

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Electricity cable trench, All Souls College,
Oxford, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Genni Elliott

Site Code: ASC13/135

(SP 5171 0631)

Electricity cable trench, All Souls College, High Street, Oxford

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For Benfield and Loxley (Oxford) Limited**

by Genni Elliott

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code ASC 13/135

September 2013

Summary

Site name: Electricity cable trench, All Souls College, High Street, Oxford

Grid reference: SP 5171 0631

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 25th July 2013

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Genni Elliott

Site code: ASC 13/135

Area of site: c. 154 sq m

Summary of results: Observation of the route of a cable trench revealed a post-medieval buried soil. Excavation was not deep enough to reveal natural geology. A small quantity of medieval and later pottery and other artefacts were recovered.

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

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

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Electricity cable trench, All Souls College, High Street, Oxford An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 13/135

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at All Souls College, High Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 5171 0631) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sara Murray of Benfield and Loxley (Oxford) Ltd, Old Bank House, 166 Oxford Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2LA.

Planning permission has been gained from Oxford City Council to refurbish the kitchen complex which includes the laying of a new power cable, subject to a condition which requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and Oxford City Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr David Radford, Archaeological advisor to Oxford City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Genni Elliott on 25th July 2013 and the site code is ASC 13/135.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within Oxford City centre, to the north of the High Street at its junction with Cattle Street, within the grounds of All Souls College (Fig. 1). The trench was dug within one of the quads across fairly level ground at approximately 60m above Ordnance Datum (Fig. 2). The underlying geology is recorded as being on the junction between the 1st (flood plain) and 2nd (Summertown-Radley) Terrace Deposits consisting of river gravel (BGS 1982). The natural geology was not observed within the trench.

Archaeological background

In summary, the archaeological potential the site stems from its position within the historic core of Oxford (Ashdown and Hassall 1975; Dodd 2003) which includes the Medieval town and possibly the Saxon *burh*. The college was founded by Henry VI in 1438 and lies on one of the main thoroughfares of the City.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by invasive the groundworks. This involved the observation of a service trench running diagonally across an internal quad (Fig. 3). The trench was 18m long by 0.32m wide with a maximum depth of 0.48m. It was dug by hand (Pls 1-3).

Results

A total of four layers were observed within the trench (Pl. 3). The uppermost layer (50) was a fine gravel surface in a matrix of very pale yellowish brown, silty clay, 0.05m thick. This was above (51), which was only present at the western end of the trench. Layer 51 was a very stony, dark greyish brown, sandy clay, 0.08m thick and containing limestone rubble, post-medieval roof tile and animal bone. Layer (52) was below layer (51) and consisted of relatively clean gravel in a matrix of orangey brown, sandy clay, 0.13m thick. The earliest layer was (53), a fairly loose, greyish brown, sandy clay loam, more than 0.22m thick. Inclusions consisted of lime mortar and some gravel. There were a number of finds including pottery, animal bone, post-medieval roof tile, limestone rubble and oyster shell. This layer is interpreted as a post-medieval buried soil.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 22 sherds with a total weight of 189g. It all occurred in a single context, (53), and was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994), as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD975–1350. 1 sherd, 5g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200–1600. 14 sherds, 127g.

OXST: Rhenish Stoneware, AD1480–1700. 7 sherds, 57g.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The German Stonewares are all fragments of late medieval beer-mugs typical of the Langerwehe and Raeren industries, and most likely date to the late 15th to mid-16th century (Gaimster 1997). The Brill/Boarstall sherds are also in fabrics which are typical of the latest products of the tradition, and of a similar date. The single sherd of OXAC is residual. Large quantities of German Stoneware beer-mugs have been noted during excavations at other Oxford Colleges, such as at Merton (Blinkhorn 2006).

