

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**S O U T H W E S T**

**Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry,  
Elburton, Plymouth**

**Phase 2**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andy Weale**

**Site Code: MQP14/145**

**(SX 5355 5386)**

# **Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elberton, Plymouth**

**Phase 2**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
for Aggregate Industries**

by Andrew Weale

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MQP 14/145

**August 2014**

## Summary

**Site name:** Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth

**Grid reference:** SX 5355 5386

**Site activity:** Archaeological watching brief phase 2

**Date and duration of project:** 22nd July to 12th August 2014

**Project manager:** Andrew Weale

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** MQP 14/145

**Area of site:** c. 1.3 ha

**Summary of results:** No archaeological deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest were recorded during this phase of overburden removal. The only features observed were revealed to be modern services, or post-medieval field boundaries.

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

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

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# Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth, Phase 2 An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Andrew Weale

Report 14/145

## Introduction

This report documents the results of a second phase of archaeological watching brief carried out at Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth (SX 5355 5386) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr John Penny of Aggregate Industries UK Ltd, Marston House, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DU.

Planning permission (06/00169/ESR10) has been granted by Plymouth City Council to extract limestone from another parcel of land at the quarry. The consent includes a condition relating to archaeology and requires a programme of archaeological excavation and recording in advance of each phase of extraction.

This is in accordance with the with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16, 1990) and the City Council's policies on archaeology, in order to satisfy the archaeological condition placed on the planning permission. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Mike Daniells, Historic Environment Officer with Plymouth City Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale, from 22nd July to 12th of August 2014 and the site code is MQP 14/145. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services South West, Taunton and will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum Service in due course.

## Location, topography and geology

The site lies within Elburton, with the village of Brixton to the east, Plymstock to the south, and the river Plym and the city of Plymouth to the West (Fig. 1). The site consisted of two areas, a small field which had been recently harvested for a cereal crop and a small area of former pasture with shrub and small trees with hedges to the east and west dividing the two areas. The active quarry lay to the north and west (Fig. 2). The southern edge of the site was a bund made out of limestone and topsoil. At the northern edge of the small area there was a drop of approximately 2m beyond to the top level of the working quarry and access road. A field boundary shown on the quarry survey of 2010 which divide the larger of the two areas was no longer evident. The site sloped down from a high point of 35m above Ordnance Datum in the north towards the bund line at the southern edge of the site at 31m aOD. The underlying geology is shown as Middle Devonian Limestone (BGS 2004) a mixture of limestone and a clayey silt was observed within the stripped area with areas of a gritty sandy deposit.

## **Archaeological background**

The site lies in a landscape that has significant archaeological content. To the east of the site are the remains of a prehistoric enclosure, a round barrow, and Roman and medieval field systems all within 1.5km of the site. A little further afield to the north-east are the remains of Wasteberry Camp, an Iron Age hillfort, and approximately 4.5km to the west is the site of the ancient port of Mount Batten which is believed to have been active from the late Bronze Age through to the Roman period.

The site lies within the Parish of Brixton which was mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002) as being held by a William from Iudichael of Totnes. There was land for 2 ploughs, a slave, 4 villans and 12 acres of pasture and the estate was worth 15 shillings.

A previous watching brief (Weale 2012) which was located to the north west of the current site only found modern services and modern structures. Some of these appear to have been part of "Hazeldene" a house that stood immediately to the north of the 2012 area. It did not appear on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map of 1894 but had been built by 1906 map.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The general objectives of the project were to:

- excavate and record all archaeological deposits and features within the areas affected;
- 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.

Specific research objectives for the project were to seek to answer the following questions:

- When was the site first occupied?
- When was the site abandoned?
- What is the nature of any occupation of the site?
- What is the nature and date of any landscape features encountered (eg fields, boundary features, large enclosures) and what is their spatial organization?
- What is the chronology and organization details of the landscape features if found?
- How did these landscape features relate to occupied areas?
- What is the palaeoenvironmental setting of the area?

