

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**54 High Street, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Kyle Beaverstock

Site Code: 54HSW15/84

(SU 6052 8951)

**54 High Street, Wallingford,
Oxfordshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr R. Pearce

by Kyle Beaverstock

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code 54HSW15/84

June 2015

Summary

Site name: 54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 6052 8951

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 8th June 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Kyle Beaverstock

Site code: 54HSW15/84

Summary of results: No deposits nor artefacts of archaeological interest were discovered during the course of the watching brief. The works did not penetrate to the archaeologically relevant horizon.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 10.06.15 Steve Preston ✓ 09.06.15

54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Kyle Beaverstock

Report 15/84

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire (SU 6052 8951) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Ron Pearce of 54 High Street, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 0BX.

Planning permission (P14/S1084/F) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the construction of a single-storey garden room to the rear of the existing building at 54 High Street, Wallingford. Due to the potential for disturbance of below ground archaeological features, two conditions (4 and 5) have been attached to the planning permission requiring that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the period of groundworks.

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 specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Council, the archaeological advisers to the District, and based upon a brief prepared by him (Oram 2014). The fieldwork was undertaken by Kyle Beaverstock on 8th June 2015 and the site code is 54HSW 15/84.

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 in central Wallingford on the north side of High Street and south of Bullcroft (Figs 1 and 2). It lies within the Saxon *burh* which was enclosed by a defensive bank and ditch (Scheduled Ancient Monument Oxon 234) constructed during the 9th century as part of King Alfred's defences against the Danes. The site lies at a height of approximately 49m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is mapped as first (flood plain) terrace deposits of the younger river gravels but this was not observed during the groundworks (BGS 1980).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location adjacent to the Scheduled Monument of Saxon Wallingford. Excavation close to the site has found medieval features and finds, a substantial chalk built wall from the priory (Ford 2004) and a charnel pit, possibly associated with the priory or the known Saxon cemetery within Wallingford.

Several archaeological investigations in the town have identified stratified Saxon and medieval deposits, with larger projects, such as that carried out to the south of the site at 51–3 St Mary's Street identifying a complex stratigraphic sequence dating from the 11th century to the present day (Pine 2012). Excavations on the site of the new Waitrose store on the High Street to the east of the site located the cemetery but not the church of St. Martin. In medieval times Bullcroft to the north was occupied by a Benedictine Priory, though the layout and location of the priory buildings is unknown despite a 19th-century investigation. Small investigations regularly add further detail to the study of the historic town (Christie *et al.* 2013).

Objectives and methodology

The aims of the project were to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks and include observation of surface stripping, geotechnical investigations, the excavation of foundations and service trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive work. Any archaeological deposits exposed by the groundworks were to be recorded and if threatened, excavated. Sufficient time was to be allowed to carry this out within the groundworkers' schedule.

Results

The foundations for the construction of the garden room were originally to consist of the excavation of a foundation trench along the margins of the new building to be founded in the natural geology (Fig. 3). However, excavation of the first trench revealed that the depth at which the top of the natural geology would be reached exceeded that was expected as auguring showed the level of the natural geology to be *c.* 2m below current ground level. This trench was 1.5m long and 0.5m wide and the stratigraphy as seen comprised 0.2m of turf/concrete, 0.5m of made ground and *c.* 1m+ of a buried soil (Fig. 4; Pl. 1). This buried soil does not appear to be of archaeological interest as it contained fragments of modern brick, and appears to be at the same surface level as that of Bullcroft park on the eastern side of the garden wall. This would suggest that the level of the garden was raised in order to level it with the current buildings.

In order to discover whether this sequence was present elsewhere on the site, a second test trench was dug along the northern edge of the footings. The trench was 1.2m long and 0.5m wide and the stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil, 0.4m of made ground, 0.35m of buried soil and 0.7m+ of mid yellow brown silty sand subsoil (Fig. 4; Pl. 2). This too was augured and the natural geology was discovered to be not less than c.2m deep.

