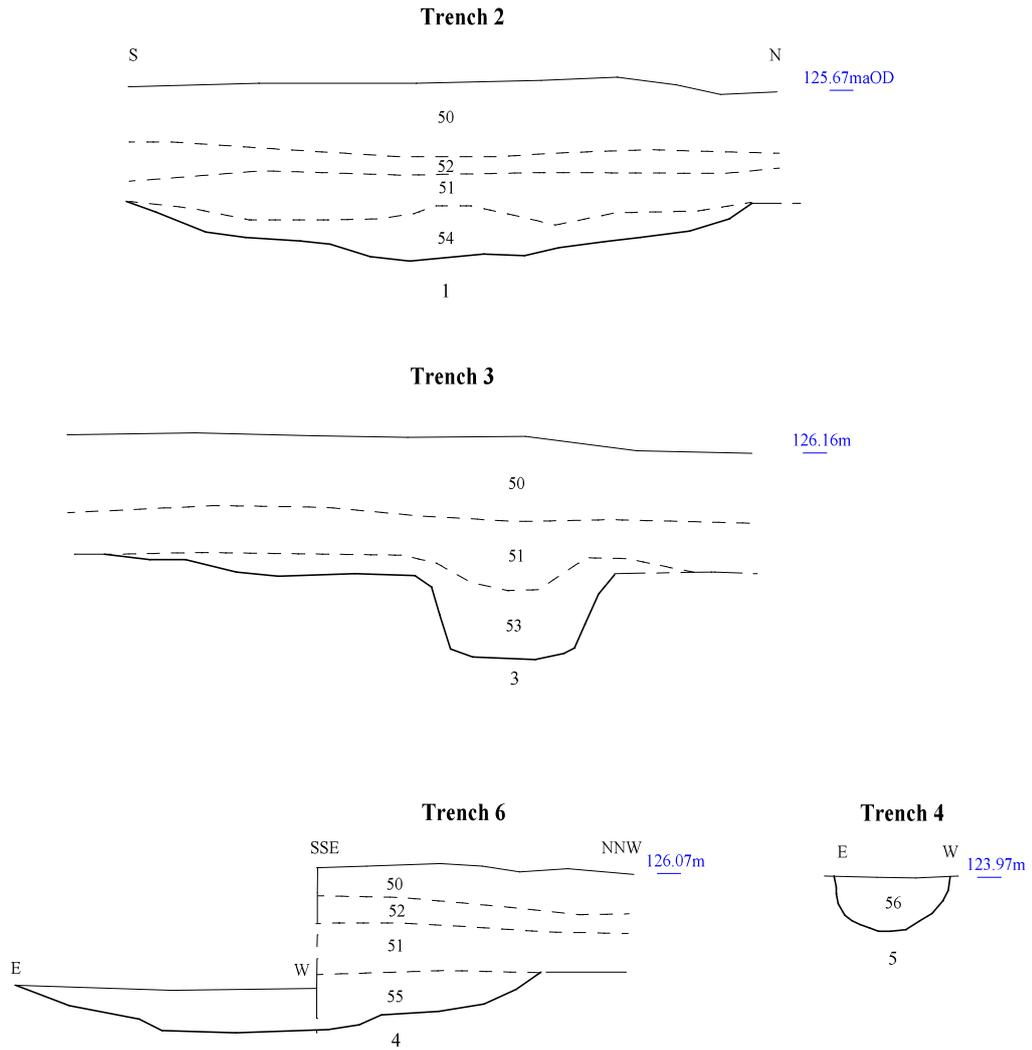
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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.



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Figure 5. Sections.





Plate 1. General view of site looking south west.



