

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**8 Grass Hill, Caversham,
Reading, Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Ellen McManus-Fry

Site Code: GHC15/183

(SU 7030 7506)

8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr S and Mrs G Bartlett

by Ellen McManus-Fry

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code GHC 15/183

September 2016

Summary

Site name: 8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 7030 7506

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 30th June - 1st July 2016

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Ellen McManus-Fry

Site code: GHC15/183

Area of site: 0.3ha

Summary of results: Monitoring of an area of levelling and foundation trench digging for a new garage took place. However, no finds, features or deposits of archaeological interest were found during this watching brief.

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 in due course.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 26.09.16

8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Ellen McManus-Fry

Report 15/183

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at 8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG47TJ (SU 7030 7506) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs Gitte Bartlett, at 8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG47TJ.

Planning permission (121361/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council for the erection of a new 3 bedroom dwelling with garage. The work is subject to a condition (14) which requires that an archaeological watching brief be maintained during the intrusive groundworks due to the potential disturbance of below-ground archaeological features.

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 Ellie Leary, Archaeology Officer for Reading Borough Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Ellen McManus-Fry on 30th June and 1st July 2016 and the site code is GHC15/183.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at an appropriate designated museum or repository in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in Caversham, to the north of Reading, and lies 150m north of the River Thames (Fig 2). The site currently comprises a mostly flat parcel of land occupied by the house and garden and surrounded by trees. To the east of the site the land rises quite steeply to a wooded bank. Underlying geology is indicated as chalk of the Seaford and Newhaven Formations (BGS 2000). The site lies at a height of *c.* 45m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

Archaeological background

The site is located in an area of the Thames Valley which is of archaeological significance especially with regards to the Palaeolithic period, although the immediate location of the site has limited entries for

archaeological finds or sites in the Berkshire Historic Environment Record. The adjacent Boyn Hill gravel terrace, marking the route of an earlier course of the River Thames, is known to contain Palaeolithic stone tools, which were often recovered in 19th and early 20th century gravel pits, sometimes in large numbers (Wymer 1968). Recent fieldwork to the north east has uncovered evidence of Bronze Age occupation and a medieval ditch (Ford and Raymond 2013), although other sites nearby have revealed nothing of interest (e.g. Ford 2008; Bennet 2009).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and/or record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular the digging of foundation trenches. Archaeological deposits exposed by the groundworks were to be recorded but not further excavated unless threatened by the groundworks. The excavation of the site was undertaken using a machine with a toothed bucket. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

Results

The development proposal comprised one component of archaeological interest, namely construction of a new garage (Figs 3 and 4). An extension to the house lay in a part of the site which had already been terraced into the slope for the original house. Its foundation trenches were not monitored.

The garage

The area where the garage was to be sited was levelled, which required digging into the adjacent bank to a maximum depth of *c.* 1m (PI. 1). A modern pitchfork and spade head and glass bottle fragment were uncovered at the maximum depth of levelling.

The footing trenches for the garage were excavated to a depth of 1.1m from the levelled ground surface and were 0.6-0.7m wide in a rectangular plot 7m by 6m (PI 2-4). The underlying geology sloped steeply across the site, being highest in the NE corner of the footings where the natural chalk geology lay only 0.15m below the levelled surface. In the SE corner the depth of the chalk was below the maximum depth of the footings.. The observed stratigraphy consisted of 0.2m of topsoil, overlying 0.7m mid yellow-brown silty clay with flint and chalk inclusions, on top of 0.5m of mid red-brown silty clay which lay above light yellow white chalk with

