

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Grazeley Primary School, MereOak Lane,
Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Daniel Bray

Site Code: GSG15/209

(SU 7008 6685)

**Grazeley Primary School, MereOak Lane,
Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Wokingham Council**

by Daniel Bray

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GSG 15/209

October 2015

Summary

Site name: Grazeley Primary School, Mere oak Lane, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7008 6685

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 5th-6th October 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Daniel Bray

Site code: GSG 15/209

Area of site: c. 1.4ha

Summary of results: A single undated ditch and modern truncations were recorded. Four joining sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated Museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 20.10.15 Steve Preston ✓ 20.10.15

Grazeley Primary School, Mere oak Lane, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Daniel Bray

Report 15/209

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Grazeley Primary School, Mere oak Lane, Grazeley, Reading, Berkshire (SU 7008 6685) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Tim Searle of Wokingham Council.

Planning consent (F2014/2662) has been gained from Wokingham Council for the construction of a new extension, car park and multi-games area at the school. The consent is subject to a condition (21) relating to archaeology requiring a programme of archaeological investigation. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, an initial evaluation in the form of machine trenching in the area of development was required, based on the results of which, further fieldwork may be required if significant archaeological deposits are encountered.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Kathelen Leary, Archaeological Officer at Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the council on matters relating to archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Bray and Benedikt Tebbit on 5th and 6th October 2015 with the site code GSG 15/209. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or repository (to be decided by the local planning authority) in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located to the south of Reading on the eastern side of Mere oak Lane in the village of Grazeley, Berkshire (Fig. 1) The triangular parcel of land comprises of the school buildings, car park, playing fields and adjacent farm land (Fig. 2). The site is flat and is at a height of approximately 45m above Ordnance Datum and is located on the interface between valley gravels and alluvium (BGS 1946).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from the location of the site on the fringes of the archaeologically rich lower Kennet Valley. A number of sites have been recorded by aerial photography (Gates 1975), especially to the north-west, and excavations further to the north-east on Mere oak Lane have examined Late Iron Age and Roman occupation (Milbank 2010) along with a Middle Iron Age occupation and iron production site on Grazeley Road (Ford *et al.* 2011). However an earlier watching brief at the school itself found nothing of interest (Cass 2007).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific research aims of this project are;

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to provide sufficient information to construct an archaeological mitigation strategy.

It was proposed to excavate 6 trenches, five each at 20m long located in the playing field and farm land and one at 10m long positioned in the car park. All trenches were to be between 1.60m and 2m wide. The trenches were to be excavated using a JCB-type machine equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and under constant archaeological supervision, with the excavated spoil monitored for finds. All potential archaeological deposits were to be hand cleaned, excavated and recorded in order to satisfy the objectives of the project.

Results

The trenches were all dug as intended. They ranged in length from 9.60m to 22.50m and in depth from 0.43m to 0.60m (Fig. 3). All trenches were 1.60m wide. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was aligned NNW - SSE and was 22.50m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.31m of topsoil and 0.07m of subsoil overlying natural yellow brown sandy silt and gravel geology. No archaeological features were present and no finds recovered.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was aligned NNW - SSE and was 19.50m long and 0.60m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.32m of topsoil and 0.20m of subsoil overlying natural sandy silt and gravel geology. No archaeological features were present and no finds recovered.

Trench 3 (Fig. 4; Pl 2 and 4)

Trench 3 was aligned N - S and was 19.00m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.30m of topsoil and 0.10m of subsoil overlying natural geology. A single ditch (1) aligned east-west and 1.20m wide and 0.36m deep was excavated. The ditch was filled with two deposits (52 and 53) both of which were light blue grey in colour and silty sand in composition with the only difference being the compaction. No finds were recovered.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was aligned NNW - SSE and was 19.00m long and 0.51m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.25m of topsoil and 0.26m of subsoil overlying natural geology. At the northern end of the trench, the southern edge of a large clay filled feature possibly a ditch seen on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map was observed. Modern brick was present.

Trench 5 (Pl. 3)

Trench 5 was aligned ENE - WSW and was 20.20m long and 0.47m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.28m of topsoil and 0.15m of subsoil overlying natural geology. No archaeological features were present but four sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil.

