

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street,
Eton, Windsor, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andy Weale

Site Code: RBE10/23

(SU 9660 7725)

Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Bewley Homes plc

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code RBE10/23

April 2013

Summary

Site name: Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 9660 7725

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 4th to 6th March 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andrew Weale

Site code: RBE 10/23

Summary of results: Excavation of the crane base pit only revealed layers of post-medieval made ground above alluvium. No archaeological deposits were observed.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 11.04.13 Steve Preston✓ 19.03.13
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Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Weale

Report 10/23c

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Rafts Boathouse, Brocas Street, Eton, Windsor, Berkshire (SU 9660 7725) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Steve Parks, for Bewley Homes plc, Inhurst House, Brimpton Road, Baughurst, Hampshire, RG26 5JJ.

Planning permission (app nos 11/02769/FUL and 12/02607/FUL) has been granted by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for the construction of new apartments, houses and a new boathouse following demolition of the existing boathouse complex. The consent includes a condition (14) relating to archaeology, requiring a phased programme of archaeological investigation prior to development. The archaeologically relevant levels lay at a depth well below the majority of the impact level of the groundworks, with a low density of proposed piling. However, one area (a crane base) had a higher density of piling, and the archaeological adviser to the council (Mr Ben Jervis of Berkshire Archaeology) requested that further work takes place in this zone of the site.

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. It is acknowledged that the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) has since superseded PPS5. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Ben Jervis of Berkshire Archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, between 4th and 6th March 2013 and the site code is RBE 10/23. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited in an appropriate designated museum or repository in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north bank of the River Thames at Eton, overlooked by Windsor Castle and Windsor on the south bank, with Windsor Bridge a short distance to the east (Fig. 1). The site is bounded by Brocas Street to the north and Brocas Meadow to the west (Fig. 2). The site previously comprised several boathouses belonging to Eton College (Pl. 1) most of which had been demolished by the time of the evaluation. The River

House was still standing and is to be renovated rather than demolished. The site is located on Quaternary drift flood-plain gravel (BGS 1981), and lies at a height of approximately 20m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been detailed in a desk-based assessment for the project (Hopkins 2010). In summary the site lies within an area of Eton that is considered to be of high archaeological potential. Eton has Saxon origins and developed alongside Windsor (Preston 2005). Eton is mentioned in Domesday Book of AD1086 (Williams and Martin 2002) but is better recorded from the 13th century. Extensive excavation to the east on the same side of the river at King Stable Street revealed occupation deposits and timber revetment of the river and reclamation from the 12th century (Blinkhorn and Pugh 2000).

More recently, an evaluation by trial trenching was carried out across the site (Weale and Porter 2013) which revealed the archaeological potential of the site. Late post-medieval make-up layers up to about 1m in depth were encountered across the site. These overlay a small number of cut features and a possible surface of certain and probable medieval date along with a peat filled palaeochannel. Reclamation deposits and waterfront structures were conspicuous by their absence.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas threatened by the proposed development. Specific research aims were to:

- 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.

Overburden was to be removed by a 360° type machine equipped with a ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under archaeological supervision. Where archaeological features were suspected the stripped areas were to be cleaned using hand tools and a metal detector was to be used on the trench floors and spoil heaps.

Results

Crane Base Pit (Figs 3 and 4 Pl. 1).

The crane base pit was aligned roughly north–south and was 2.70m long, 2.30m wide and 1.37m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.60m loose crushed concrete and brick made ground (150), overlying a geo-textile membrane, beneath which was 0.19m of firm mid brown grey silty clay sand (151) with two fragments of tile and charcoal, which in turn overlay 0.07m of crushed chalk within a yellow white clayey sand with no artefacts (152), overlying 0.14m of mid yellow grey silty clay (153) with no artefacts, which in turn overlay 0.17m of mid to dark yellow brown sandy clay (154) which contained a single fragment of brick which may be early post-medieval in date. This overlay a mid blue/grey alluvial clay with occasional fragments of chalk (155) which appeared to be natural river deposits that contained no artefacts.

Finds

Ceramic Building Material by Andrew Weale

A small assemblage of brick and tile was recovered from two contexts. Context 151 contained two fragments of undiagnostic tile with a total weight of 9g. Context 154 contained a fragment of brick which weighed 197g, appeared to be handmade a mid reddish brown colour uniform throughout the brick with small fragments of burnt flint within the fabric. The brick was not sanded, and did not contain a frog. Although the total length of the brick could not be measured the width was 102mm and the height was 56mm. This suggests that the brick was of an early post-medieval date but more precision cannot be offered.

