THAMES VALLEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

SERVICES

Land to the Rear of 59-67 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire

Archaeological Evaluation

by Kyle Beaverstock

Site Code: AHR14/239

(SU 6700 7449)

Land to the Rear of 59 – 67 Armour Hill, Tilehurst Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for Rivar Ltd

by Kyle Beaverstock

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code AHR 14/239

June 2015

Summary

Site name: Land to Rear of 59 – 67 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 67002 74487

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 4th – 5th June 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Kyle Beaverstock

Site code: AHR 14/239

Area of site: *c*.0.22

Summary of results: A single gully and a pit were recorded during the course of the evaluation. However, no finds or dating evidence were recovered. It is considered therefore that the site has a low archaeological potential.

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

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 10.06.15 Steve Preston✓ 05.06.15

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Land to the Rear of 59 – 67 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire
An Archaeological Evaluation

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Report 14/239

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land to the rear of 59 – 67 Armour Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire (SU 67002 74487) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr James Bull of Rivar Ltd, Mill House, Overbridge Square, Hambridge Lane, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5UX.

Planning consent (12/10698/FUL) has been gained from Reading Borough Council for the construction of new housing on the site, subject to an archaeological condition (18) which requires a programme of archaeological work in advance of the development. It was determined that this should take the form, initially, of a field evaluation by trial trenching, based on the results of which a further phase of work might be required in order to mitigate the effects of the development on archaeological remains, if present.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Borough Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary of Berkshire Archaeology, the adviser to the Borough Council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Kyle Beaverastock, William Attard and Anna Ginger between 4th and 5th of June 2015 and the site code is AHR14/239. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Reading Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located south of the Thames River on a high terrace overlooking The Arthur Newbery Park to its north in the suburbs of Tilehurst, west Reading (Fig. 1). The site comprised former gardens to the rear of the properties on Armour Hill, access to which was gained from the south-east corner through Larissa Close (Fig. 2). The site was *c*.84m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) in the south and sloped downwards to *c*.82m aOD to the north. The underlying geology is mapped as an unnamed Higher Gravel Terrace of the Thames, formerly Plateau Gravel (BGS 1946).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wealth of sites and finds from both prehistoric and later periods. This part of Tilehurst, however, has relatively few sites or finds recorded in the Historic Environment Record. There are various stray finds and reports of occupation and burial sites of prehistoric and Roman date, the majority of these coming from the several quarry sites in the area. At Grovelands Pit, some distance to the south of the site, Bronze Age and Roman deposits were encountered, and to the north of the site, Roman burial remains have been recorded. The higher gravel terraces of the Thames Valley are particularly noteworthy for the presence of Palaeolithic flint and stone tools, which represent the earliest known human occupation in the British Isles (Wymer 1968). A few handaxes recorded as findspots appear to be the closest entries to the site although the gravel outcrop on which the site lies pre-dates most human activity in the British Isles.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development.

The specific research aims of this project were:

to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and.

to determine the potential and significance of any such deposits.

It was proposed to dig seven trenches, each 10m long and 1.6m in width, targeting areas within the proposed development. The trenches were to be excavated using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to expose the archaeological horizon, under constant archaeological supervision.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools, and sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed were to be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above, without compromising the integrity of any deposits that might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

Results

All seven trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 3). They ranged from 9.8m to 11m in length and from 0.39m to 0.5m deep. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3 and Pl. 1)
Trench 1 was aligned south to north and was 11m long and 0.39m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil and 0.17m subsoil overlying a reddish yellow sandy gravel natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified or artefacts recovered.

Trench 2 (Fig. 3)
Trench 2 was aligned south-east to north-west and was 9.8m long and 0.49m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.31m of topsoil and 0.18m subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified or artefacts recovered.

Trench 3 (Fig. 3)
Trench 3 was aligned south-west to north-east and was 9.8m long and 0.42m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.27m subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified or artefacts recovered.