Trench 6

Trench 6 was aligned NE - SW and was 9.60m long and 0.58m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of tarmac above 0.20m of hardcore and another 0.25m of made ground above the natural geology. Two modern waste pipes and a large truncation of a possible man hole were observed. No features of archaeological interest were present and no finds recovered.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

Four joining sherds from a single medieval vessel with a total weight of 34g occurred in the subsoil of Trench 5. They are in Medieval Sandy Ware, a typical late 11th-14th century pottery type in the region. It is typified by

dense sub-rounded white, grey and clear quartz up to 0.5mm. Early medieval pottery types similar to this are found along a considerable length of the middle Thames Valley and its hinterland, and the problem of differentiating between the numerous different wares has been noted in the past (Mellor 1994, 84). The sherds are from the body of a jar or cooking pot, a typical product of the tradition, and have light sooting on the outer surface.

Conclusion

Despite the archaeological potential of the site only a single undated ditch was recorded in the playing fields east of the school buildings. Modern truncations were present under the car park. Four conjoining sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil in Trench 5. Although the archaeologically relevant levels do survive the site is considered to have low potential.

References

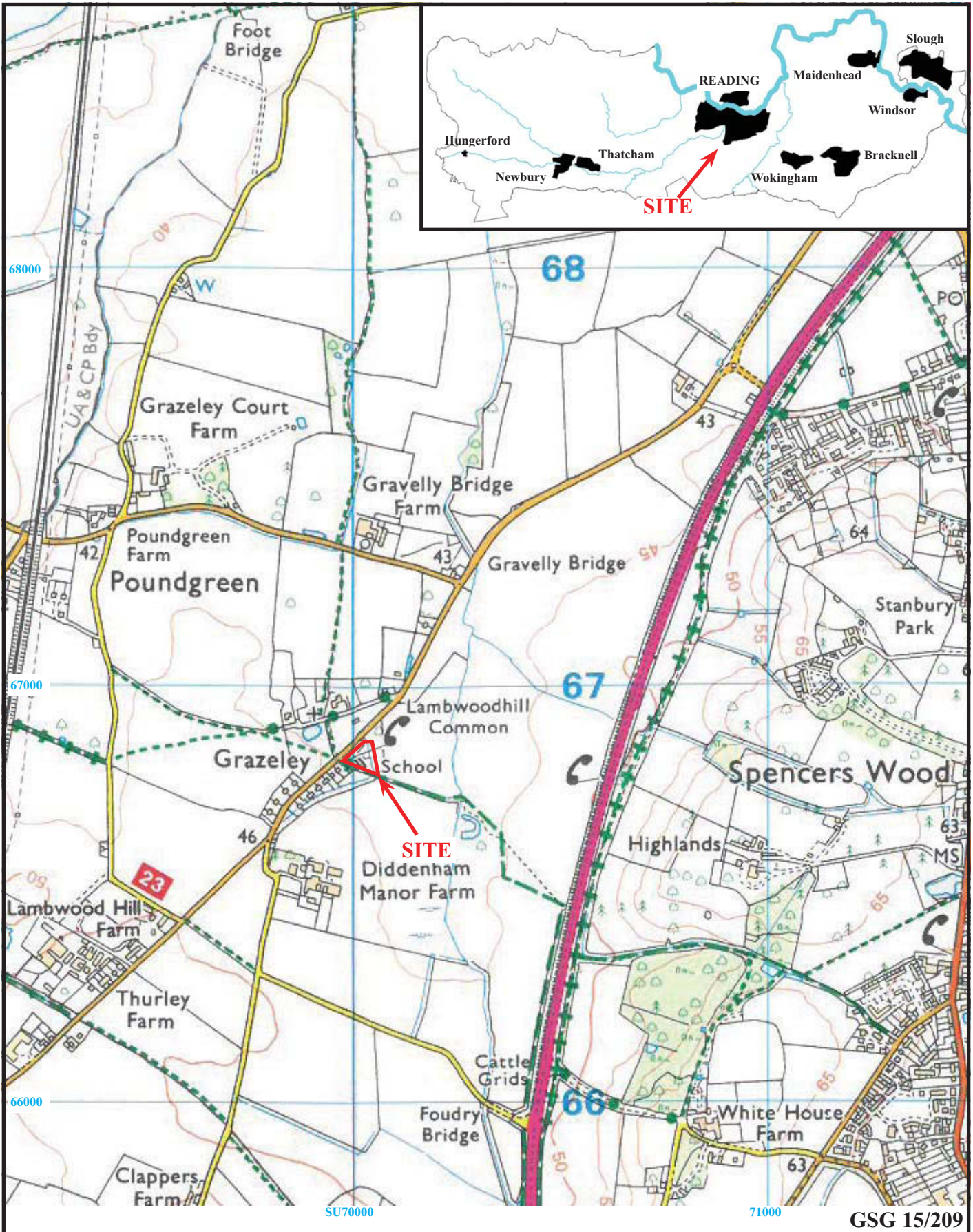
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- NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Government, London

