

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Castle Quay Shopping Centre car parks,
Banbury, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew MUNDIN and Danielle MILBANK

Site Code: CQB13/124

(SP 4575 4080)

Castle Quay Shopping Centre car parks, Banbury, Oxfordshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

**for Scottish Widows Plc and
Scottish Widows Unit Funds Limited**

by Andrew Mundin and Danielle Milbank
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CQB 13/124b

December 2016

Summary

Site name: Castle Quay Shopping Centre car parks, Banbury, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 4575 4080

Site activity: Archaeological Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 13th September - 2nd December 2016

Project Coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Andrew Muddin, David Sanchez

Site code: CQB 13/124

Area of site: c.3.7ha

Summary of results: The evaluation revealed the presence of deep made ground overlying the archaeologically relevant levels on the site. Some areas of deep modern truncation of the latter were also observed. A single feature of archaeological interest was recorded which, although undated, seems to correspond with a water meadow system present on 17th century maps. No deposits relating to Banbury Castle were observed.

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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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 15.12.16 Steve Preston ✓ 09.12.16

Castle Quay Shopping Centre car parks, Banbury, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Munday and Danielle Milbank

Report 13/124b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land adjacent to the Oxford Canal, Banbury, Oxfordshire, covering a number of the public car parks for access to Castle Quay Shopping Centre and the Cherwell District Council car parks to access the town centre (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by Mr Paul Treece of Hawkstone Properties, Worcester Road, Hagley, Worcestershire, DY9 0NW on behalf of Scottish Widows plc and Scottish Widows Unit Funds Ltd.

Planning permission (13/01601/OUT) has been gained from Cherwell District Council to redevelop the site for new retail and leisure facilities, with some demolition and changes of use to existing structures. The development site boundary encompasses an area of c.3.7ha, which includes the northern of the two multi-storey car parks for the Castle Quay Shopping Centre (Pl. 7) and a temporary car park, currently not in use, owned by Cherwell District Council, and the site of the demolished leisure centre (Pl. 8) (Fig. 1).

In view of the potential for the development to damage or destroy archaeological deposits on the site, the permission is subject to four conditions (10-13) relating to archaeology, requiring a staged programme of archaeological investigation, recording and publication.

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 Archaeological Services, the archaeological adviser to the District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Danielle Milbank, Andrew Munday and David Sanchez and the site code is CQB13/124. An initial desk-based assessment (Dawson and Ford 2013) had highlighted the potential of the site. 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

At the time of the fieldwork, the site currently consisted of an irregular parcel of land on the north-eastern side of Banbury town centre. The site is mostly located on alluvium forming the floodplain of the River Cherwell but with the north-western quarter located on Jurassic Lower Lias (Mudstone) (BGS 1982). It is at a height of approximately 90m above Ordnance Datum.

The current site use is variable (Fig.2). A distributor road (Cherwell Drive) forms the northern boundary and provides the principal site access off a roundabout. Much of the site lies in a parcel of land between the canalized River Cherwell to the north-east and the Oxford Canal to the south-west. These form the majority of the site boundaries. Concorde Avenue (A4260) lies just beyond the south-east boundary.

All of the eastern third of the site adjacent to the Cherwell is used as surface carparking, on different levels, raised to create a temporary, drainable level for the car park. The north-western third of the site on either side of the canal is given over to multi-storey parking for the Shopping Centre. The remainder of the site is taken up by a private club, access roads, surface car parking and access ramps for the various bridges, small car parks and paved areas.

Archaeological background

The desk-based assessment highlighted the archaeological potential of the development site (Dawson and Ford 2013). In summary, the site occupies a large parcel of land adjacent to a previous excavation of the castle, and encompasses the floodplain of the Cherwell. The site includes the route of the Oxford Canal through the town centre, with the origins of an attached boat yard a Scheduled Monument (EH Ref 1006323; SAM OX172). The castle site lies at the heart of the historic core of urban Banbury, which was an Early Medieval administrative centre, but was not mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086 (Mumby *et al.* 1975). A major excavation of Banbury's historic core was undertaken in 1973-4 (Rodwell 1976), with later small-scale assessment during the construction of Castle Quay shopping centre between 1995-7 (Cuttler 1996; Litherland 1997; BUFAU 1997; Litherland and Nichol 1999).

