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ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**2 and 3 Abbey Cottages, The Green,  
Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Tim Dawson**

Site Code: ASC12/127

(SU 5028 9390)

# **2 and 3 Abbey Cottages, The Green, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Sweetcroft Homes Ltd**

by Tim Dawson

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ASC 12/127

**April 2013**

## Summary

**Site name:** 2 and 3 Abbey Cottages, The Green, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 5028 9390

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 14th March - 22nd April 2013

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Munding, Susan Porter

**Site code:** ASC 12/127

**Area of site:** 450 sq m observed within plot of c.0.2ha

**Summary of results:** Two reduced area digs were observed for basements at the location of new house plots. No archaeological deposits were encountered.

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

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 28.04.13<br>Steve Preston ✓ 24.04.13 |
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## **2 and 3 Abbey Cottages, The Green, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Tim Dawson

**Report 12/127**

### **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the site of 2 and 3 Abbey Cottages, The Green, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire, OX14 4AF (SU 5028 9390) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Glen Chapman, of Sweetcroft Homes Ltd, 78 Cumnor Road, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5JP.

Planning permission (P12/V1956/FUL) has been gained from Vale of White Horse District Council for the demolition of the existing cottages, and the construction of two new houses. The planning consent is subject to two conditions (14 and 15) requiring an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during the course of the 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 written scheme of investigation approved by Mr Hugh Coddington of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisers to the Council on matters relating to archaeology. This specification was based on a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2012). The fieldwork was undertaken by Tim Dawson, Andrew Mundin and Susan Porter between 14th March and 22nd April 2013. The site code is ASC 12/127.

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

### **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located down a short lane just east off the High Street, close to the junction of Church Street and High Street in Sutton Courtenay, just south of the Thames. The Green is situated immediately to the north along with The Abbey, a grange building with 14th-century elements. The roughly rectangular piece of land included in the development has quite dense tree coverage. The two previously existing houses were in the centre of the development area, which covered the central and eastern parts of the overall site (Figs 2 and 3). The underlying geology is mapped as first terrace river gravel (BGS 1971) however, a mixture of greensand, clay and chalk was observed during the excavations. The site is at approximately 50m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## **Archaeological background**

The site is towards the presumed centre of the historic village, directly to the south of the former grange of Abingdon Abbey, which has elements dating to the 1320s. The site also lies close to the parish church. Fieldwork in the area suggest growth along the Drayton Road from dispersed farmsteads developing during the medieval period, such as those found at Drayton (Challinor *et al.* 2004; Anthony and Taylor 2006; Porter 2013). In the surrounding area, cropmarks and aerial photography have uncovered a wealth of features (Benson and Miles 1974, map 34), ranging from settlement to funerary activity of Prehistoric to Saxon date. Though some of these areas have been encroached on by quarrying in the mid-20th century, some areas, such as the north of the village, have been investigated. A recent watching brief on Abingdon Road identified features associated with this landscape (Mundin and McNicoll-Norbury 2009). Of particular note was the recovery of Early/Middle Saxon Ipswich-ware pottery, a rare find for the area.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record archaeological deposits affected by the new groundworks. This would involve observations of areas of intrusive groundworks, which would include reduced strip areas, footing trenches and service runs. In the event, only two area reductions were required. Areas of overburden were removed by a mechanical excavator with a bladed bucket, but deeper works were carried out with a toothed bucket.

## **Results**

### Plot 1

The ground reduction for the first basement was observed to the upper level of the natural geology, a greensand mixed with grey sandy clay and chalk, 0.92m below the ground surface. The area excavated measured 16m by 14m and cut through 0.25m of crushed rubble, 0.30m of dark grey-brown sandy clay made ground and 0.37m of mid grey-brown sandy clay made ground (Pl. 1, Figs. 3 and 4). Both made ground layers included frequent fragments of brick, tile and drain pipe. The eastern half of Plot 1 was greatly disturbed by the construction and demolition of the house that previously stood on site. The stratigraphy was much less well defined and bucket tooth marks were visible in the upper surface of the natural geology. No archaeological features were identified in the plot.

