

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Land adjacent to The Willows, Sycamore Road,  
Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andy Mundin**

**Site Code: TWL13/174**

**(SP 6102 2272)**

**Land adjacent to The Willows, Sycamore Road,  
Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Mr Donald Maloney**

by Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TWL 13/174

**January 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Land adjacent to The Willows, Sycamore Road, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SP 6102 2272

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 12th December 2013 to 16th January 2014

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Munding

**Site code:** TWL 13/174

**Area of site:** 354 sq m

**Summary of results:** After ground reduction, the digging of footings for a new house and garage were observed on the site. However, no archaeological finds nor deposits were identified.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 17.01.14
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# Land adjacent to The Willows, Sycamore Road, Launton, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Muddin

Report 13/174

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried at land west of The Willows, Sycamore Road, Launton, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX26 5DY (SP 6102 2272) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Donald Maloney, Walnut Halt, Main St, Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire, HP18 0SL. Planning consent has been gained from Cherwell District Council (App. no. 13/00992/F) to build a new house and garage on the site. The consent is subject conditions (6 and 7) which requires a written scheme of archaeological works to be submitted and undertaken in the form of a watching brief.

This is in accordance with *The 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 Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, archaeological advisors to the District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Muddin, Susan Porter and David Platt, between 12th December 2013 and 16th January 2014. The site code is TWL 13/174.

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

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located in the northern part of the village of Launton, which is located on the north eastern edge of Bicester (Fig.1). Sycamore Road is a residential road off Station Road, the northern road leading out of the village (Fig.2). Yew Tree Farm lies just to the north of the site. The site is currently a piece of grassland adjacent to The Willows, with a new fence dividing the site from it in the east. A small pond is situated inside the site, on its northern boundary. The underlying geology is Peterborough Member Mudstone (BGS 2002), and the site lies at c.66m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Oram 2013). In summary, this notes that the site lies to the rear of an early 18th

century farm, which is Grade II Listed (18170), and close to other 17th and 18th century dwellings on Station Road. The settlement has Saxon origins, as it is documented in Domesday Book of AD1086 (Williams and Martin 2002) and it is considered that the historic focus of the settlement is most likely to be centred near to the church of St. Mary's on the north-western side of the village. Few archaeological investigations have taken place within the village but a medieval pit was recorded during a watching brief to the west and a recent watching brief, close to the Tythe Barn at Manor Farm recorded an undated ditch, aligned to the barn, also a Grade II Listed building (Castle 2013) .

In the wider area, Iron Age and Roman settlements have been recorded both to the north west and south west of the site with a number of other similar settlements recorded beyond including the Roman town of Alchester.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeology deposits affected by the works. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks and include observation of surface stripping and the digging of foundation trenches. The garage foundation was to be a block and beam foundation and the main house was to be a ring beam with piles. These trenches were to be dug with a tracked 360° mechanical excavator, fitted with a toothed ditching bucket.

## **Results**

### *Overburden removal*

Prior to the digging of foundation trenches, a portion of the site was reduced by 0.3m with 0.5m maximum reduced towards the northern edge. This was in order to remove made ground from the site, which has been dumped during the construction of the adjacent property (The Willows) (Fig. 3). Therefore, the observed surface through which the foundation trenches were dug was the very base of the original topsoil, with only some subsoil exposed. This was at a height of 65.3m aOD.

### *The house*

The house foundations were constructed using mini-piles joined by a ring beam (Fig. 3). The trenching for this was 0.7m wide and dug to a depth of 0.7m below the stripped surface. Below the subsoil, the mudstone (clay) natural geology was encountered at a depth of c. 0.4m (Fig. 4). No archaeological deposits were recorded.

### *The garage*

The garage was built using strip foundations. The trenches were also 0.7m wide and were dug to a depth of 1.1m below the stripped surface through the subsoil with the natural geology being encountered at c. 0.43m (Fig. 4).