This was to involve examination of all the areas of previously undisturbed ground stripped of overburden in the excavation area. Topsoil and overburden were removed by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket to expose the uppermost surface of archaeological deposits. Following machine clearance, all investigation of archaeological levels was to be by hand, with cleaning, examination and recording both in plan and in section. All archaeological features were to be planned and sectioned as a minimum objective, with excavation to an agreed sample percentage.

## **Results**

The strip revealed that the topsoil varied from 0.10m to 0.60m across the site with subsoil only existing in areas where the bed rock was within 0.21m from the surface. The subsoil overlay a layer of creamy-yellow fine silt with grit, underneath which was a dark brown to black silty clay. The subsoil and other layers only occurred where the underlying limestone was not near the surface and may represent the remains of palaeochannels or other erosion features which were subsequently infilled. Two test pits though the layers overlying the limestone natural were excavated to reveal the stratigraphy (TP 1 and TP2).

### Test Pit 1

In this test pit, the topsoil was 0.50m thick above subsoil 0.58m thick above the creamy silt with grit 0.55m thick. This overlay a mixed dark brown to black silty clay with larger limestone fragments.

### Test Pit 2

In this test pit the topsoil was 0.25m thick above 0.30m of subsoil above 0.08m of creamy silt with grit. This then also overlay 0.15m of dark brown to black silty clay which overlay mixed dark brown to black silty clay with larger limestone fragments.

A single modern metal service pipe crossed the site from the direction of the road beyond the southern bund towards the location of the former Hazeldene house. It appeared to be a water pipe and may well have been one of the three noted in 2012.

Three linear disturbances within the underlying limestone or silts were observed, two roughly north to south and one east to west, all of these disturbances where made by roots and were not cut features. The east -west one could be seen to be root disturbance left behind after the removal of the hedge boundary between the two areas whilst the topsoil strip was under way. The longer of the two north - south ones followed the approximate position of the field boundary which is shown on the 25-inch Ordnance Survey Map of 1894 and continued in use to be shown on the quarry survey of 2010. The second of the north south disturbances also appears to be in the approximate position of the field boundary shown on the same mapping. All these linear disturbances appear to be the remains of relatively modern field boundary hedges that were either still on site at the start of the recording action or had recently been removed for quarry expansion or agricultural proposes.