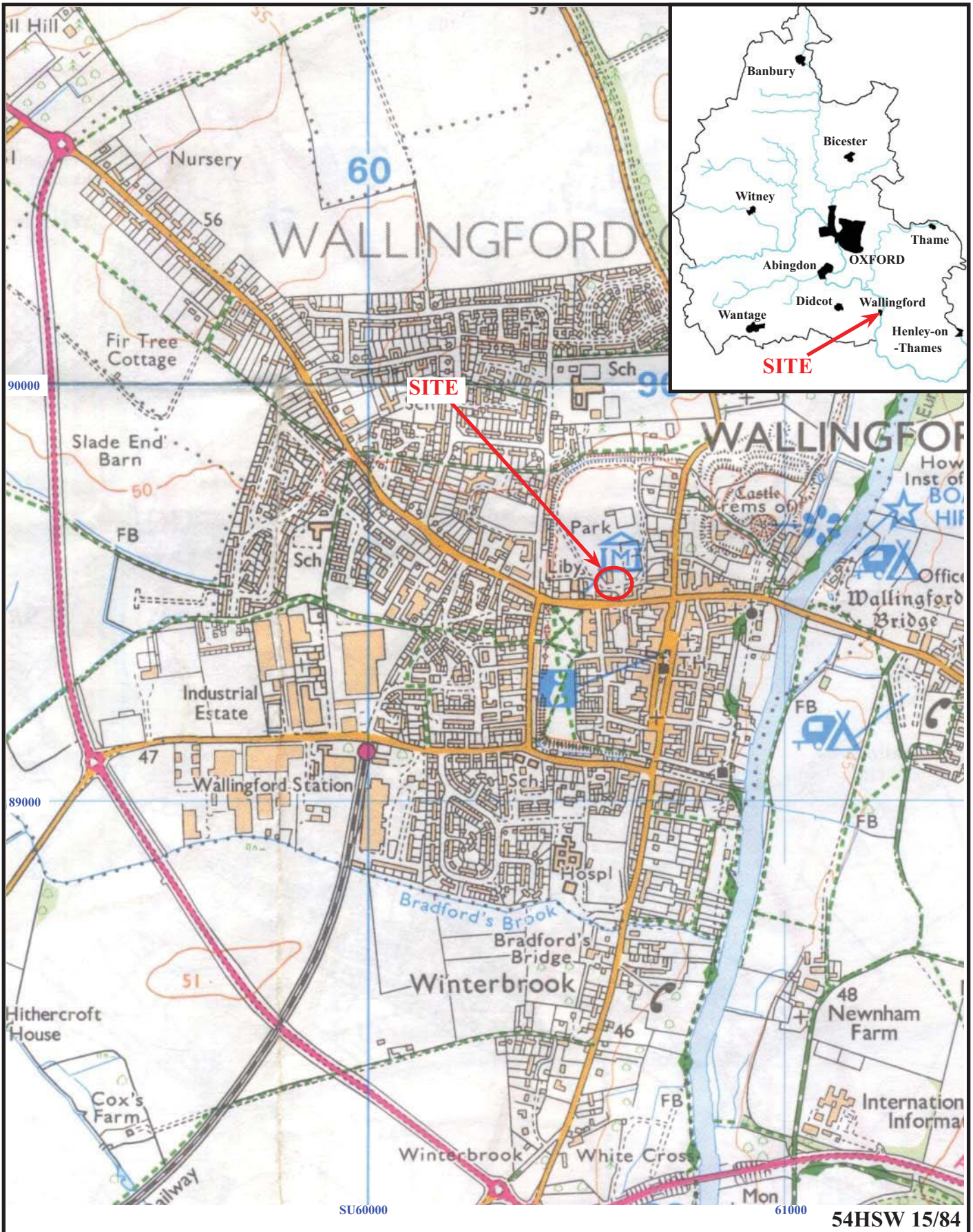
These groundworks were not deep enough to penetrate below the modern buried soil layer. As such, the foundation design was to be changed to that of piling which would not allow for any archaeological monitoring and largely preserve the archaeological levels in-situ.

Conclusion

Despite the high potential for archaeological deposits at this location within the town, the great depth of made ground observed did not allow for exposure of the archaeologically relevant levels. As a result of this, a revised foundation design to that of piling negated any further archaeological monitoring. No artefacts of archaeological interest were revealed.

