

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**46 Northcourt Avenue,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Site Code: NCA12/204

(SU 7290 7147)

**46 Northcourt Avenue,
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Country Estates Ltd**

by Susan Porter
Thames Valley Archaeological Services
Ltd

Site Code NCA12/204

December 2012

Summary

Site name: 46 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7290 7147

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 13th December 2012

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Susan Porter

Site code: NCA 12/204

Area of site: c. 900 sq m

Summary of results: No archaeological finds or deposits were present

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✓ 14.12.12
	Steve Preston✓ 14.12.12

46 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Susan Porter

Report 12/204

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at 46 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire SU 7290 7147 (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Jason Gibbs of Country Estates Ltd, Kingfisher House, Albury Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 1BD.

Planning permission (app no 12/00025/FUL) has been gained from Reading Borough Council to demolish the existing structure and rebuild with five apartments and associated car parking and landscaping. The new building is to occupy the same plot as the existing structure. The rear garden is to be graded down to form a level garden area accessed by steps whereas parking to the rear (west) is to be of no-dig construction with removal of only 5mm of turf. Grading to form the new level lawn area will require up to *c.* 1m of ground reduction at the eastern end. The consent is subject to a condition (4) relating to archaeology requiring the implementation of a phased programme of archaeological mitigation.

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 Borough Council's policies on archaeology. It is acknowledged that PPS5 has been superseded by the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012). The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Fiona Macdonald, of Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to the Borough on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Susan Porter on 13/12/12 and the site code is NCA 12/204. 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 is located on the west side of Northcourt Avenue, in a residential area on the southern margins of Reading, *c.*1km from the town centre, and to the west of Reading University (Fig. 1). The site is a *c.*900 sq m rectangular parcel of land at number 46, amidst other residential properties with Ennerdale Road to the immediate north (Fig. 2). The site formed a rear garden to the existing house with trees, and shrubs present at the edges, the centre of the site had been mostly cleared in preparation for work. The remains of a square probable shed structure remained at roughly the midpoint of the southern extent of the site. The site slopes down from

75.5m above Ordnance Datum at the eastern extent to 69.8m aOD at the western extent. The underlying geology is mapped as London Clay (BGS 1971), and this was observed in both trenches.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley and has been highlighted in a briefing note prepared by Berkshire Archaeology, advisors to Reading Borough Council. To summarize the site lies in an area where the Berkshire Historic Environment Record details a modest range of prehistoric and Roman finds. To the south of the site lies the unexplained monument known (in archaeological literature) as Marshall's Hill, which is possibly a late Bronze Age ringfort or high status enclosure (Bradley 1984). Recent excavations to the south at the rear of 68–72 Northcourt Avenue revealed Roman occupation (Milbank 2010), although a small evaluation to the north at 24 Northcourt Avenue revealed nothing of interest (McNicoll-Norbury 2009).

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 that would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which warrant preservation in-situ, or might be better excavated in conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

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

It was proposed to dig two trenches, each 1.6m wide and 10m long, targeted at the accessible areas of proposed ground reduction and car park areas to the rear of the plot. A contingency of 5m of trench was included within the proposal should it be required to clarify the initial findings.

A small 360° Kubota-type machine equipped with a ditching bucket was used to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features were present they were to be hand cleaned with appropriate tools and the spoil heaps searched for finds.

Results

Both trenches were dug as intended they ranged in length from 10.0m to 10.10m and in depth from 0.30m to 0.45m. Spoil heaps were examined for finds. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Figs 3 and 4, Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned SW–NE and was 10.00m long and 0.30m deep at the eastern end and 0.40m deep at the western end. The stratigraphy at the eastern end consisted of 0.15m of dark brown grey silty clay topsoil above 0.13m of yellow/grey silty clay with frequent small gravel inclusions subsoil. At the western end the stratigraphy was 0.20m of topsoil above 0.15m of yellow grey silty clay with frequent small gravel inclusions subsoil overlying light orange brown silty clay natural geology. A natural spread was observed at 1m and a modern drain at 8.50m. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3; Pl.2)

Trench 2 was aligned S–NE and was 10.10m in length and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of heavily rooted topsoil, overlying 0.20m heavily rooted subsoil, which in turn overlay the natural geology. Three possible features were investigated at 1.50m, 4m and 5m from the south western end of the trench, but were found to be natural tree hollows. No deposits of archaeological interest were observed and no finds were recovered.

Finds

No artefacts were recovered from either trench

Conclusion

Despite the potential of the site in general and in particular with reference to the Roman occupation deposits identified further south on Northcourt Avenue, no archaeological deposits of any period were identified in either of the trenches. The evaluation showed that although the archaeologically relevant levels had not been disturbed, based on the sample here, the proposed development can be considered to carry no archaeological implications.