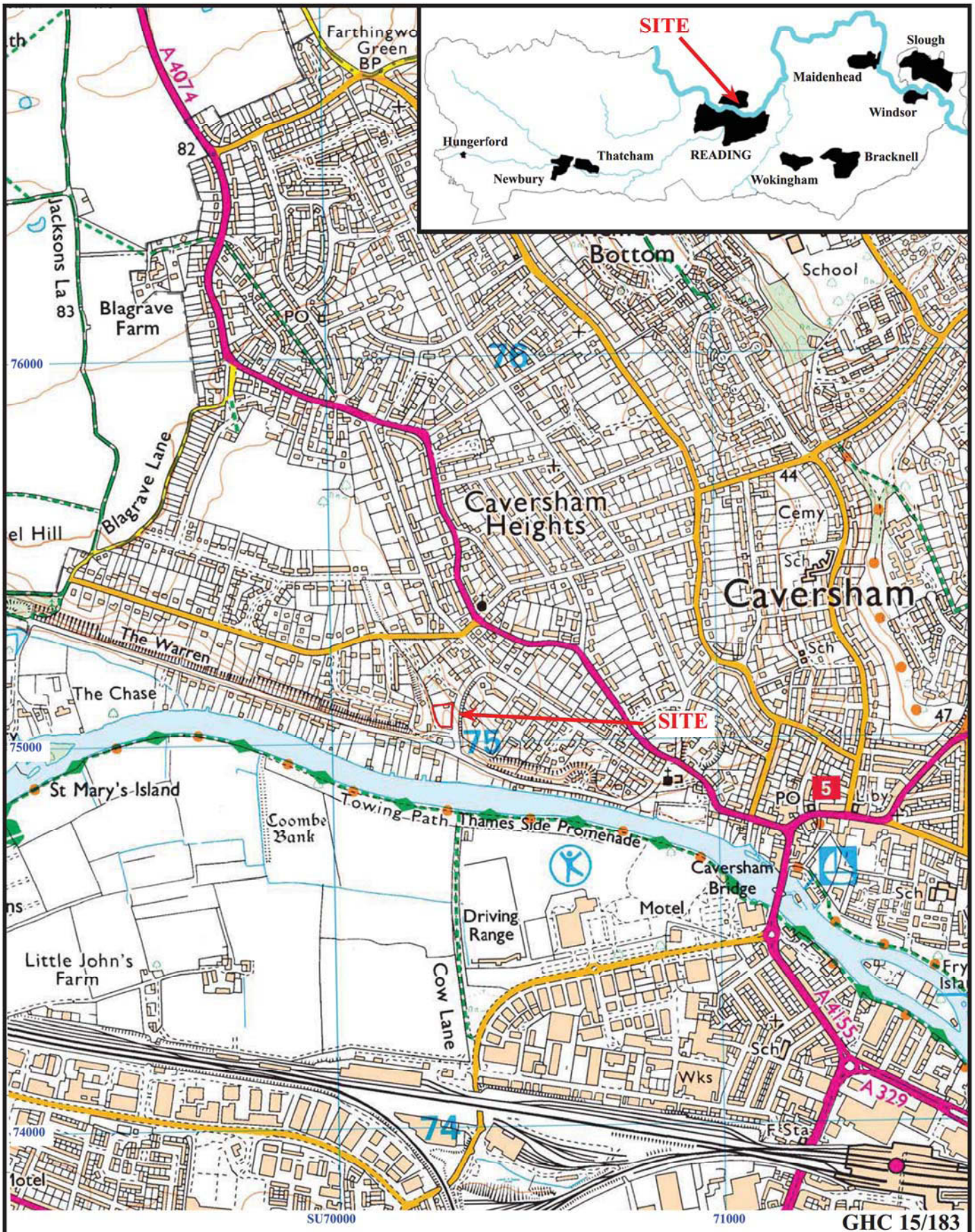
occasional silty clay patches. A layer of yellow sand observed in the western half of the plot is likely to be associated with the construction of the existing driveway. No archaeological finds or remains were observed.

Conclusion

No deposits or artefacts of archaeological interest were revealed during the watching brief.

References

- Bennet, N., 2009, 17 St Peter's Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, an archaeological watching brief, Thames Valley Archaeological Services rep 08/42, Reading
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- Ford, S and Raymond, F, 2013, 'A Late Bronze Age Artefact Scatter and Medieval Ditch on St Peter's Hill, Caversham', *Berkshire Archaeol J*, **81**, 27–35
- NPPF, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
- Wymer, J., 1968, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*, London.