## Plot 2

The second basement excavation measured 16m by 15m (Pl. 2, Fig. 3) and was dug to a final depth of c.6m. Because of its location in the garden to the east of the house which previously occupied the site the excavations for the second basement cut through a different stratigraphic sequence. This consisted of 0.29m humic topsoil and 0.23m of subsoil overlying the natural geology of greensand mixed with grey sandy clay and chalk (Fig. 4). As with Plot 1, no finds or features of archaeological interest were identified.

## **Finds**

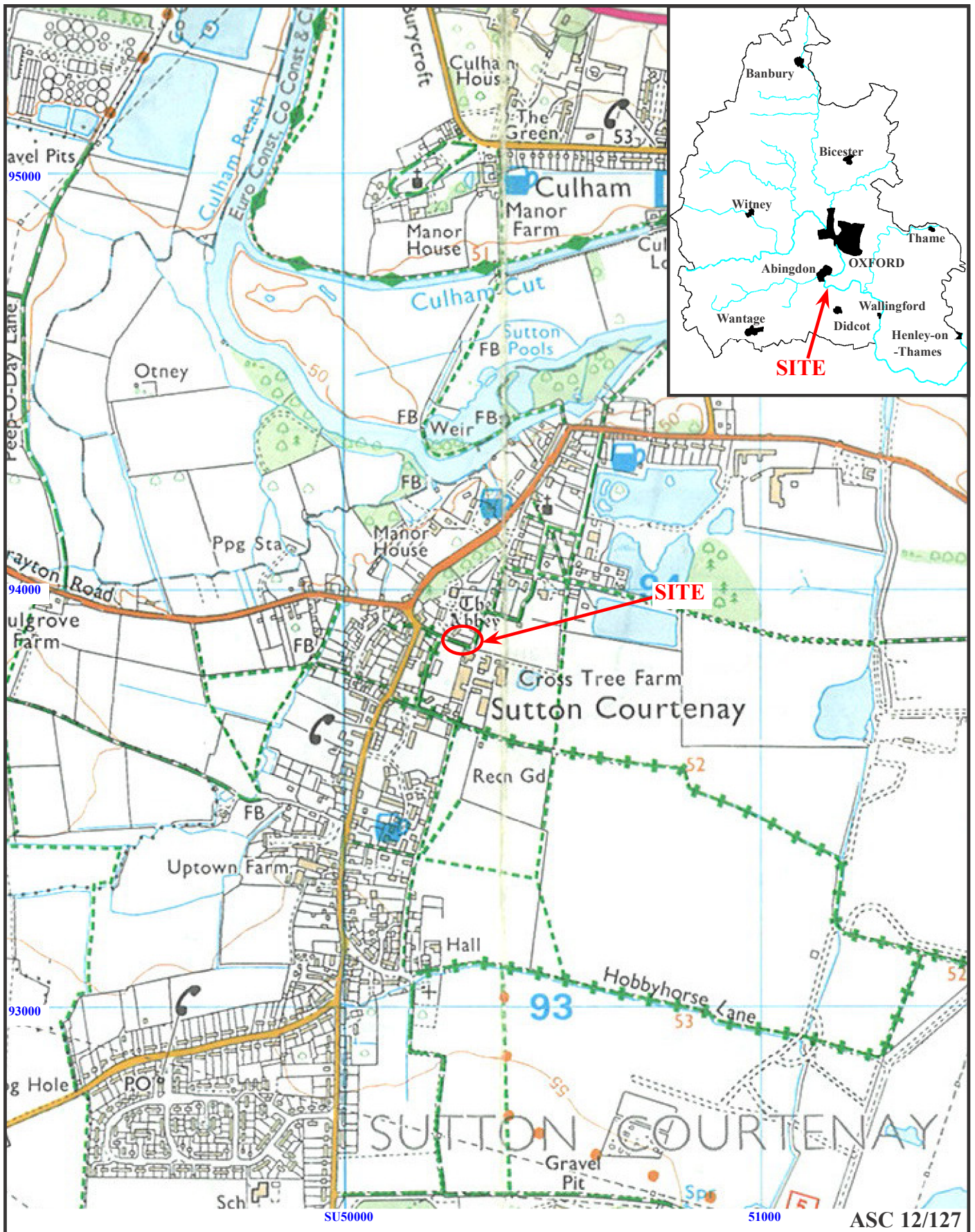
The watching brief yielded no finds of archaeological interest.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the location of the site in an area of high archaeological potential no finds or features of archaeological interest were identified during the excavation of either basement. The natural geology was exposed across the site although the area where the previous house stood was somewhat truncated by its construction and recent demolition. This may have had an effect on the preservation of any archaeological features that were in that location.