Conclusion

The evaluation has already documented the stratigraphic development of this part of the riverside site. Unsurprisingly, the uppermost levels within the crane base pit comprised multiple layers of modern made ground with earlier made ground beneath. The bottommost layer (154) beneath the modern material contained artefacts which could be dated to an early post-medieval date. These layers of made ground overlay alluvial deposits, No cut archaeological features were observed.

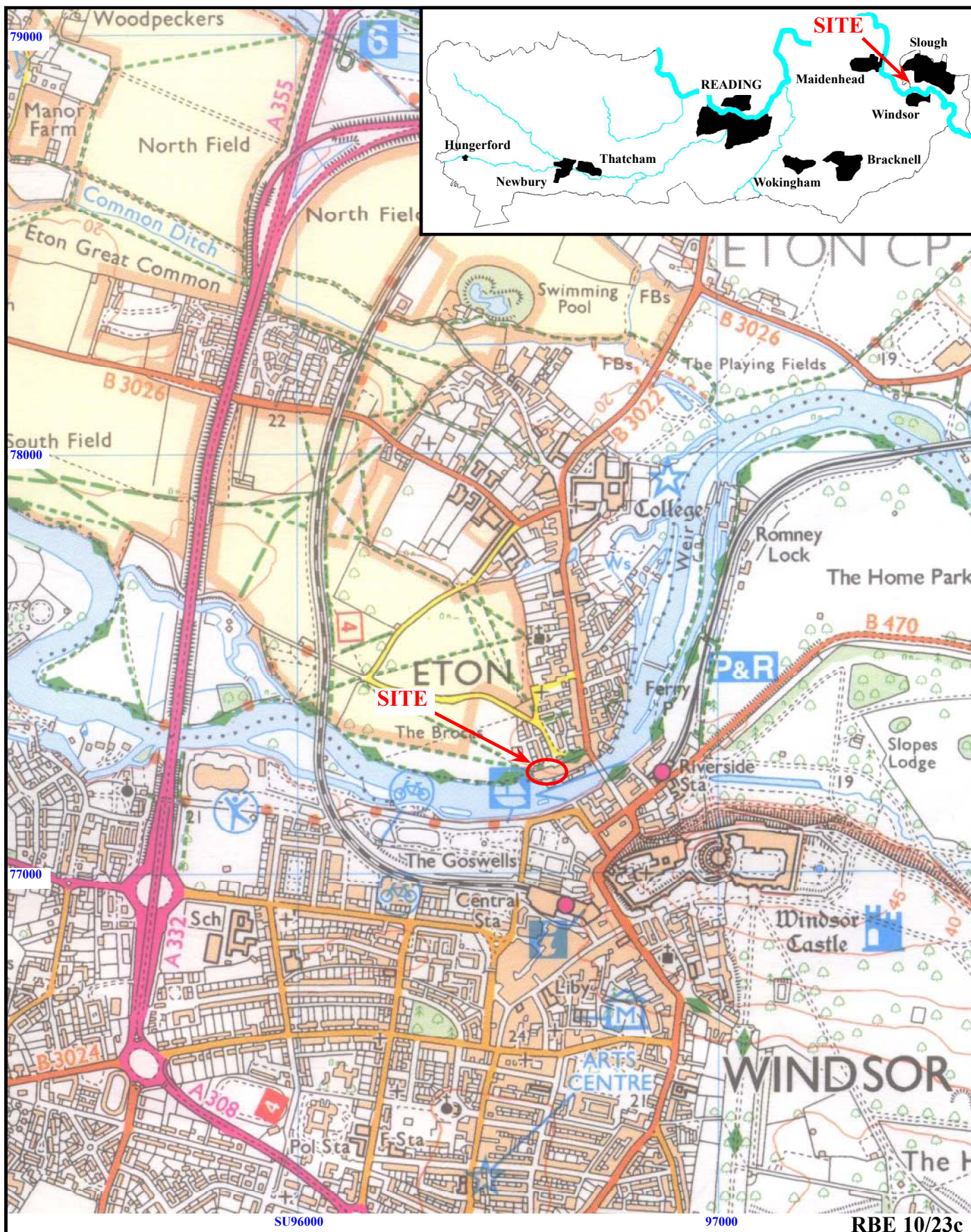
It had been considered that in this location deposits and structures representing waterfront facilities or land reclamation deposits might have been encountered but, apart from the post-medieval make-up layers, these distinctive features were absent.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Feature details

<i>Crane Base Pit</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	150	layer	modern	Geo-textile
1	151	layer	unknown	none
1	152	layer	unknown	none
1	153	layer	unknown	none
1	154	layer	unknown	none
1	155	layer	Early post medieval	brick

