

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Harcourt Cottage, Church Road,
North Leigh, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Genni Elliott

Site Code: HCW15/174

(SP 3861 1341)

Harcourt Cottage, Church Road, North Leigh, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr and Mrs R Wilks

by Genni Elliott

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code HCW 15/174

October 2015

Summary

Site name: Harcourt Cottage, Church Road, North Leigh, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 3861 1341

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 31st July 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Genni Elliott

Site code: HCW 15/174

Area of site: 45 sq m

Summary of results: No deposits nor artefacts of archaeological significance were observed.

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

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 07.10.15 Steve Preston✓ 07.10.15 |
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Harcourt Cottage, Church Road, North Leigh, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Genni Elliott

Report 15/174

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Harcourt Cottage, Church Road, North Leigh, Oxfordshire (SP 3861 1341) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Richard Wilks of the above address.

Planning permission has been granted by West Oxfordshire District Council (appn. No. 14/0869/P/FP) for the construction of a two-storey rear extension and outbuilding. This is subject to two conditions (8 and 9) which require an archaeological watching brief to be carried out. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012) and the District's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Hugh Coddington, of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, advisers to the District on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Genni Elliott on 31st July 2015 and the site code is HCW 15/174.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western side of Church Road, to the south of the church and to the north of the village of North Leigh (Figs 1 and 2). An existing extension to the rear of Harcourt Cottage has been demolished to accommodate a larger extension. This is within a levelled area, with the garden to the rear (west) at a slightly higher level. The underlying geology is recorded as being on the junction of Kellaways Sand and Kellaways Clay (BGS 1982): a combination of Kellaways Clay and Cornbrash Formation was observed in the base of the trenches. The site is at an elevation of approximately 112m above Ordnance Datum with the land rising to the south.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief provided by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Coddington 2015). In summary, North Leigh Roman villa lies approximately 2km north of the site and large quantities of Roman roof tile have been found just to the north of the village. The villa overlies an Iron Age settlement (VCH 1990) and sherds of Iron Age pottery have been found in a nearby quarry pit. The villa is one of several located close to the line of Akeman Street, the Roman road from *Verulamium* (St Albans) to Alchester (Margary 1955, route 16) which passes around 2km north of North Leigh. North Leigh is mentioned in Domesday Book of AD 1086 (Williams and Martin, 2002). To the north-west of the site earthworks suggest the presence of a shrunken medieval village. South of the village is one of the many earthworks collectively known as Grim's Ditch. Few archaeological investigations have taken place to examine the medieval settlement. In the immediate vicinity are a number of post-medieval listed buildings, including Harcourt Cottage itself.

Objectives and methodology

The aim of the project was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This involved monitoring of all areas of intrusive groundworks and included observation of surface stripping, the excavating of foundations and service trenches, landscaping works and all other invasive work as necessary.

Two foundation trenches for the rear extension to the existing house were observed (Fig. 3), each 0.70m wide by up to 1m deep. These were dug by a 360° mini digger under constant archaeological supervision (Pl. 1) and numbered trenches 1 and 2.

Results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located along the south-western boundary of the site, immediately adjacent to the property next door (Figs 3 and 4). It measured 5.1m long by 0.70m wide and 1m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of made ground containing abundant slate, stone rubble and modern rubbish, directly above natural Cornbrash. It is possible that the adjacent wall had been underpinned more recently and this was the backfill from the trench (Pl. 2). The trench immediately flooded. No archaeological features or finds were present.