APPENDIX 1: Trench details

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	22.50	1.60	0.43	0-0.31m topsoil; 0.31m-0.38m subsoil; 0.38m+ natural geology- mid yellow brown sandy silt with gravel. [PI. 1]
2	19.50	1.60	0.60	0-0.32m topsoil; 0.32m-0.52m subsoil; 0.52m+ natural geology
3	19.00	1.60	0.46	0-0.30m topsoil; 0.30m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m+ natural geology. Ditch 1. [PIs 2, 4]
4	19.00	1.60	0.51	0-0.25m topsoil; 0.25m-0.46m subsoil; 0.46m+ natural geology.
5	20.20	1.60	0.47	0-0.28m topsoil; 0.28m-0.43m subsoil; 0.43m+ natural geology [PI. 3]
6	9.60	1.60	0.58	0-0.10m tarmac; 0.10m-0.30m hardcore; 0.30m-0.55m made ground; 0.55m+ natural geology. modern truncations

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

Trench	Cut	Fill (s)	Type	Date	Dating evidence
1	1	52, 53	Ditch	-	-

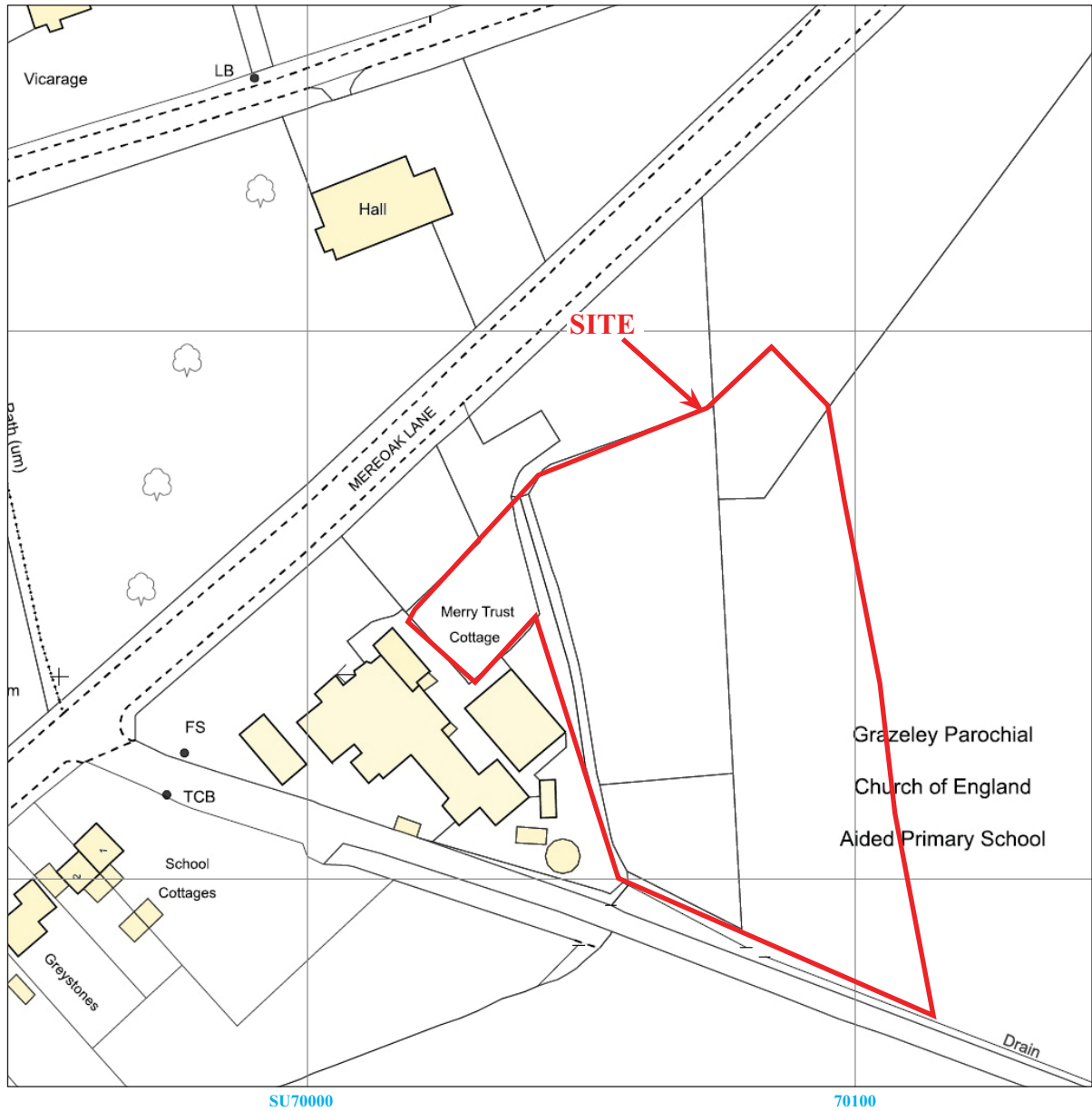


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Figure 1. Location of site within Grazeley and Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Meroak Lane.