Animal Bone by Genni Elliott

A small assemblage of disarticulated animal bone was hand collected from a single context: 51 fragments weighing 513g were present for analysis and these are summarized in Appendix 1. The remains were moderately well preserved, with little surface erosion but were fairly fragmented which decreased the amount of identifiable bone. Overall the assemblage was dominated by large (cow/horse) and medium (sheep/goat/pig) skeletal elements, mainly consisting of long bones and ribs.

Cattle bones formed the largest number of identifiable bone consisting of a right proximal phalange, the distal end of a right femur and an un-fused femur head. Sheep/goat elements consisted of two radii/ulnae, one of which was complete. A single roe deer tibia/fibula was identified and the proximal end of a cat tibia.

The large majority of the bone could only be sub-divided into large- (16 fragments) and medium-sized (12 fragments) mammals with a further 16 fragments being too fragmented to identify beyond mammal. Two of the large mammal fragments showed evidence of being chopped.

Due to the lack of duplicated skeletal elements, the minimum number of individuals present in the assemblage was found to be 4: 1 each of cow, sheep/goat, deer and cat. No further information could be obtained from the highly fragmented remains.

The assemblage overall appears to reflect domestic waste, with evidence of butchery limited to two pieces.

Ceramic by Danielle Milbank

A total of three fragments of tile (160g) were recovered from deposit 53. They were examined under x10 magnification. Two of the three fragments co-join and are of a hard, slightly friable clay fabric with poorly-sorted small burnt flint and quartz sand inclusions. The core is black (reduced) and within this, the flint inclusions are not burnt. Within the core, a void has been left by a small piece of organic material 12mm long and 1.5mm thick, probably a small piece of wood or straw, which has been burnt. The surface colour is a pale grey red, and there are slight striations on the upper side. The overall form is flat (though slightly irregular) and there is a probably peg hole on one broken edge. The thickness is 13mm and the piece represents a roof tile fragment. Although roof tiles of this type can date from the early medieval period to the 16th century, the uneven form and the fabric of the fragments suggest a date in the earlier part of this range.

A third small piece of tile is 10mm thick and is of a fine, hard clay fabric with sparse sandy inclusions and a red colour with dark grey (reduced) core. It likely to date to the medieval period, again likely from the early part (13th or 14th centuries).

Although roof tile was in use from the early medieval period onwards, it was used initially only for high-status buildings, before becoming more widespread in the 15th century. However as the material is durable and is often re-used, it is frequently found redeposited in later contexts.

Metalwork

Two iron nails weighing 28g found in layer 53 are handmade with a rectangular cross-section and are probably post-medieval in date.