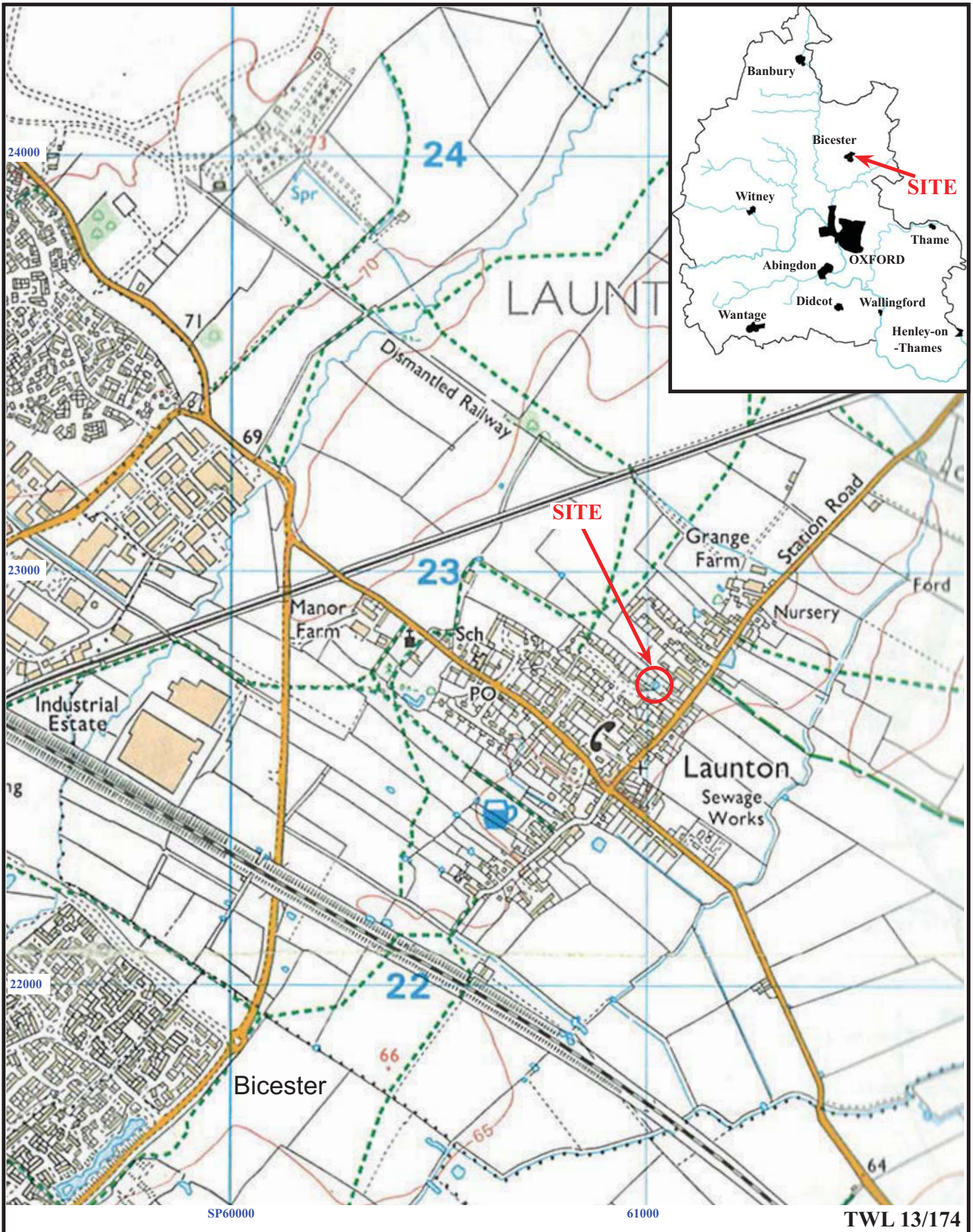
No archaeological deposits were recorded.

### **Conclusion**

No cut features were encountered within any of the trenching for the garage and house, and no archaeological finds were uncovered from the works.

### **References**

- BGS, 2002, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 219, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Castle, A, 2013, Manor Farm, Launton, Oxfordshire: an archaeological watching brief, Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep 13/220, Reading
- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Oram, R, 2013, Land adj. to The Willows and east of No.2 Sycamore Road, Launton, Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief, Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, Oxford
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London



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Figure 1. Location of site within Launton and Oxfordshire