## **References**

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- Challinor, D, *et al*, 2004, 'Excavations at Manor Farm, Drayton, Oxfordshire,' *Oxoniensia*, **68** (for 2003), 279–311
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- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Porter, S, 2013, 'Peewit Farm, Drayton Road, Sutton Courtenay; an archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 13/39, Reading

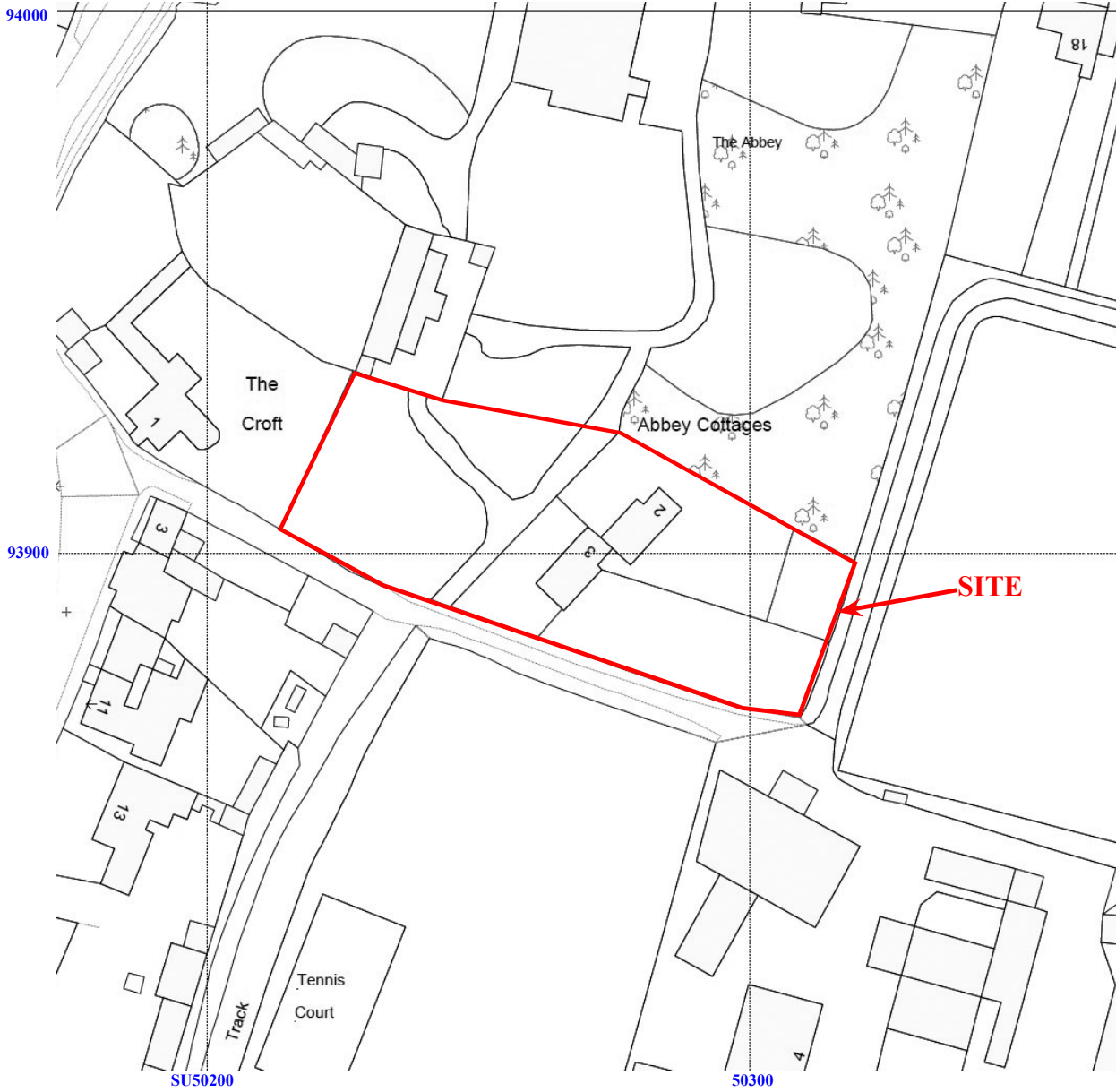


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Figure 1. Location of site within Sutton Courtenay and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Plot 1 e