References

- BGS, 1980, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
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- Pine, J, 2012, 'Medieval and later occupation at 51–53 St Mary's Street, Wallingford', in S Preston (ed), *Archaeological Investigations in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, 1992–2010*, TVAS Monogr **10**, Reading, 9-37
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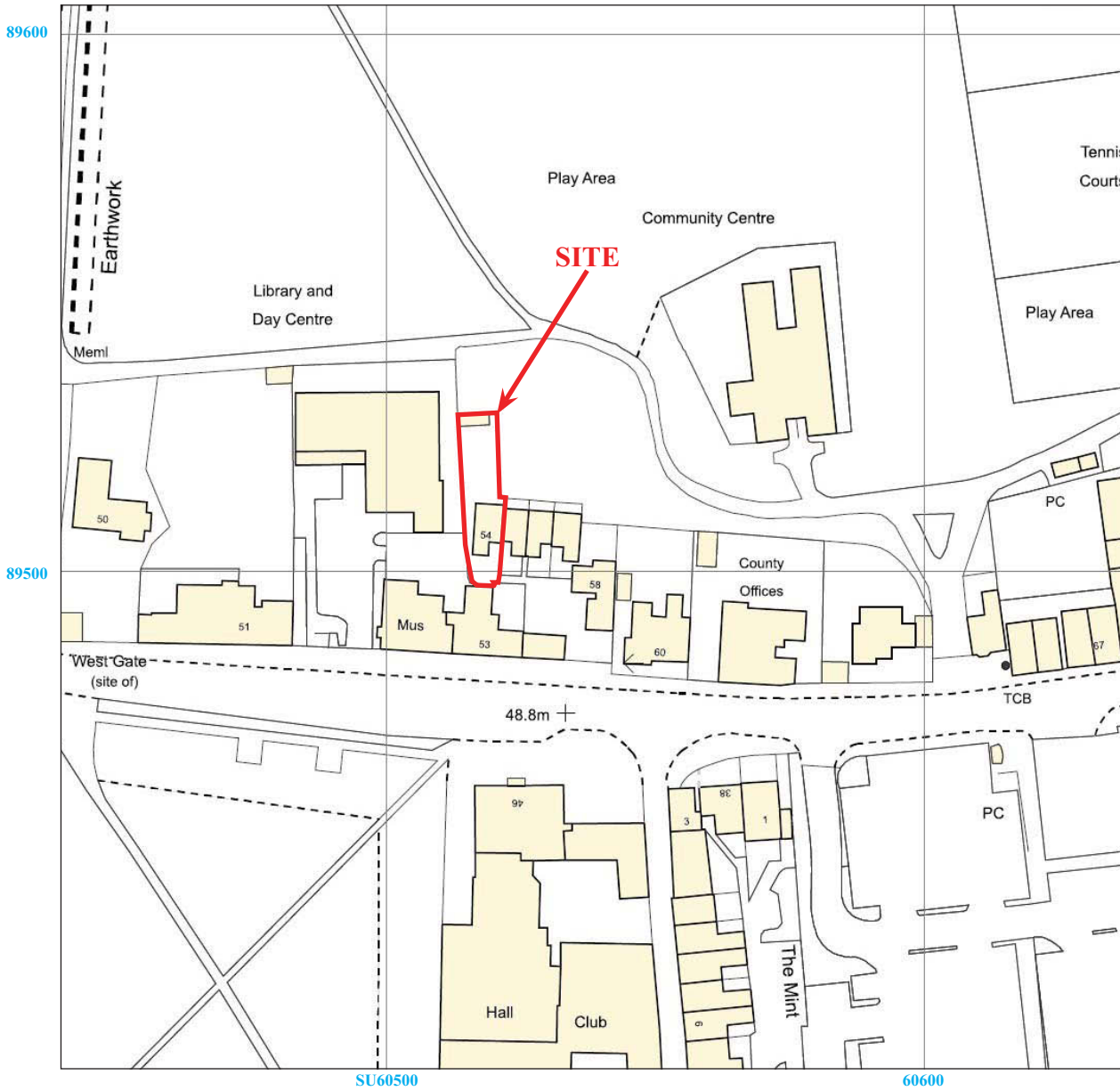


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Figure 1. Location of site within Wallingford and Oxfordshire

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off the High Street.

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Figure 3. Detail of observed area.