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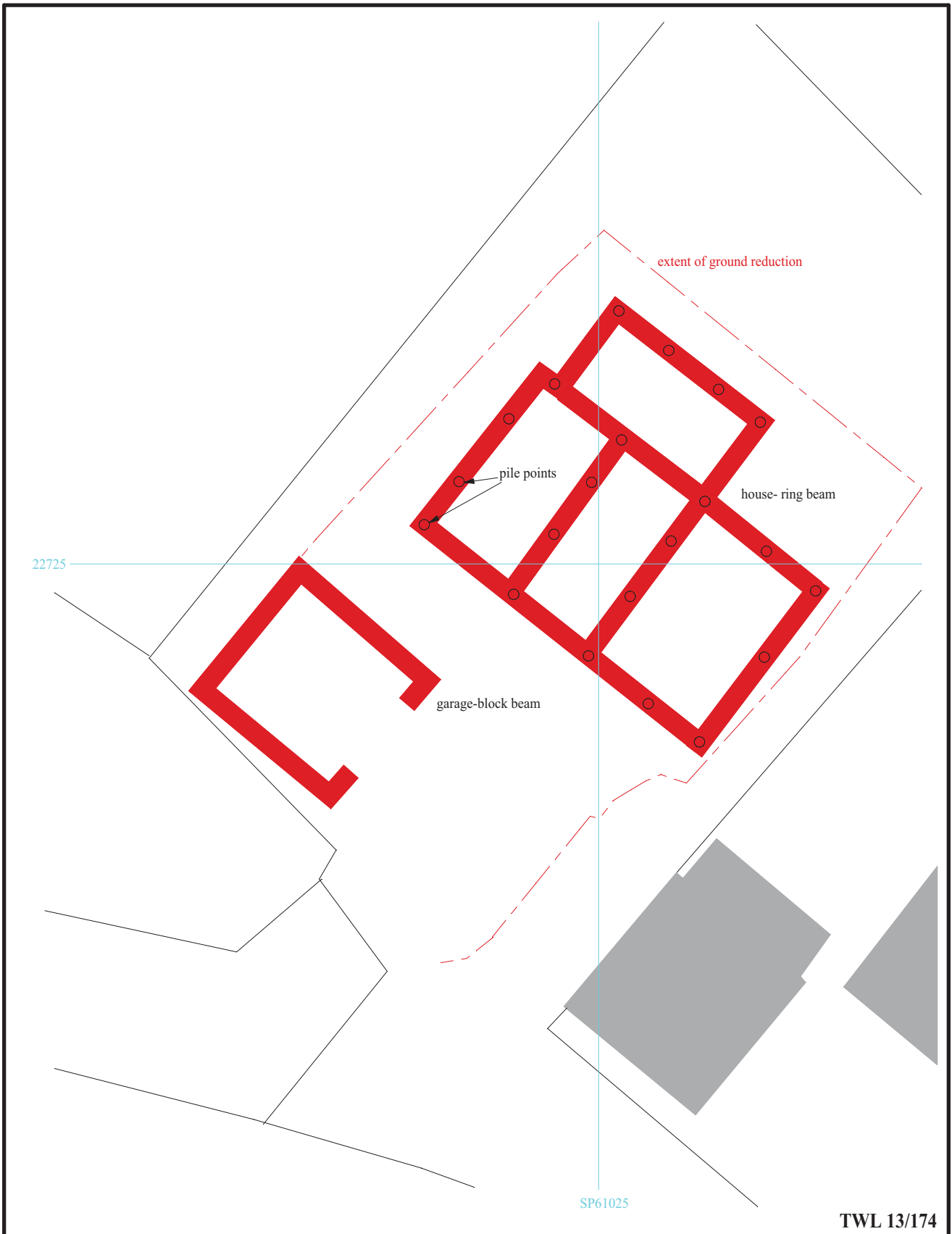
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Sycamore Road.

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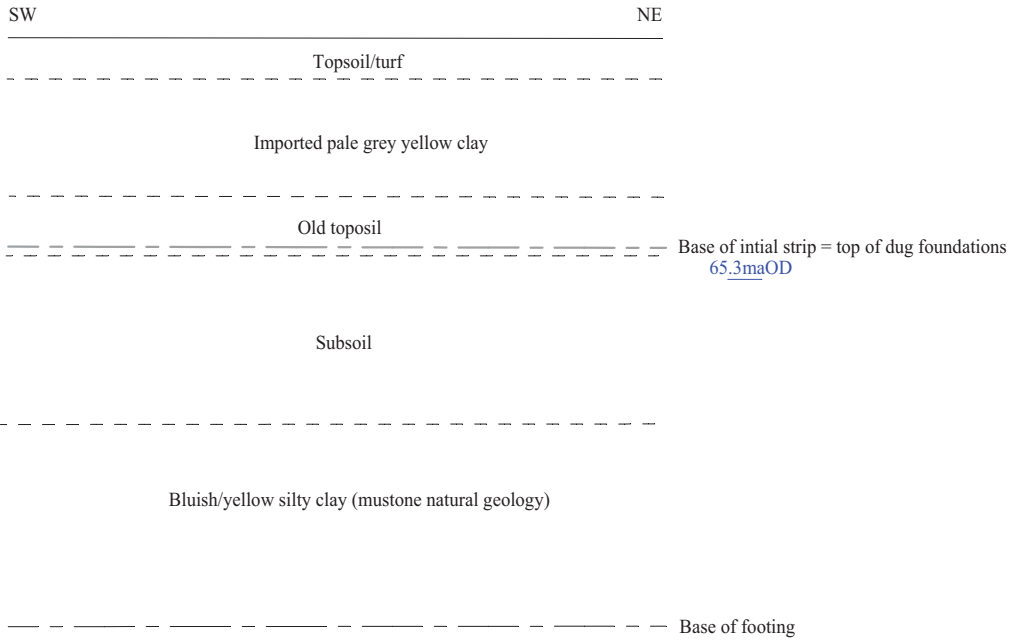




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Figure 3. Location of observed areas.