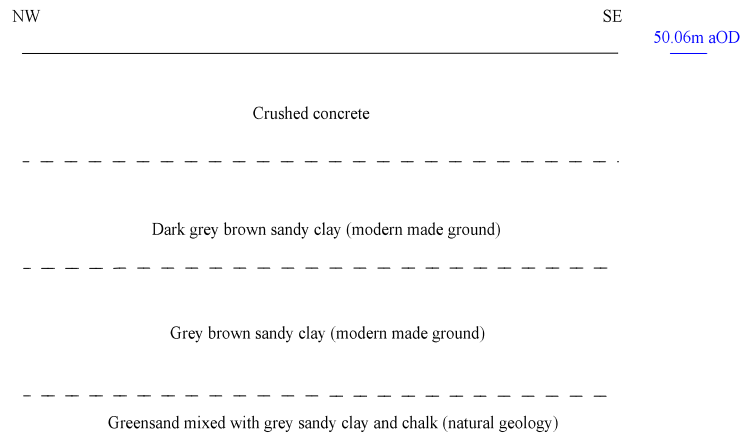
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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.

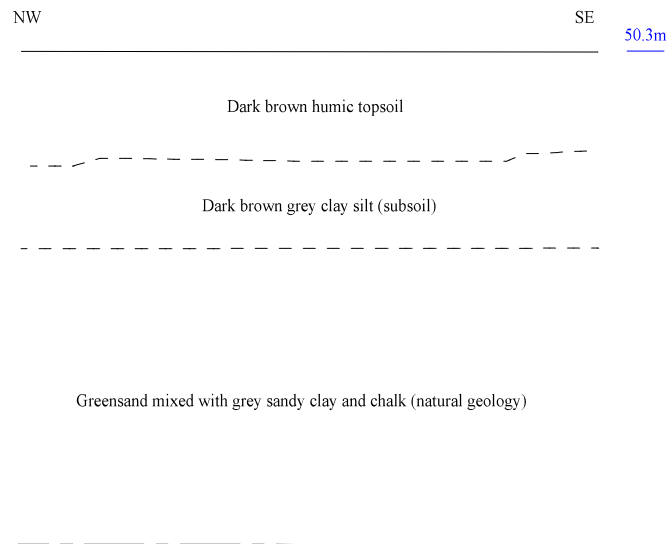


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**Plot 1 - full profile representative section**



**Plot 2**



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Figure 4. Representative sections.





Plate 1. Plot 2 section, looking north west, Scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Plot 1 looking north west, Scale: 1m..