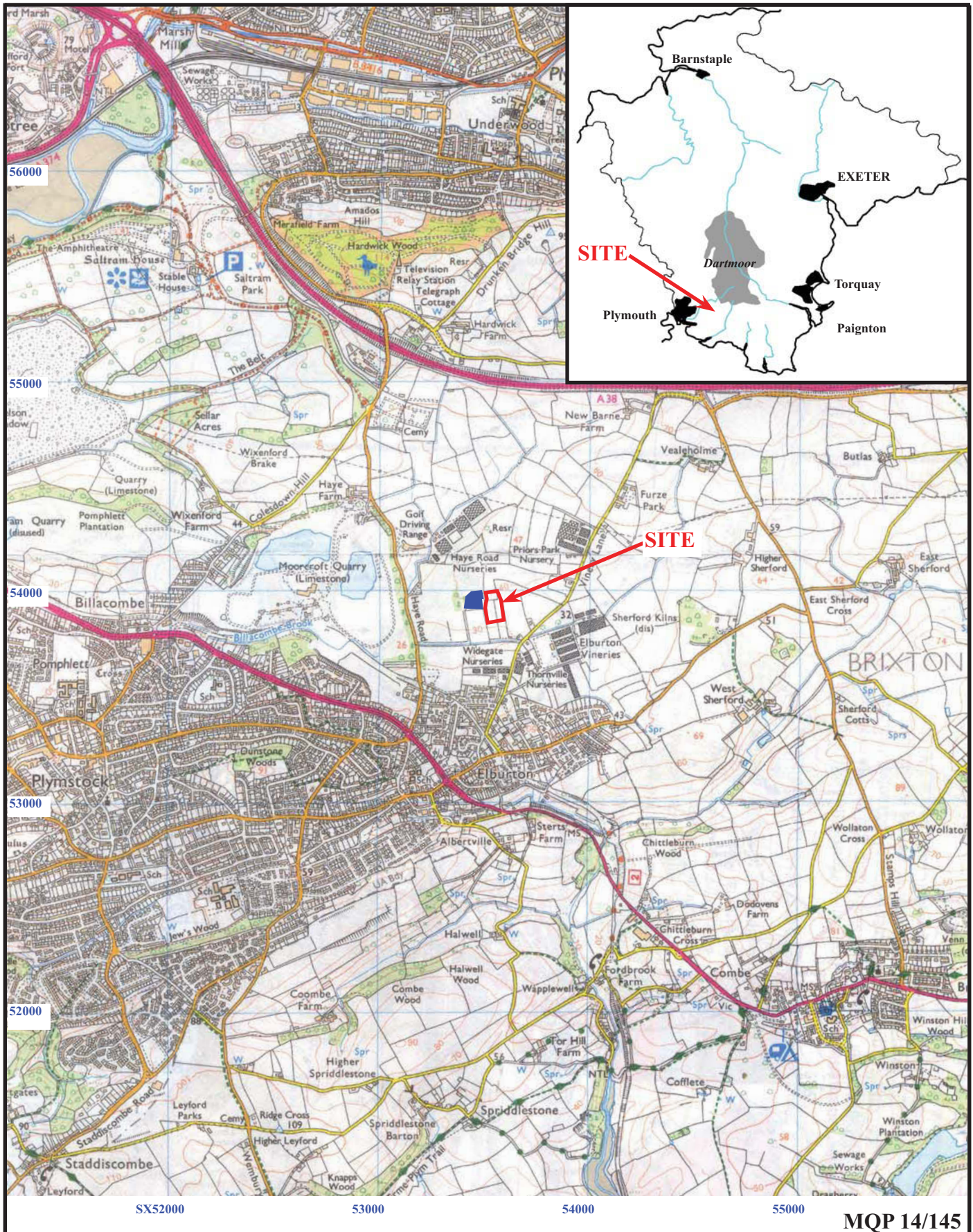
No other features were seen within the area and no pre-modern artefacts were present within the top- or sub-soils.

## **Conclusion**

A number of features disturbing the surface of the natural geology were observed and examined. However, these were revealed either to be modern services, or former post-medieval field boundaries. No archaeological features or artefacts were present within the stripped area

## **References**

- BGS, 2004, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 350, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth.
- PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO
- Weale, A, 2012, 'Hazeldene, Moorcroft Quarry, Elburton, Plymouth An Archaeological Watching Brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl rep **12/46**, Taunton
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book, a complete translation*, London