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

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 3, feature 3, looking west, Scale: 2m, 0.5 and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Trench 6, looking north west, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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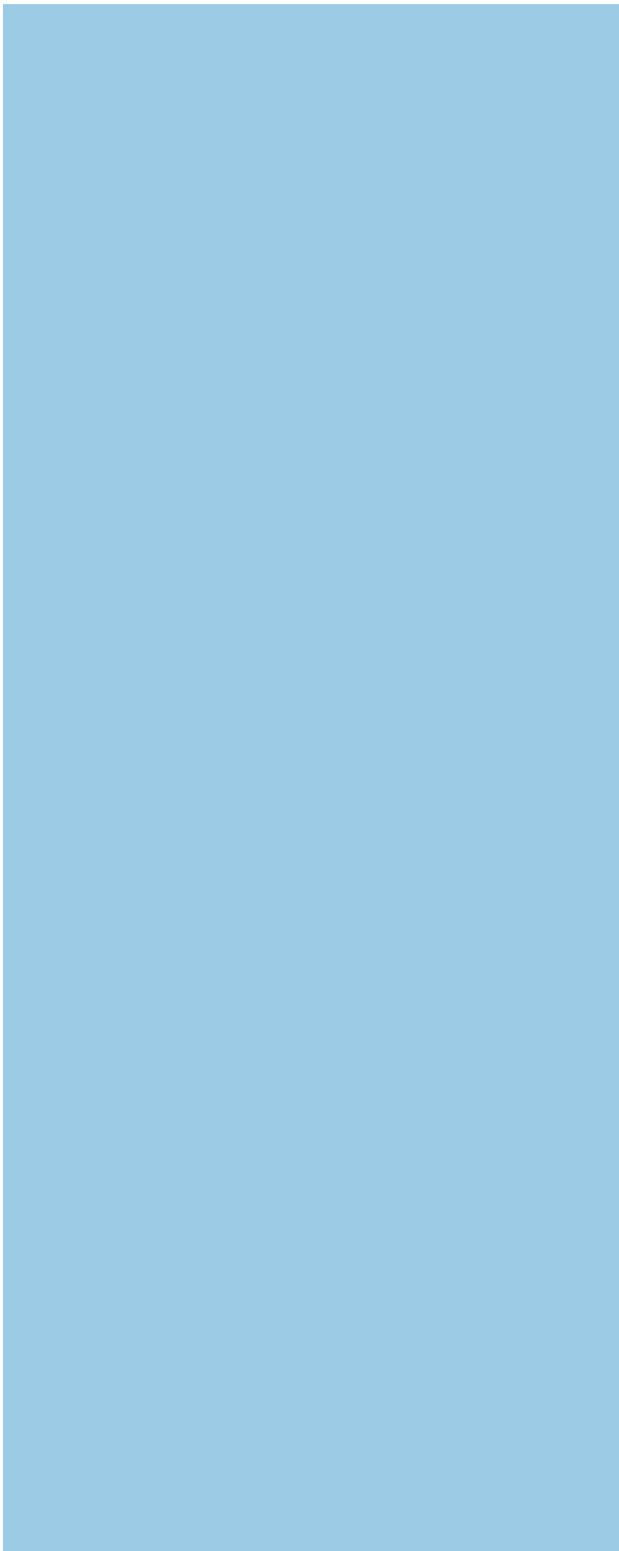
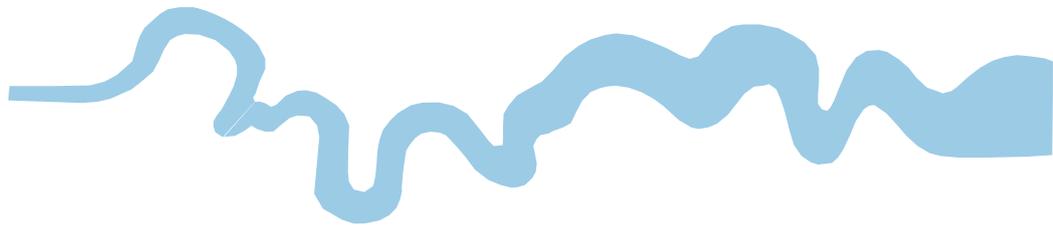
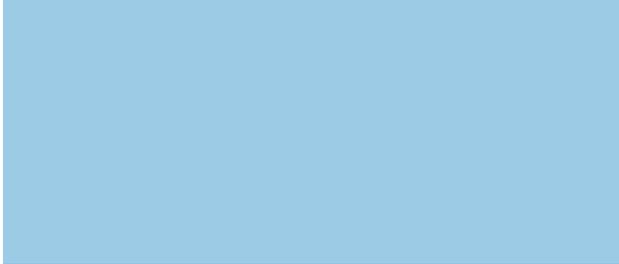
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Plates 3 and 4.

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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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