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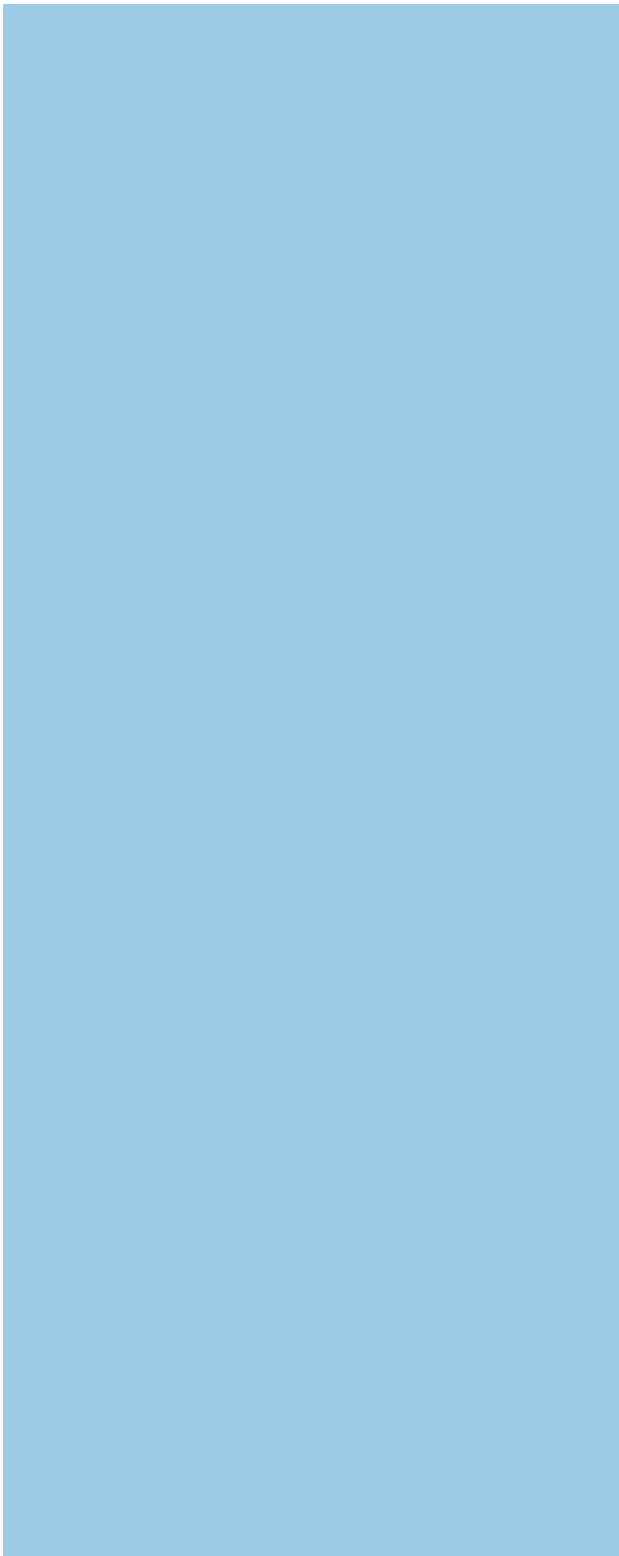
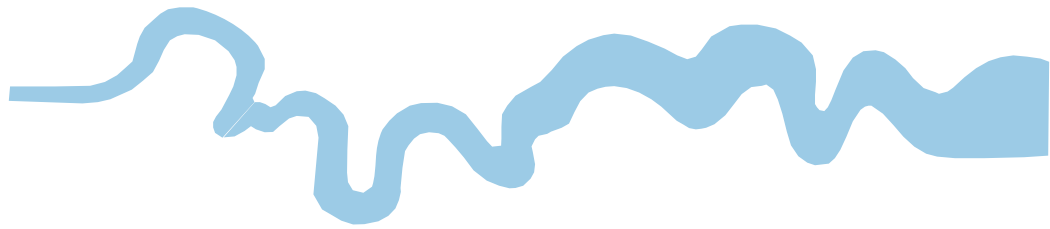
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Plates 1 and 2.

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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<br>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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