Trench 4 (Fig. 3)
Trench 4 was aligned south-west to north-east and was 10.2m long and 0.5m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.21m of topsoil and 0.29m subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified or artefacts recovered.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4, and Pls 2 to 4)
Trench 5 was aligned south-east to north-west and was 9.8m long and 0.49m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil and 0.21m subsoil overlying natural geology. A gully (1) was recorded, 1m long 0.55m wide and 0.36 deep, with a single fill (52) which consisted of a mid grey brown silty sand (Pl. 3). A pit (2) was also observed, north of the gully. This was 0.8m in diameter and 0.17m deep and also contained a single fill (53) which consisted of a mid grey brown silty sand (Pl. 4). No finds were recovered.

Trench 6 (Fig. 3)
Trench 6 was aligned south-west to north-east and was 9.9m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.2m subsoil overlying a sandy gravel natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified or artefacts recovered.

Trench 7 (Fig. 3)
Trench 7 was aligned south-east to north-west and was 10.1m long and 0.4m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.15m subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological deposits were identified or artefacts recovered.

Conclusion

A small number of potential archaeological deposits were observed during the course of the evaluation. However, none of the features yielded any dating evidence and both were heavily disturbed by roots from the many trees that covered the site. Both features were sampled, however no finds were recovered. It is therefore difficult to ascertain whether they are of archaeological interest but for the site as a whole, as the density of features encountered was low and no artefacts of archaeological interest were recoevered, it is considered that the site has very low archaeological potential.

References

BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
Wymer, J, 1968, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	11.0	1.6	0.39	0–0.22m topsoil, 0.22 – 0.39m subsoil and 0.39m+ pale reddish yellow gravelly sand natural geology. **[Pl. 1]**
2	9.8	1.6	0.49	0–0.31m topsoil, 0.31 – 0.42m subsoil and 0.42m+ pale reddish yellow gravelly sand natural geology.
3	9.8	1.6	0.42	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25 – 0.42m subsoil and 0.42m+ pale reddish yellow gravelly sand natural geology.
4	10.2	1.6	0.5	0–0.21m topsoil, 0.21 – 0.5m subsoil and 0.5m+ pale reddish yellow gravelly sand natural geology.
5	10.1	1.6	0.44	0–0.23m topsoil, 0.23 – 0.44m subsoil and 0.44m+ pale reddish yellow gravelly sand natural geology natural geology. Gully (1) and Pit (2), **[Pls 2–4]**
6	9.9	1.6	0.45	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25 – 0.45m subsoil and 0.5m+ pale reddish yellow sandy gravel natural geology.
7	10.1	1.6	0.4	0–0.25m topsoil, 0.25 – 0.4m subsoil and 0.4m+ pale reddish yellow gravelly sand natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	*Cut*	*Fill (s)*	*Type*	*Date*	*Dating evidence*
5	1	52	Gully	-	none
5	2	53	Pit	-	none