Trench 2

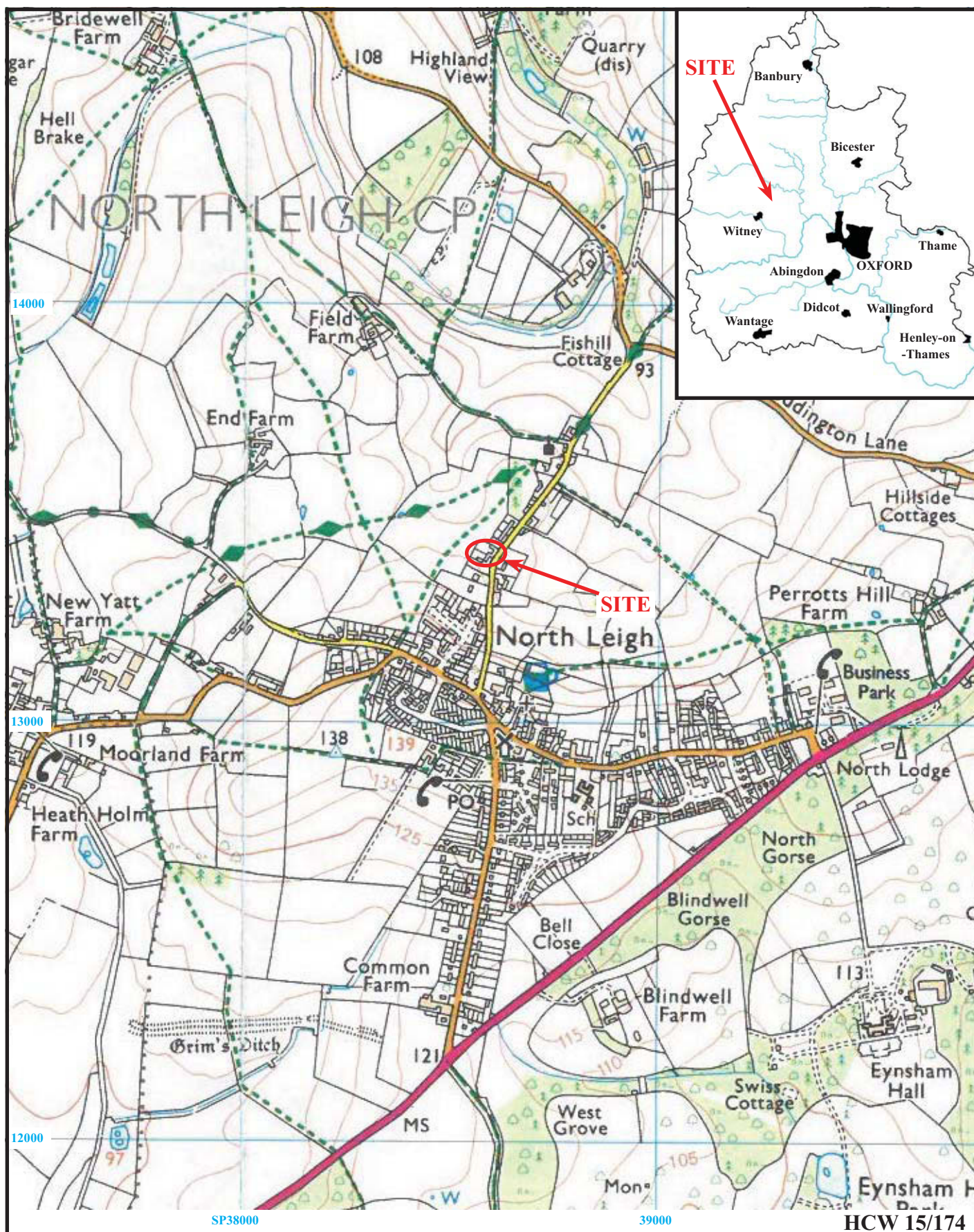
Trench 2 was located parallel to Harcourt Cottage, aligned northeast-southwest. It measured 8.05m long by 0.70m wide by 0.85m deep (Figs 3 and 4). The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of made ground, probably from the demolition of the previous extension, above 0.34m of dark greyish brown silty clay, above more than 0.21m of blueish grey silty clay containing occasional stones (Fig. 4). Both of the clay layers were natural Kellaways Clay. This trench also partially flooded. No archaeological deposits were present.

Conclusion

Nothing of archaeological significance was observed. The area investigated appeared to have been truncated for the former buildings on site.