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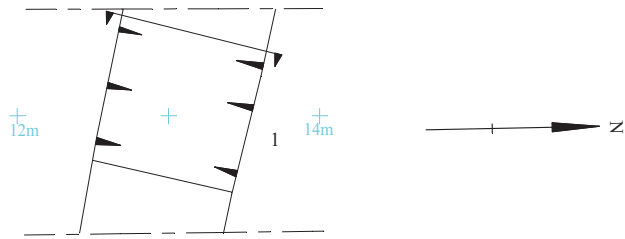
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.

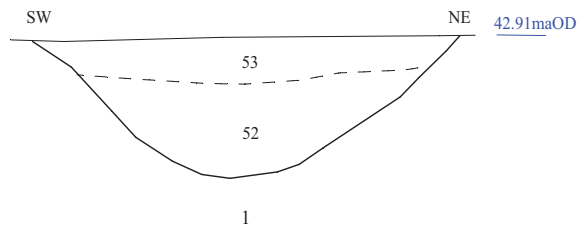


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Trench 3



0 5m



0 1m

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Figure 4. Detail of Trench 3.

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



Plate 2. Trench 3, looking north, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 5, looking east, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 4. Trench 3, ditch 1, looking north west, Scales: 0.5m.

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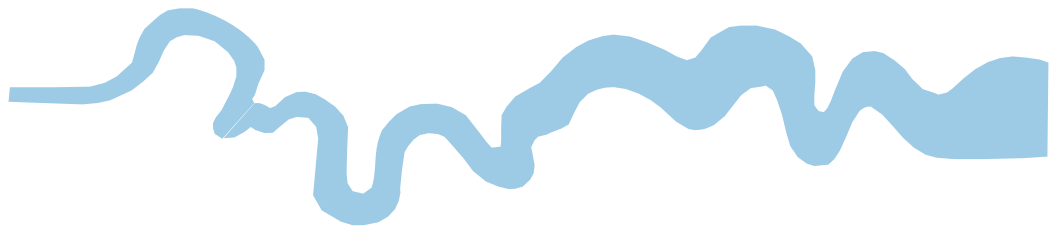
Plates 3 - 4.

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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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