Conclusion

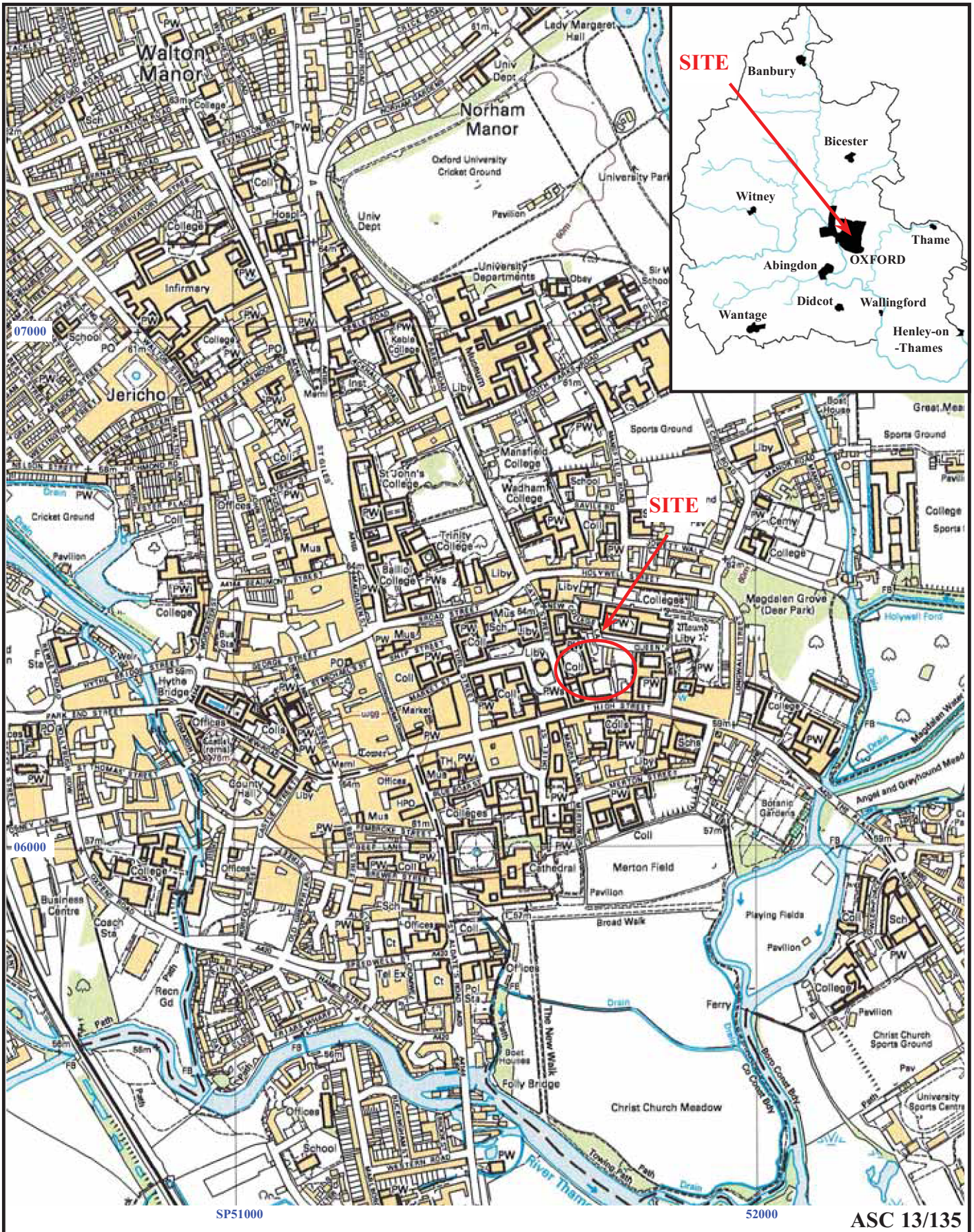
No archaeological features were observed, but the works did not penetrate to the relevant horizon (natural soils were not encountered); the earliest layer was a buried soil containing post-medieval and medieval finds, including pottery.

References

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- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

Appendix 1: Inventory of animal bone

Deposit	No. frags	Wt (g)	Cow	Sheep/ goat	Deer	Cat	Medium	Large	Mammal
53	51	513	3	2	1	1	12	16	16
MNI	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-