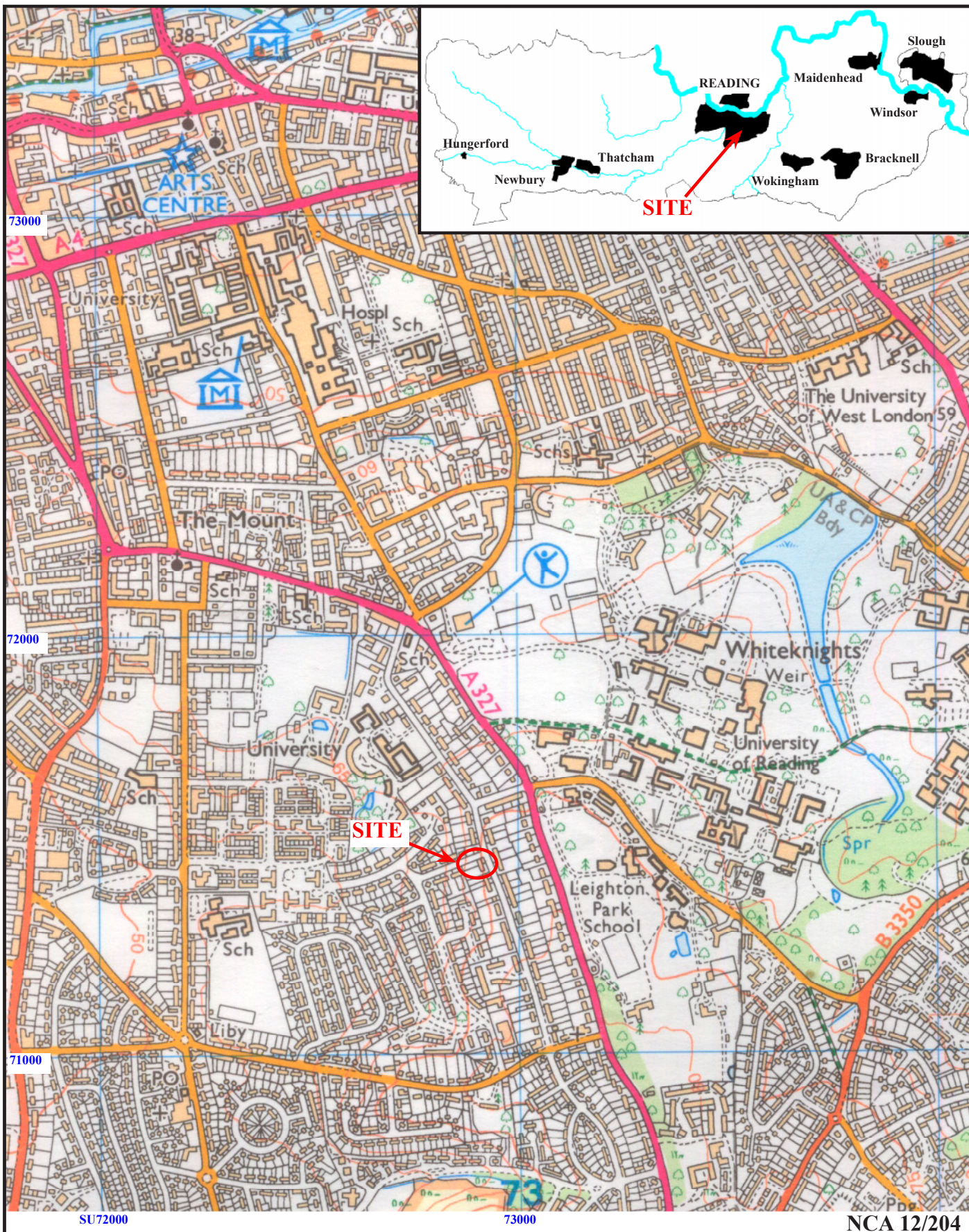
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at west and south west end.

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	10.00	1.60	0.30-0.40m	East: 0–0.15m dark brown grey silty clay topsoil; 0.15-0.28m light yellow grey clayey silt with frequent gravel subsoil; 0.28m+ light orange brown silty clay natural geology West: 0-0.20 topsoil; 0.20-0.35m subsoil; 0.35+m natural geology. [Pl.1]
2	10.10	1.60	0.45m	0–0.20m dark brown grey silty clay heavily rooted topsoil; 0.20-0.40m light yellow grey clayey silt with frequent gravel heavily rooted subsoil; 0.40m+ light orange brown silty clay natural geology. Tree holes at 1.50m, 4m and 5m. [Pl.2]