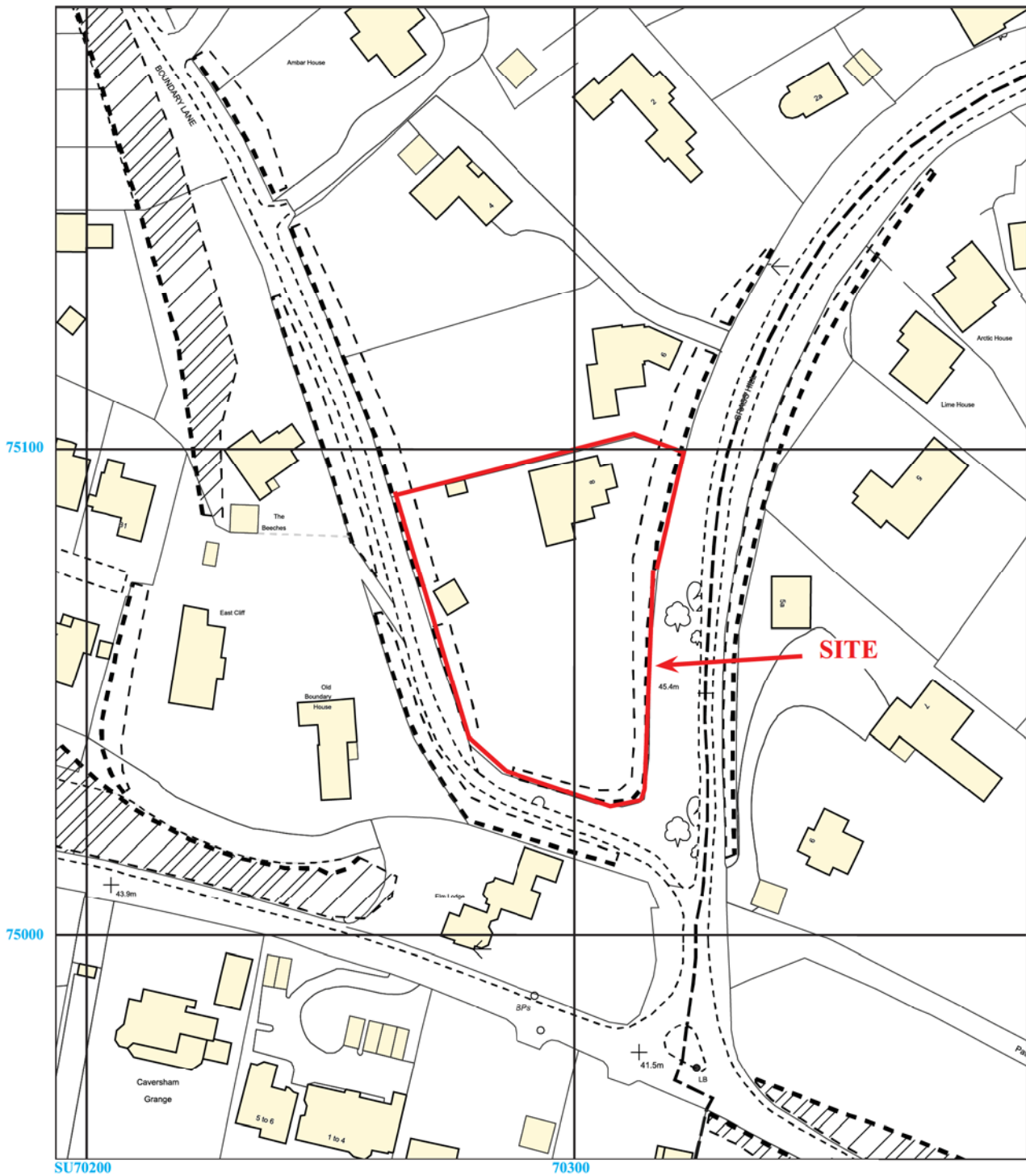


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Reading, Berkshire, 2016
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Caversham,
Reading and Berkshire.

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Archaeological Watching Brief**
Figure 2. Detailed location of site off Grass Hill.

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Reading, Berkshire, 2016
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Location of area monitored



Topsoil

Subsoil (mid yellow brown silty clay with gravel and chalk)

Natural geology (Red brown silty clay)

Natural geology (chalk)

GHC 15/183

**8 Grass Hill, Caversham
Reading, Berkshire, 2016
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Representative section.





Plate 1. Section of the bank after levelling, looking E, Scale: 1m.



Plate 2. Garage footing trenches, looking N, Scales: 1m and 2m.

GHC 15/183

8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, 2016
An archaeological watching brief

Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Site, looking N, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Garage footing trenches, looking SW, Scales: 2m and 1m.