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Trench 1

N

S

48.6maOD

Turf/topsoil

Made ground

Buried soil
(Dark grey brown silty sand)

base of trench

Trench 2

E

W

Turf

Made ground

Buried soil

Subsoil
(Yellow brown silty sand)

base of trench

54HSW 15/84

54 High Street, Wallingford
Oxfordshire, 2015
Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 4. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking east, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

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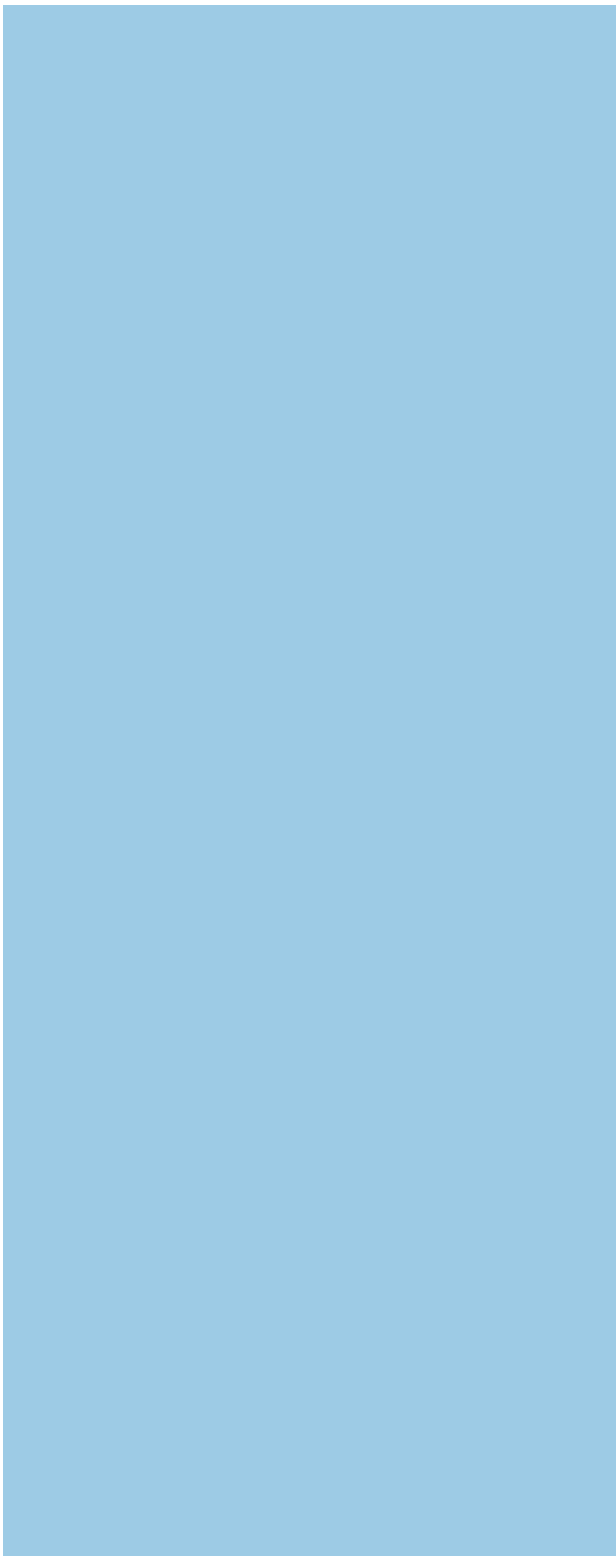
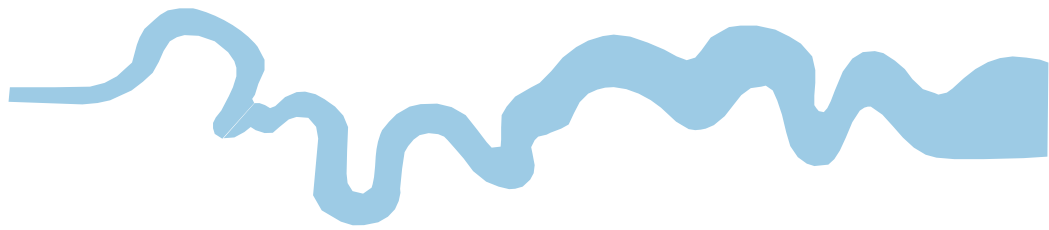
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Plates 1 - 2.

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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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading,
Berkshire, RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**