References

- BGS, 1982, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 236, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Coddington, H, 2015, 'Harcourt Cottage, Church Road, North Leigh: Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief', Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford
- Margary, I D, 1955, *Roman Roads in Britain: vol 1 south of the Foss way–Bristol Channel*, London
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- VCH, 1990, *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*, **12**, London
- Williams, A and Martin, G H, 2002, *Domesday Book: a complete translation*, London

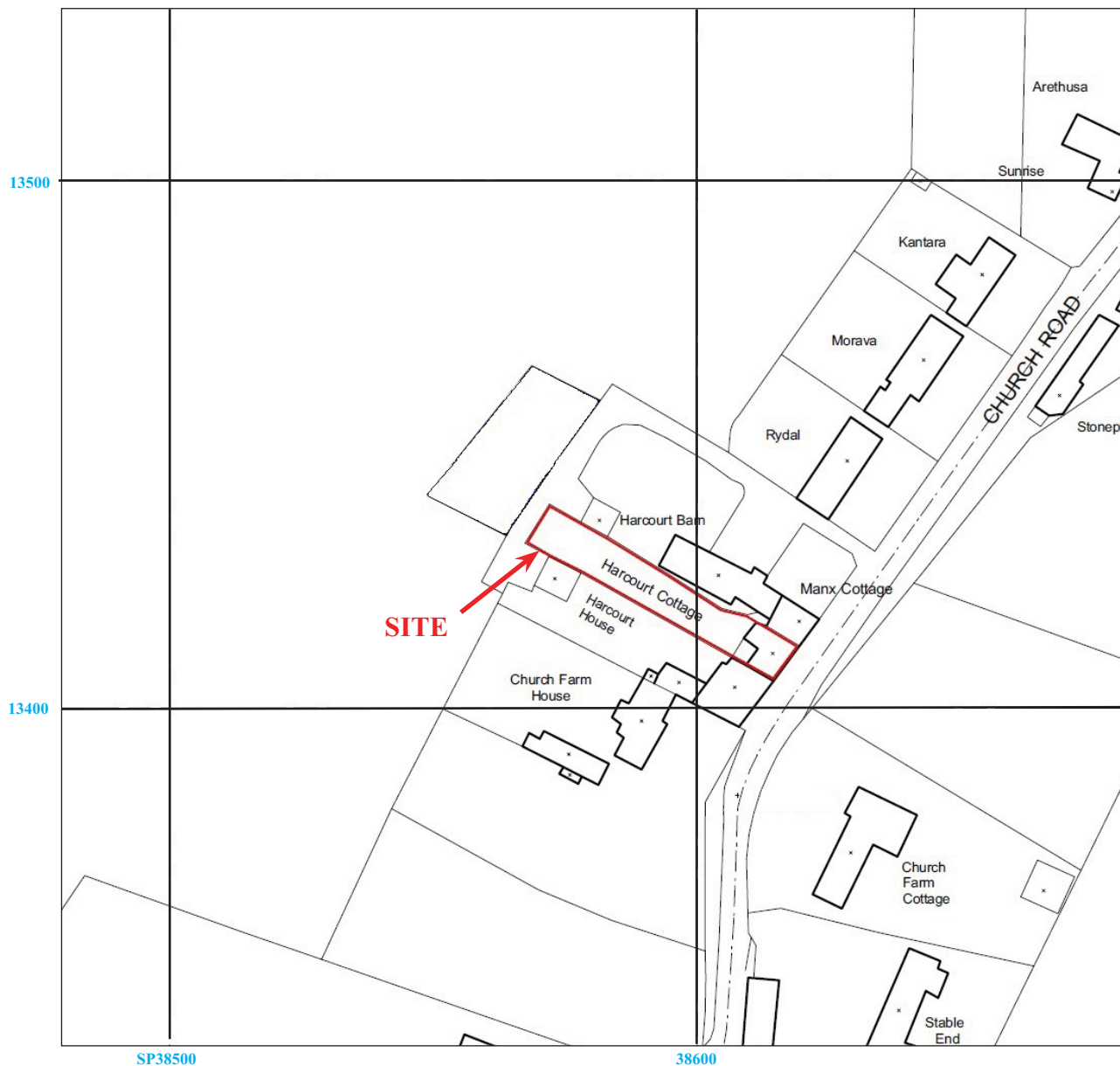


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Figure 1. Location of site within North Leigh and Oxfordshire

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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Figure 3. Location of observed area



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NE

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Made ground

Dark grey brown silty clay

Blueish grey silty clay with stone

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Figure 4. Representative section.

0 1m

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Plate 1. Footings under excavation, looking south south west, Scale: 1m.