GHC 15/183

8 Grass Hill, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, 2016
An archaeological watching brief

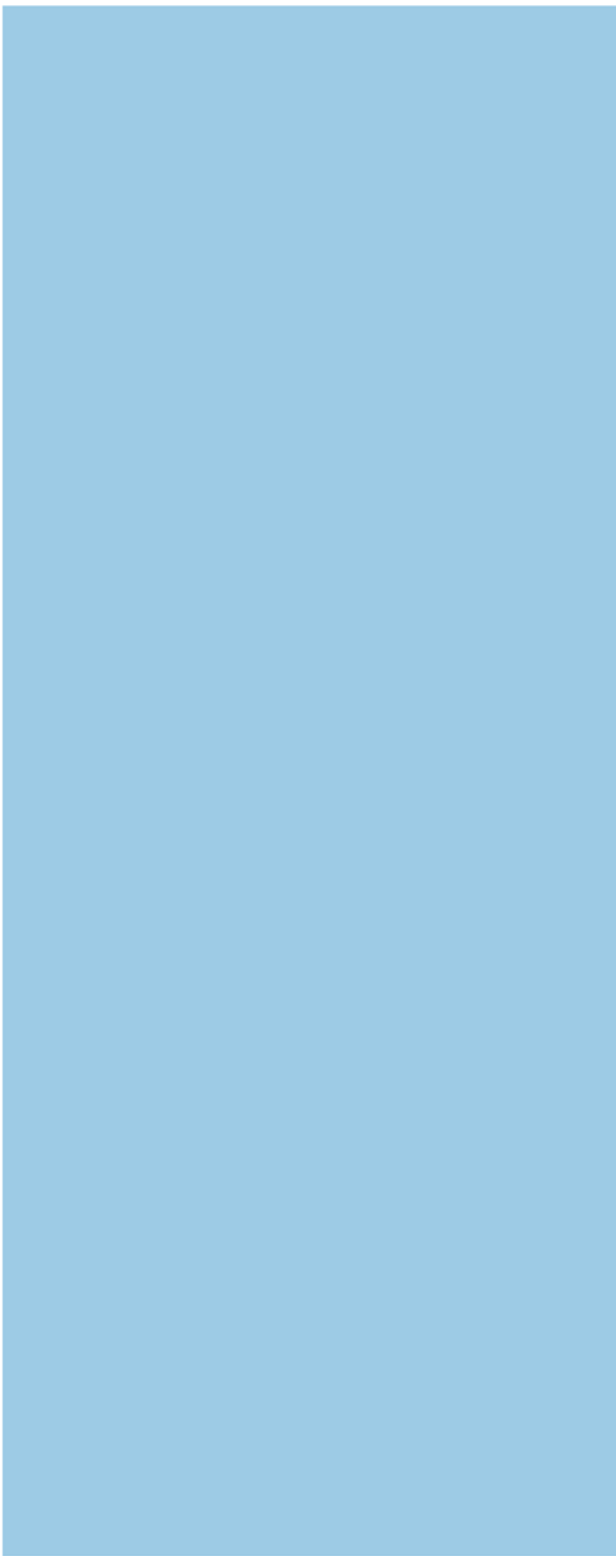
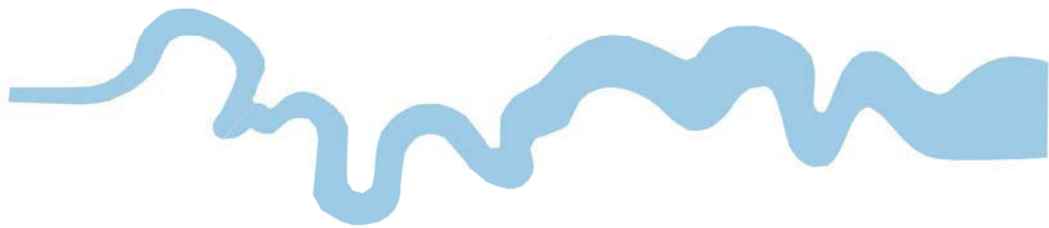
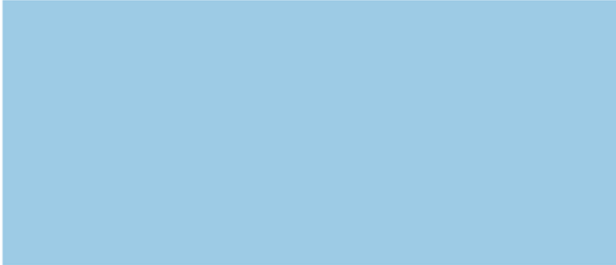
Plates 3 - 4.

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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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