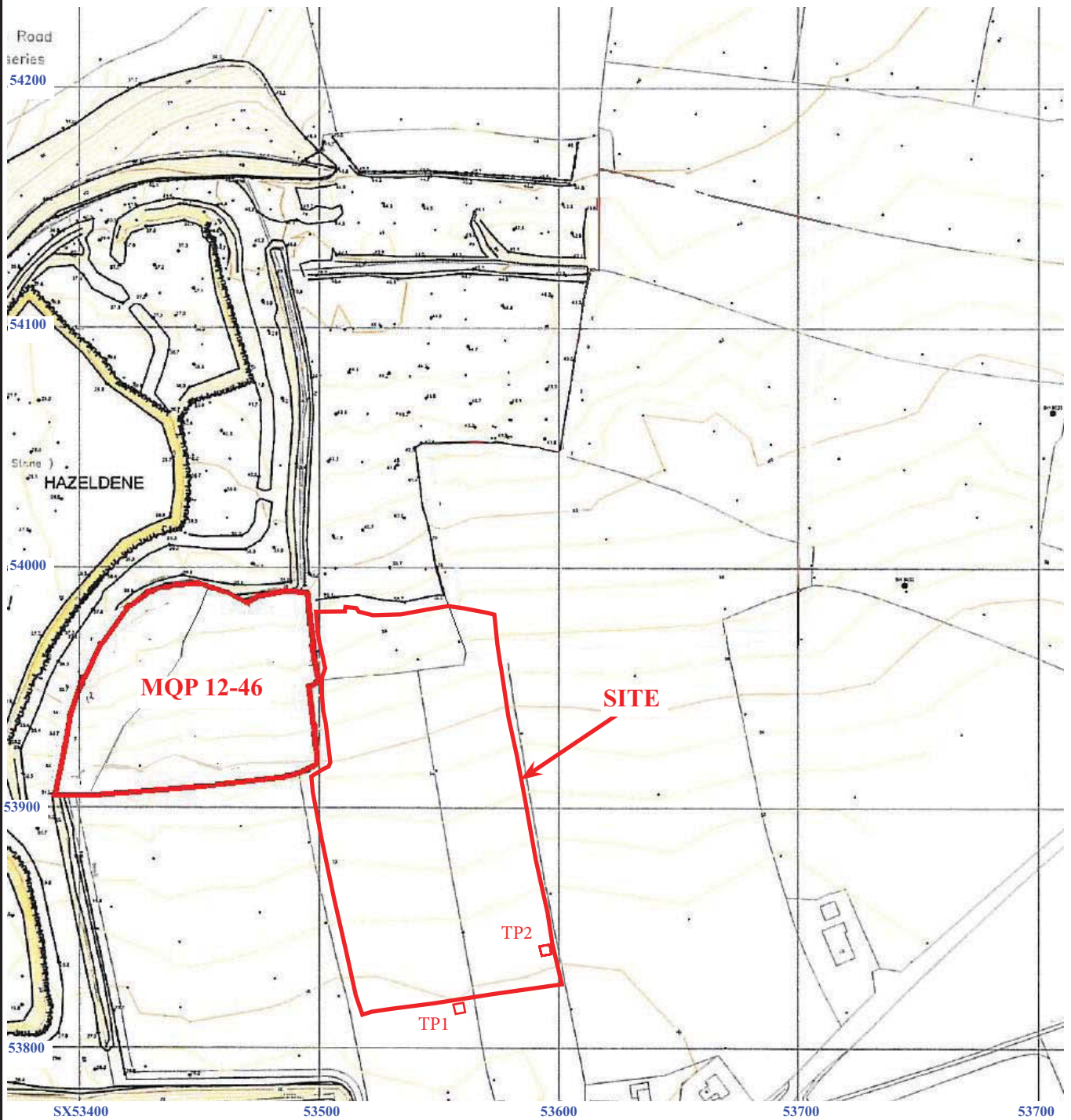


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Figure 1. Location of site within Plymouth and Devon.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Plate 1. North east corner of strip, looking south west after hedge removed.



Plate 2. Northern area, looking east.

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Plates 1-2

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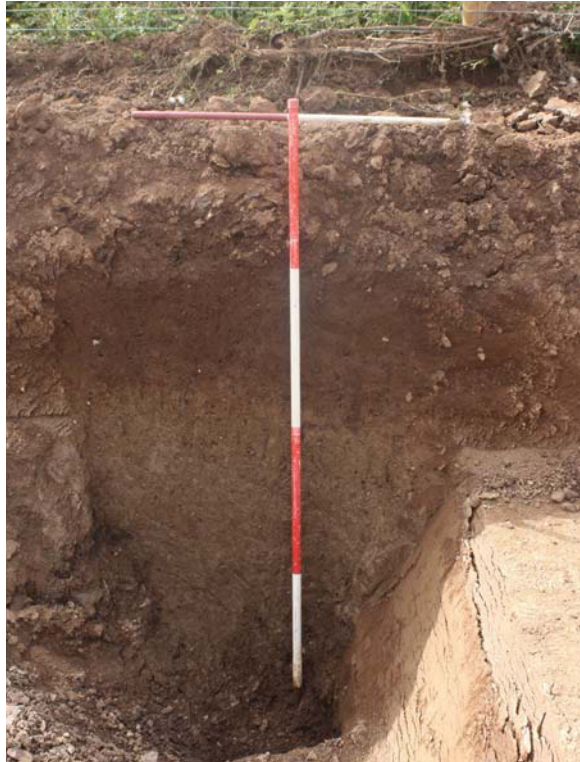