These works strengthen evidence from the previous excavation of a 'moated castle' site just to the north of the market place. The documented histories are suggestive of a timber motte and palisaded bailey, probably built for the Bishop of Lincoln in 1135, with any earlier settlement controlled by the See of Dorchester-on-Thames from 1070 (Litherland and Rodwell 1999). Though Banbury Castle would have been involved during the

'Rebellion' and was confiscated by Stephen from the Bishop during the 12th century civil war it was later returned. It was strengthened by King John in the later 12th century.

Archaeological evidence showed a major rebuild inside the castle took place in the 13th century. The main keep was rebuilt in stone, and pentagonal in shape (Rodwell 1976). Its theoretical layout was interpreted based on limited excavation, uncovering the south-western part of an outer castle ditch, and a minimal part of the location of the proposed motte. It has been compared with Beaumaris, and other Welsh Marches castles, mostly by its form and from the location protecting a probable market, and less so a detached settlement, which could have grown and serviced the castle from outside of its walls.

During the English Civil War from 1642 the castle was held by the Parliamentarians and was rapidly strengthened. After the nearby Battle of Edgehill, near the northern Oxon-Northants border to the west, the Castle was forced to surrender to Charles I. After the war, it was systematically dismantled to prevent its further use, and became a ready source for stone for construction in the town (Rodwell 1976).

The Oxford Canal, built in the later 18th century, would not have respected the castle's location, and was surmised to cut through the north-eastern corner of the outer earthwork (Litherland and Nichol 1999).

In the 1990s, when the Castle Quay shopping centre was being built a series of geotechnical-type investigations including boreholes and test pits, aimed to establish the limits of the castle (BUFAU 1997). They were successful in as much as this work outlined phases of development patterns in the now lost parts of Post-Medieval and Victorian Banbury namely Castle Street, Mill Street and Market Place (Litherland 1997). It also identified areas of deep made ground, and therefore a potential for older remains surviving below (Litherland and Nichol 1999). More recent borehole data (LGC 2013) typically showed 1–2m of modern made ground above a generally similar depth of alluvium, above lower Lias.

Objectives and methodology

The aims of this evaluation were two-fold. The main aim for the majority of the site area was to determine the topographical context of the site, in particularly the depth of made ground and/or alluvium lying above the archaeologically relevant horizons on the floodplain areas of the Cherwell. If relevant deposits were encountered this part of the evaluation was then to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits. Depending on these results a further phase of evaluation fieldwork may be required to fully characterize the archaeological potential.

For smaller parts of the site the main aim was to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits.

The specific research aims of this project are:

to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present.

to determine the location and nature of any castle earthworks on the site.

to determine the depth of made ground on the floodplain.

to provide information to assist in the drawing up of a mitigation strategy.

This work was to be carried out in a manner which would not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

It was proposed that twelve 15m long and 2m wide evaluation trenches were excavated in the areas of the proposed development.

Overburden was to be removed mechanically with a toothless ditching bucket to expose archaeologically sensitive levels, under constant archaeological supervision. Provision was made for trenches to be shored, stepped or battered to facilitate safe access.

Where archaeological features were certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were to be cleaned using appropriate hand tools. Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed would then be excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims outlined above.

Results

In the event, only two trenches were excavated more-or-less as intended and four more were dug as test pits (Fig. 2). Trenches 1 and 3 were respectively 8.60m and 5m in length and 2.11m and 1.45m deep. After consultation with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service and considering the thickness of made ground deposits observed in Trench 5 and the presence of modern services, Trenches 5 to 8 were dug as test pits and Trenches 2, 4 and 9 to 11 were not excavated. Test pits ranged in length from 2.30 to 3.20m and in depth from 2.05 to 2.30m. A complete list of trenches and test pits giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

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Trench 1 (Fig. 2; Pls 1 and 2)

Trench 1 was aligned NW - SE and was 8.60m long and 0.81m deep in the SW end and 2.11m deep in the NE.