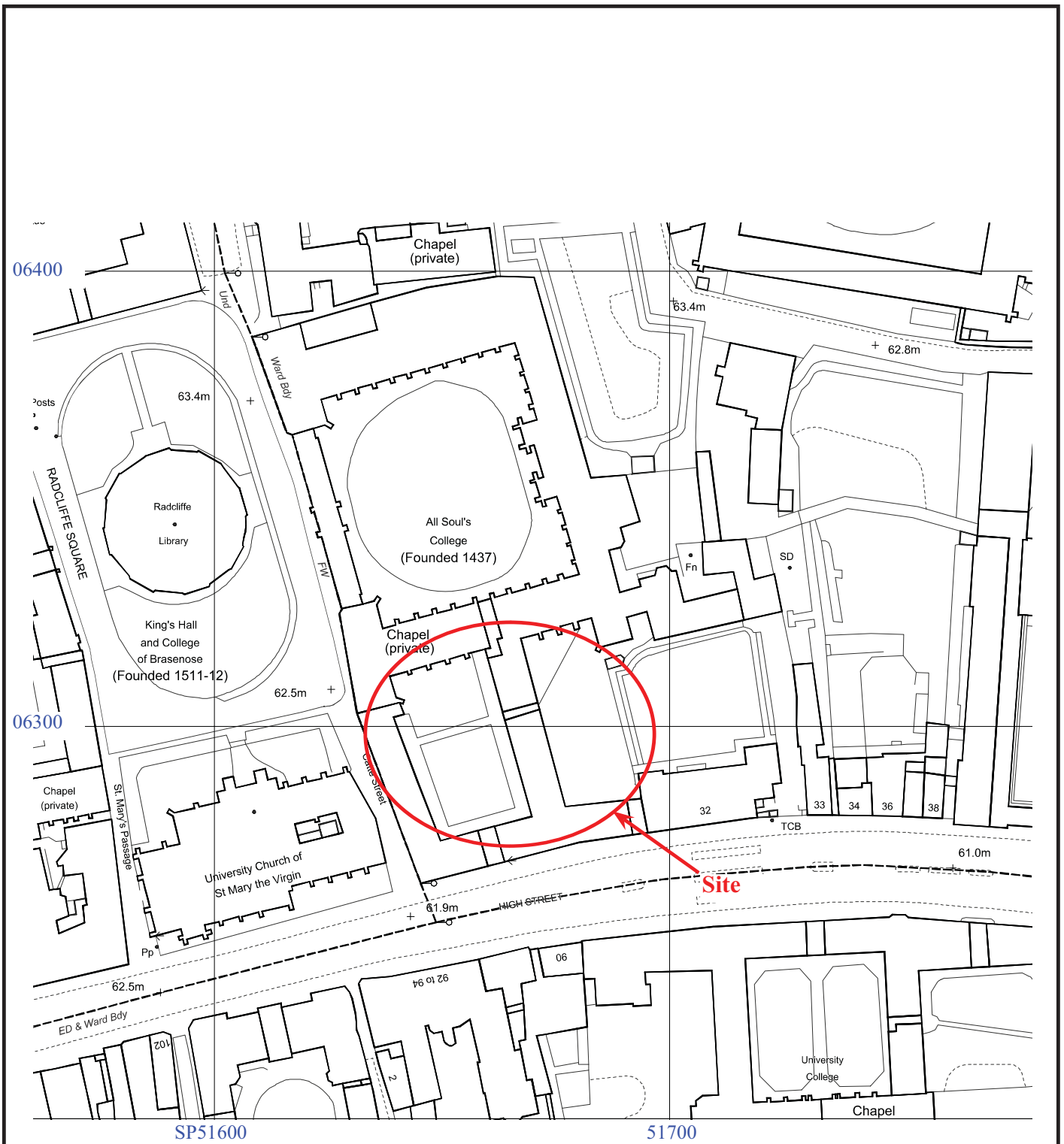


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Figure 1. Location of site within Oxford and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site on the High Street, Oxford.
Scale 1:1250

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Plate 1. Along the trench, looking north east,
Scales: 2m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Along the trench, looking north west,
Scales: 2m and 0.3m.



Plate 3. Typical section, looking south east, Scales: 2m and 0.3m.

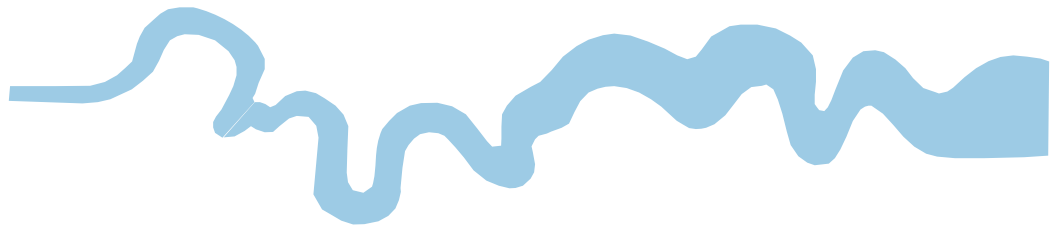
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Plates 1 - 3.

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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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