Plate 2. Representative section, looking north west, Scales: 1m and 0.5m.

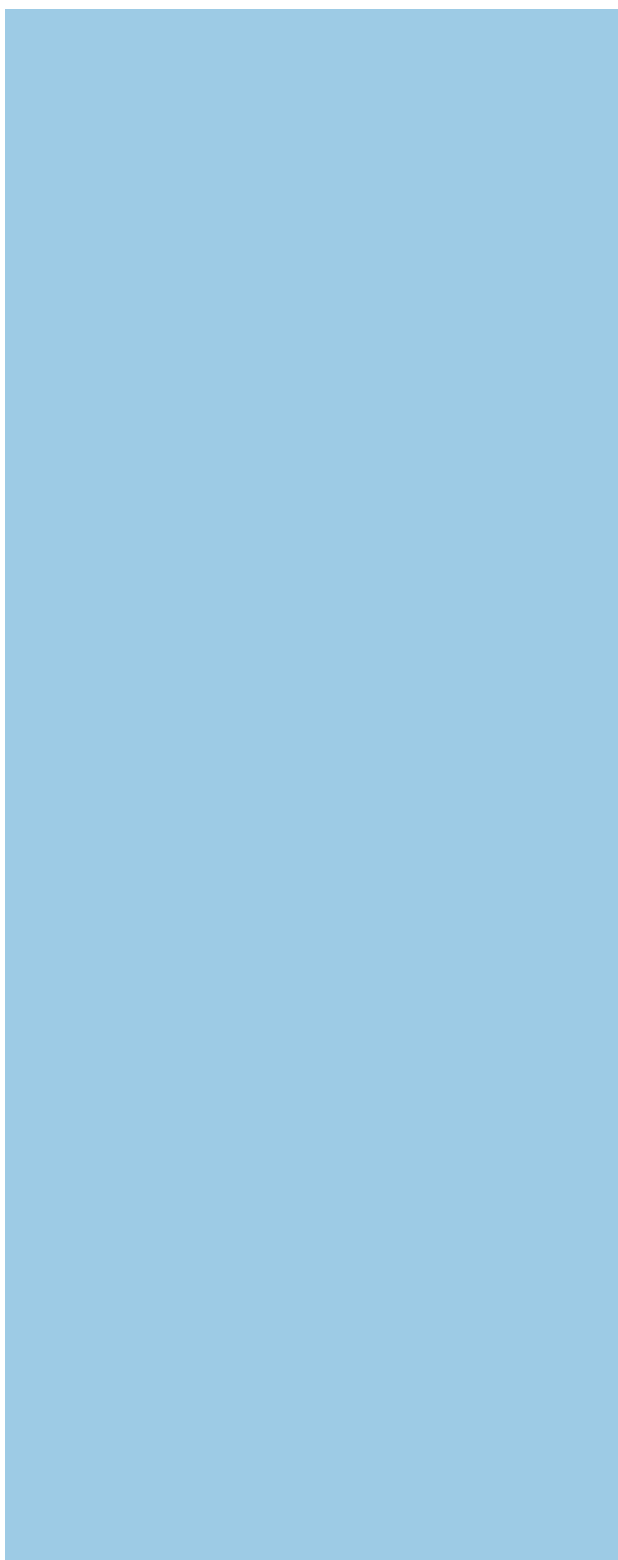
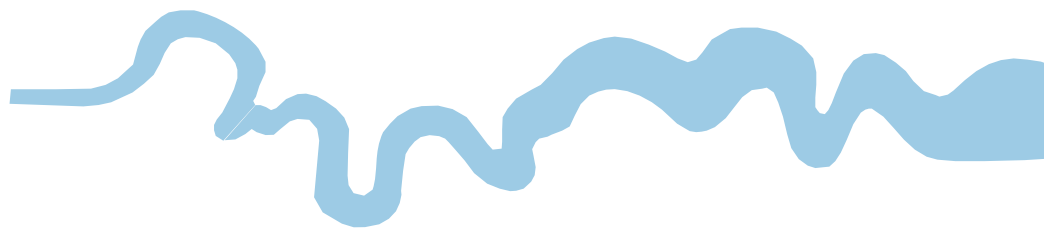
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Plates 1 - 2.

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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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