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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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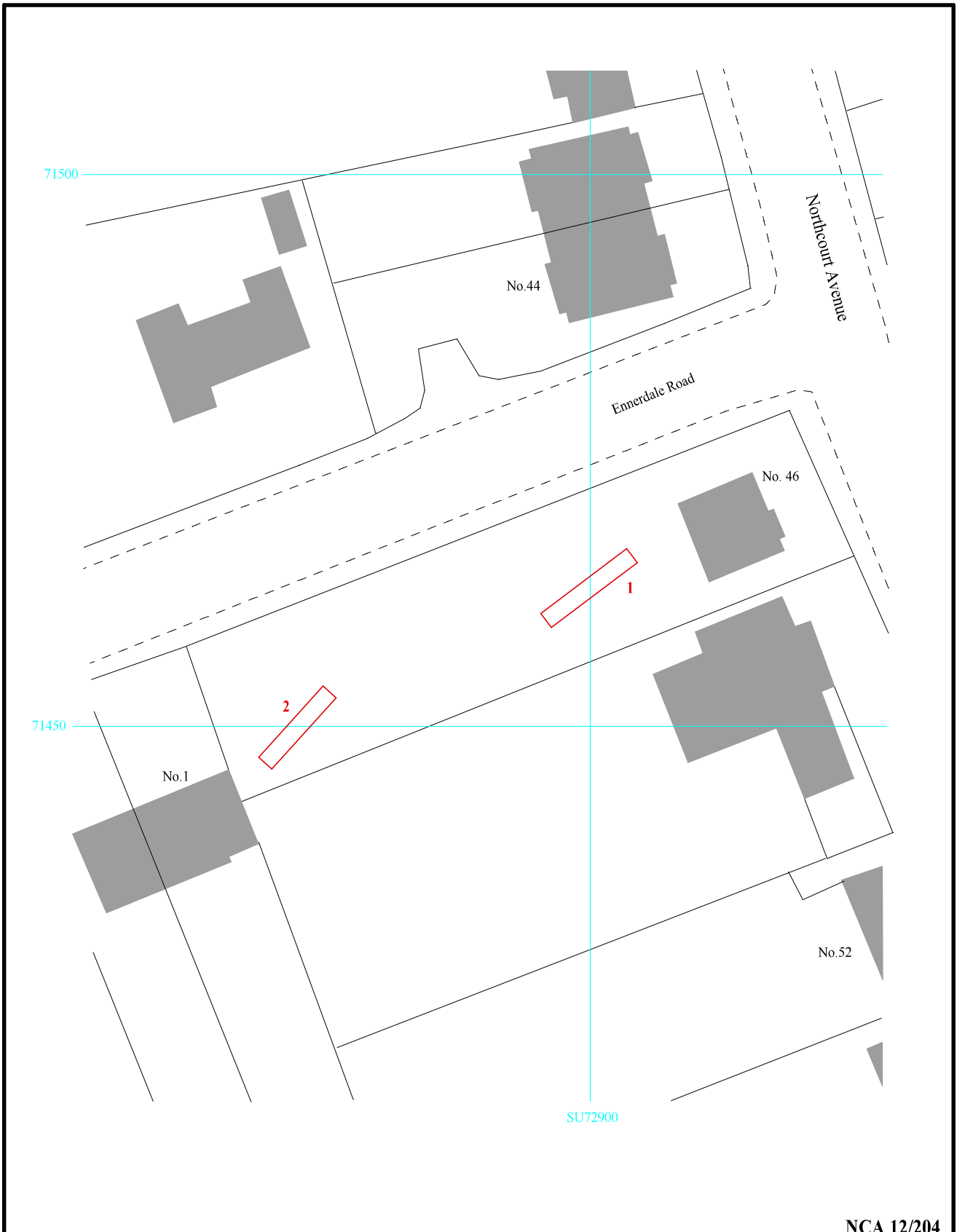


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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Northcourt Avenue.

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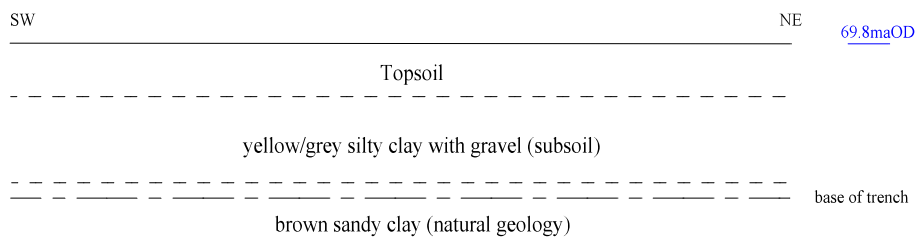
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Figure 4. Representative section of trench 1.





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



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

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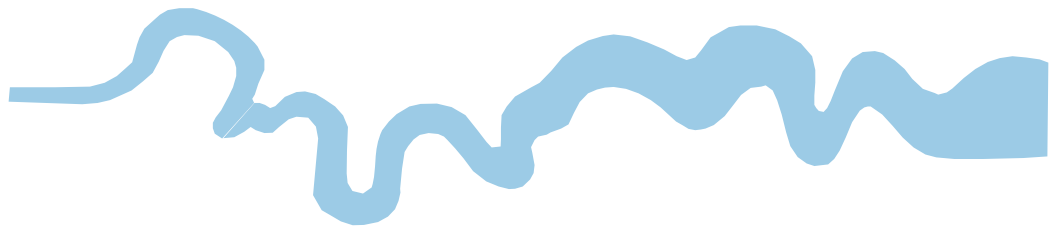
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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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