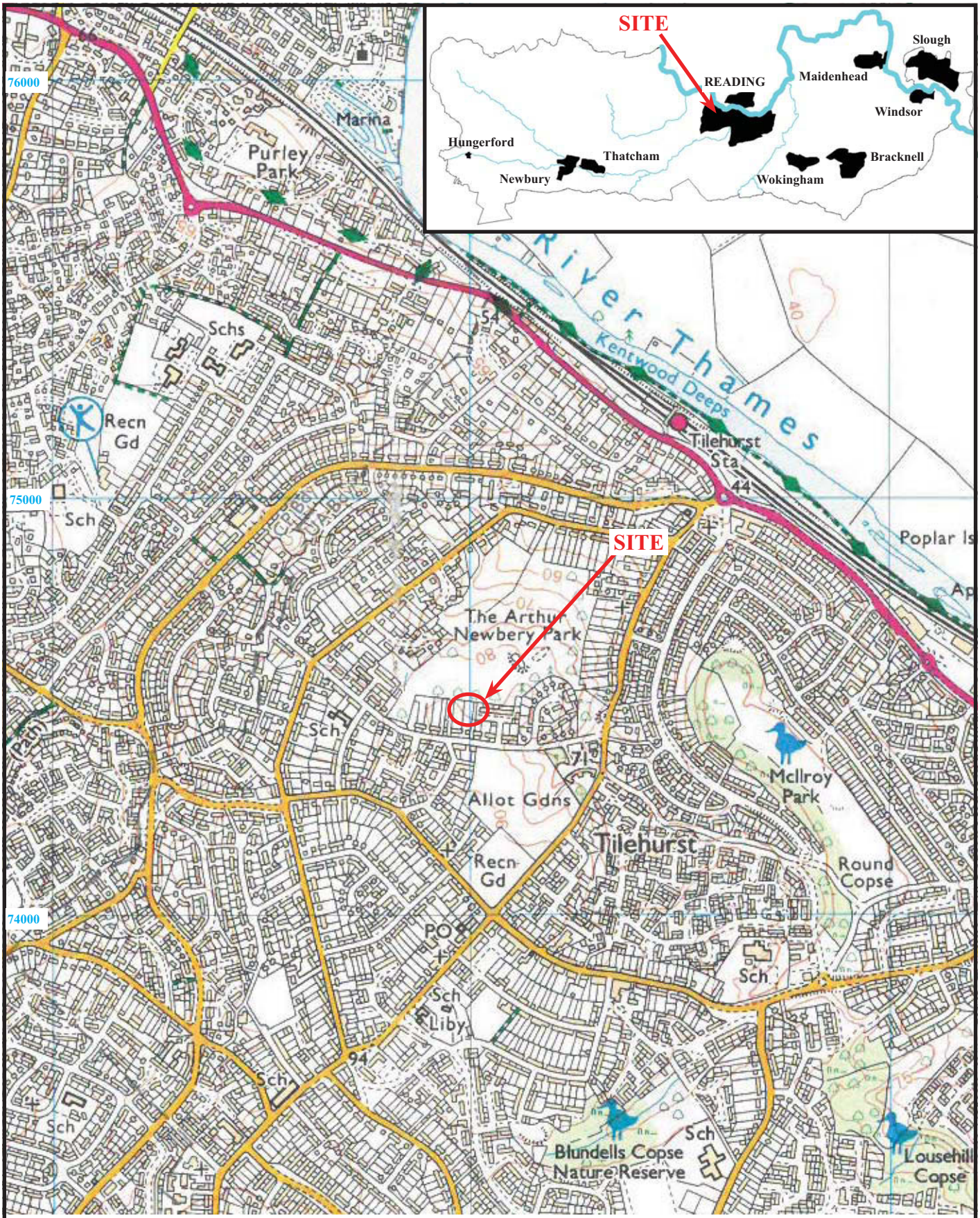

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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Armour Hill.

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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

0 25m

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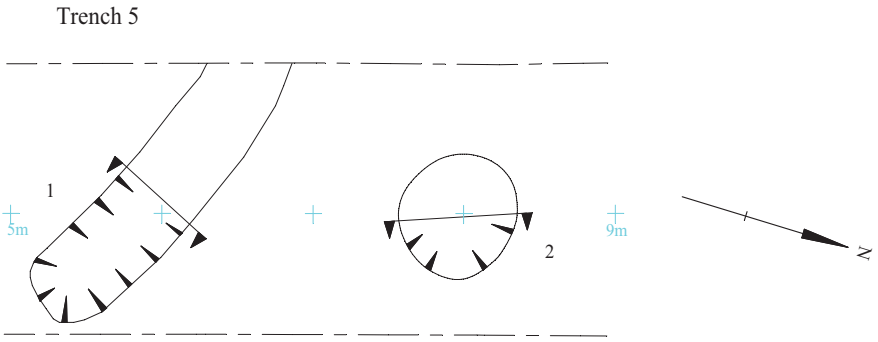