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Figure 4. Representative section.



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Plate 1. General view of site looking south.



Plate 2. Representative section from house, looking north west, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 1m.

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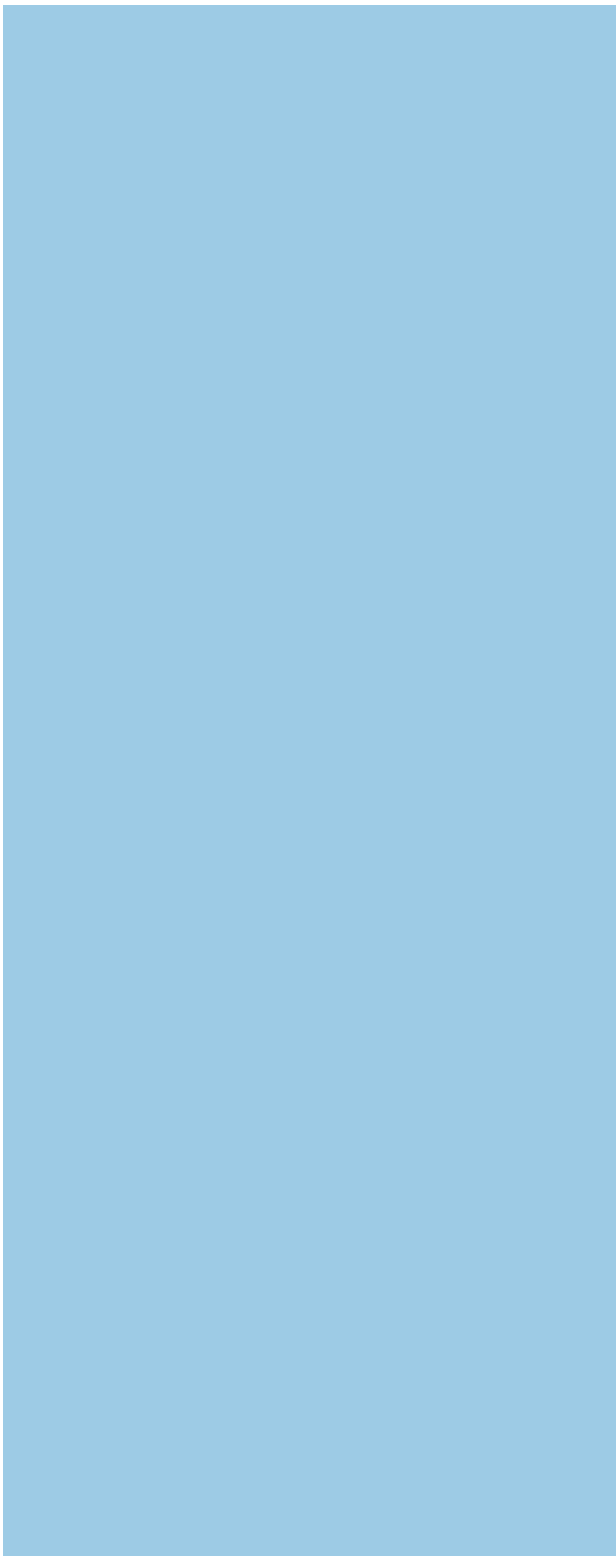
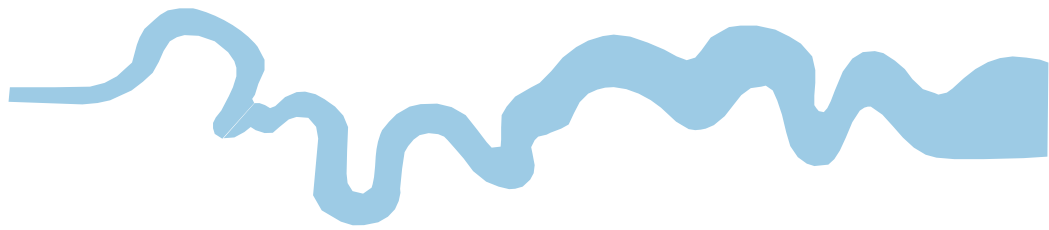
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Plates 1 - 2.

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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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