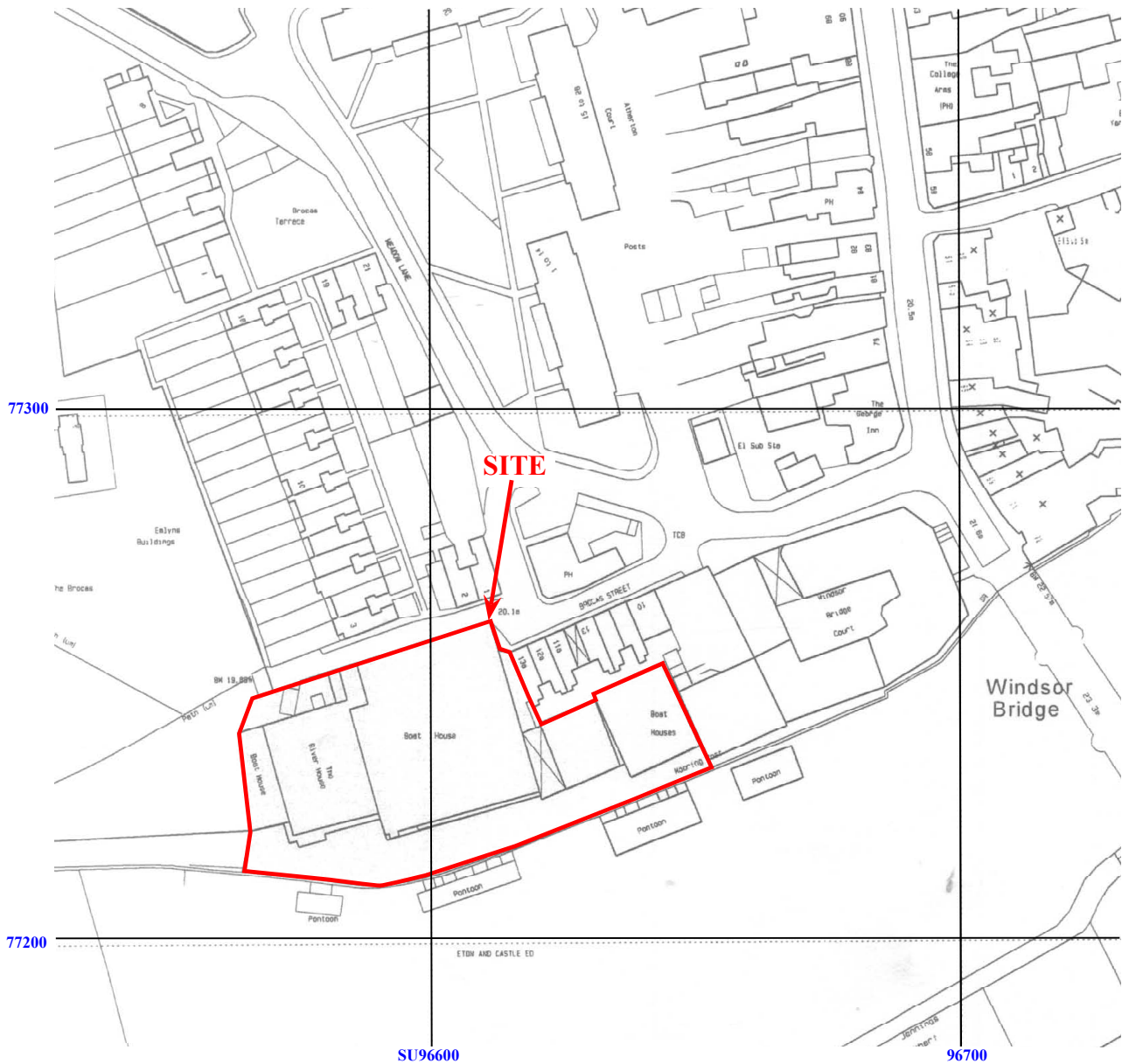


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Figure 1. Location of site within Eton and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Brocas Street.

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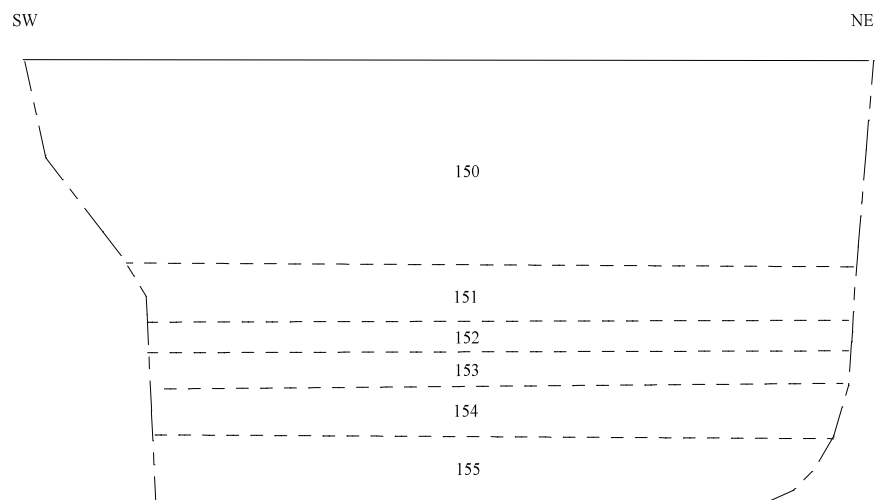


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Figure 3. Crane base location in relation to recent evaluation trenches.