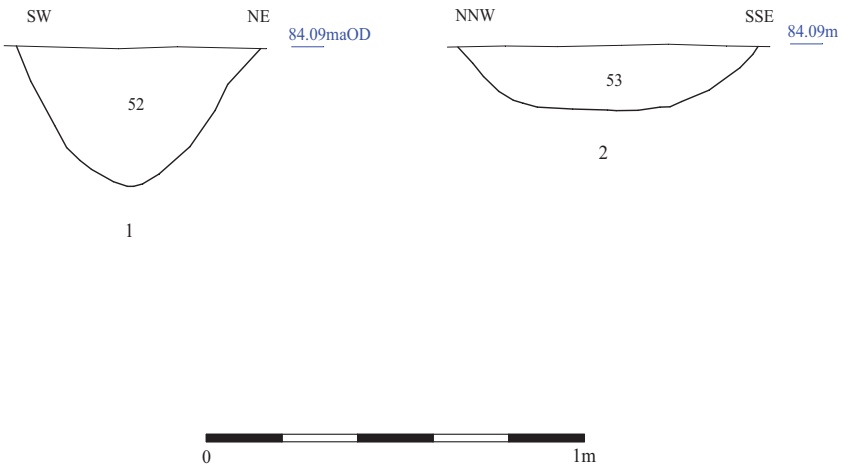

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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

Plate 2. Trench 5, looking north-west, Scales: 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 1. Trench 5, ditch 1, looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.3m.

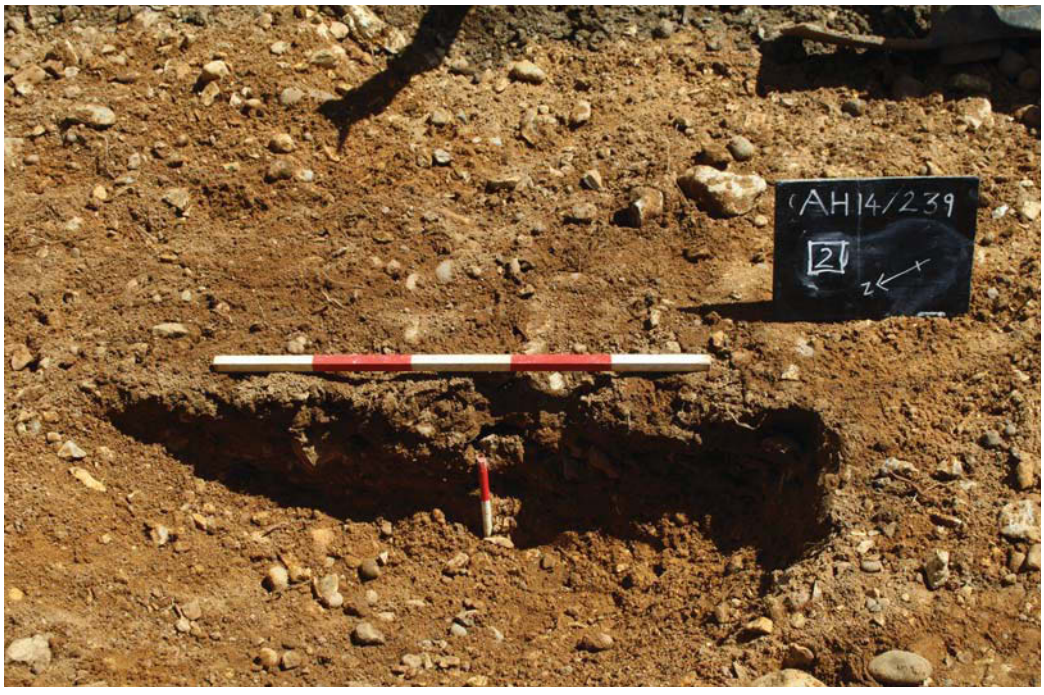

Plate 2. Trench 5, pit 2, looking south east, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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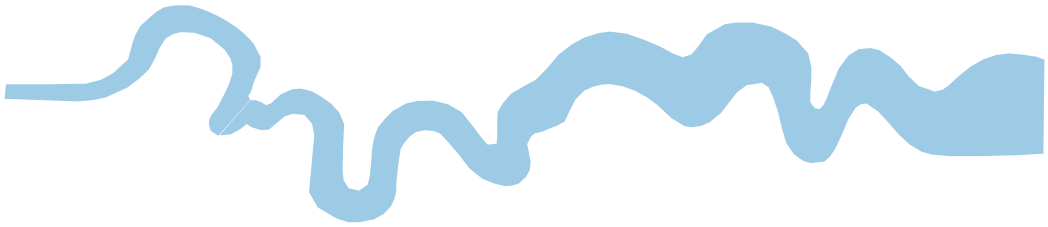
TIME CHART

	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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