Plate 3. Test pit 1 section, looking south, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 2m.



Plate 4. Test pit 2 section, looking east, Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 2m.

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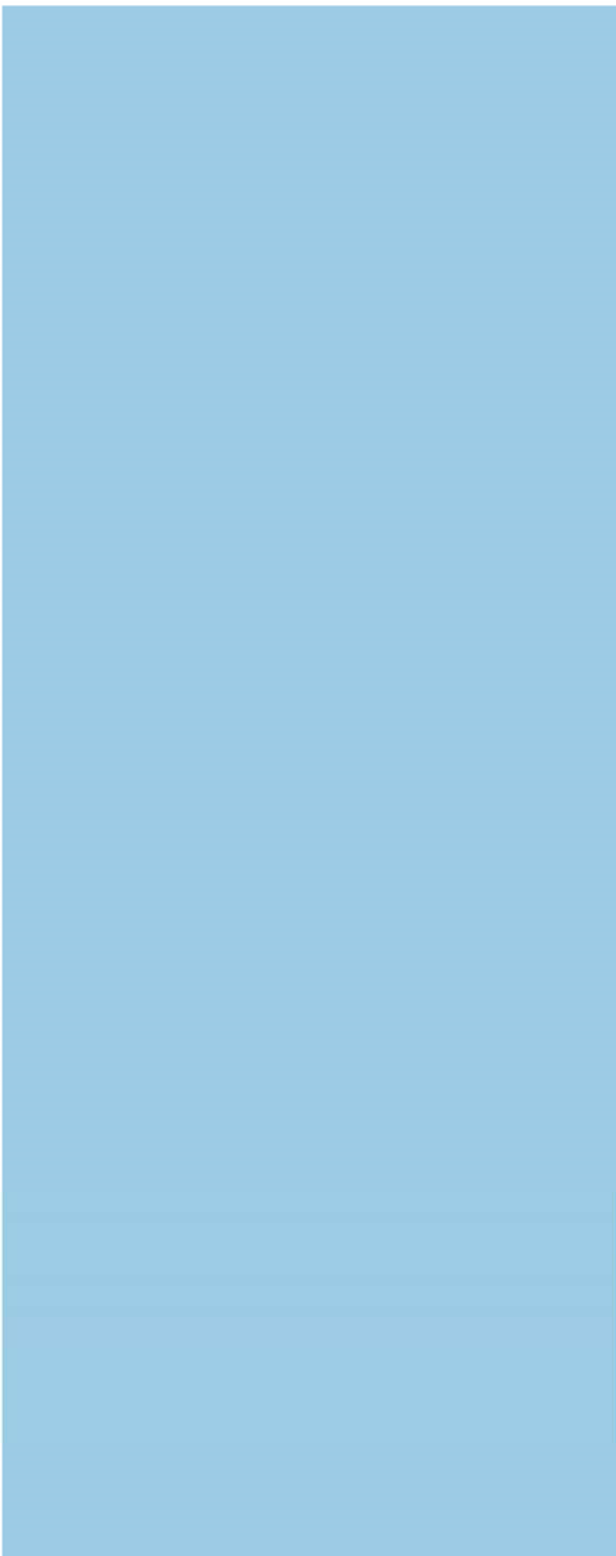
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Plates 3-4

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## TIME CHART

	<b>Calendar Years</b>
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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