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Figure 4. Crane base pit section.



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Plate 1. Crane base pit, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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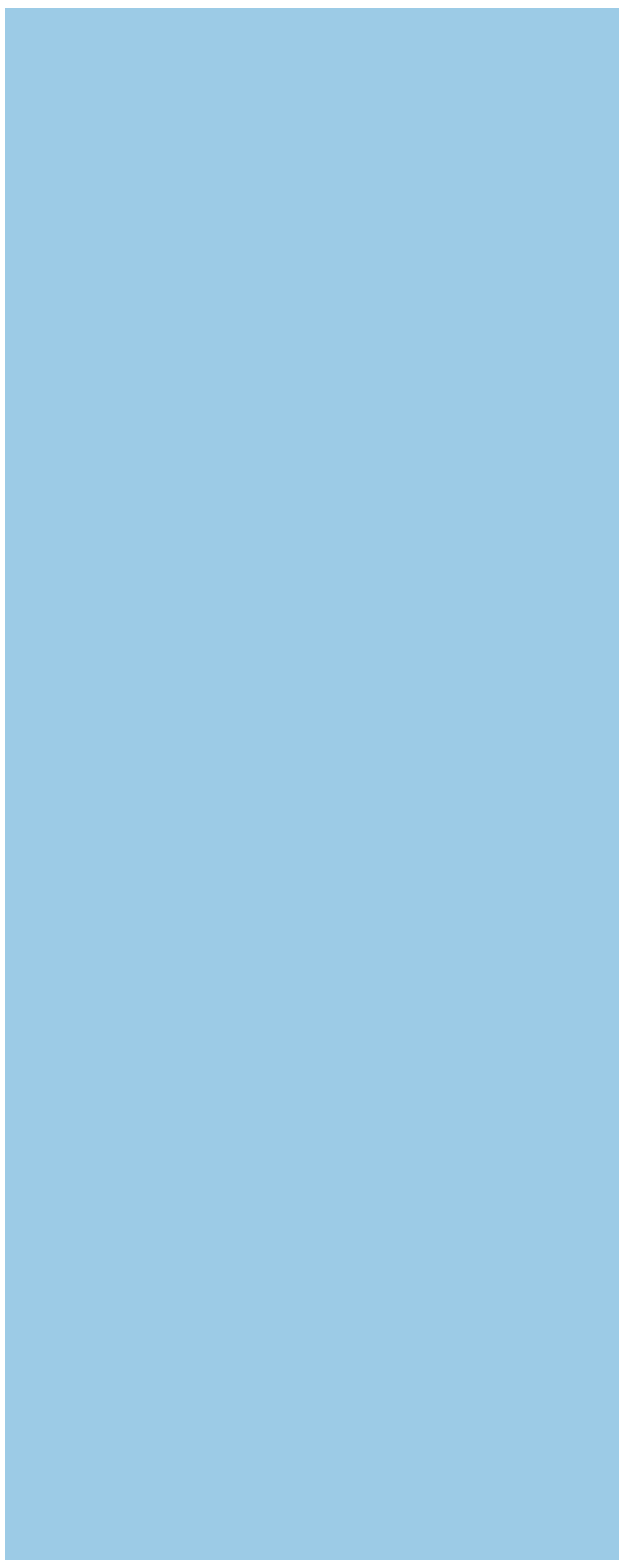
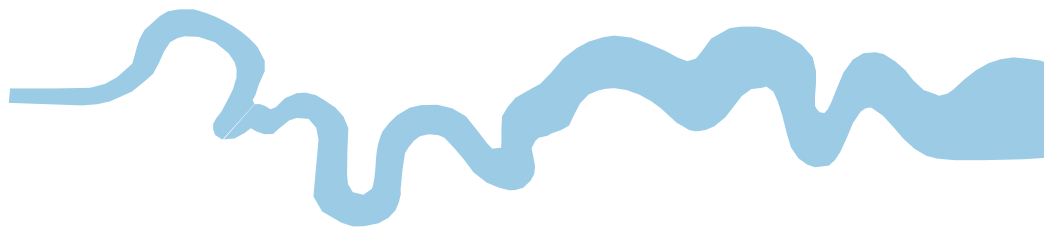
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Plate 1.

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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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