Much of the original location of the trench was occupied by a large deep modern truncation and the trench was

moved sideways to avoid this. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.35m of Tarmac and hoggin overlying four deposits of modern made ground consisted of 0.46m of mixed orange clay and grey sandy clay, 0.09m of hoggin, 0.20m of orange grey sandy clay and 0.35m of grey clay silt, overlying 0.45m of mid orange brown sand overlying alluvial deposits. No archaeological deposits or features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Trench 3 (Figs 2 and 3, Pls 3 and 4)

Trench 3 was aligned NW - SE and was 12m long and 1.45m deep. This trench was dug in two halves, due to a buried service and concrete present perpendicular to the trench at 5m from the south east end of the trench. The stratigraphy of the trench was consistent on both sides to a point with 0.35m of Tarmac and hoggin (scalpins) to 0.6m, this all overlay 0.41m of firm grey blue silty clay made ground. At this level, a 0.33m of a yellowish brown silty clay deposit (60) was present, that sealed the underlying deposits. In the north eastern side of the trench, oblique to the trench, but on a roughly N-S axis, ditch 1 was recorded. This ditch (1) was c.2.5m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.45m deep though extended well beyond both the watertable and the base of the trench. It contained four upper deposits that were recorded. Under layer 60, was an upper fill (58), a yellowish blue/grey silty clay, over a thin layer of grey silty clay (57). This reached beyond the base of the trench, but represented slumped infill of the centre of the features. Under these layers, were two further fills, which could have been the same, at least stratigraphically. Both of these fills (56 and 59) were blue grey clays, and contained flecks of chalk and charcoal. Both extended well beyond the base of excavation at 1.45m. No finds were recovered.

Test pit 5 (Figs 2, Pl. 5)

Test pit 5 was aligned W - E and was 3.20m long and 2.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of construction gravel on top of a modern made ground. This made ground consisted of 1.10m of light reddish brown silt with frequent brick and concrete fragments, 0.70m of brick and concrete hard core and 0.30m of dark brownish grey clay with occasional brick fragments overlying mid orange brown gravel and clay natural geology. No archaeological deposits or features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Test pit 6 (Figs 2)

Test pit 6 was aligned SW - NE and was 2.30m long and 2.20m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of five different deposits of a modern made ground overlying mid brown clay alluvial deposits. This made ground consisted of 1.20m of light brown sand with frequent concrete and brick fragments, 0.40m of brick and concrete hard core, 0.20m of mid brown sand with brick and concrete fragments, 0.20m of light grey sand with brick and concrete

fragments and 0.20m of brick and concrete hard core. At a depth of 2.20m the alluvial deposits were observed but the bottom of the test pit flooded up quickly stopping the excavation at that depth. No archaeological deposits or features were observed and no finds were recovered.

Test pit 7 (Figs 2)

Test pit 7 was aligned SW - NE and was 3.00m long and 2.30m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of five different deposits of a modern made ground: 0.70m of light orange brown sand with frequent brick and concrete fragments, 0.20m of a similar composition deposit, 0.20m of brick and concrete fragments hard core, 0.40m of light brown sand with frequent brick and concrete fragments, 0.80m of brick and tarmac fragments hard core. At a depth of 2.30m the bottom of the test pit flooded up quickly stopping the excavation at that depth. No natural geology or alluvial deposits were observed.

Test pit 8 (Figs 2, Pl. 6)

Test pit 8 was aligned NW - SE and was 2.80m long and 2.05m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of construction gravel, 0.60m of light orange brown sandy modern made ground with frequent brick and concrete fragments, 0.70m of a second made ground consisted of mid brown sand and medium size sandstones with occasional bricks, and 0.65m of light greyish brown alluvial clay overlying light brown gravel and clay natural geology. Two brick fragments were recovered from the second made ground for dating purposes showing this to be of early 20th-century date. No other archaeological features or deposits were observed.

Finds

Ceramic Building Materials by Danielle Milbank

A brick sample was recovered from made ground deposit 61, encountered in trench 8. The brick fabric was examined at x10 magnification and the brick type classified according to Harley 1974. It comprises a hard, dense fabric with groggy inclusions. It is unfrogged and the dimensions (thickness 68mm, width 110mm) and sharp finish indicate that it is of likely early 20th century date (Harley type 6).

Conclusion

A single ditch has been identified during the evaluation. Documentary evidence suggests the Castle Meadows were later than the castle, and could have even been present after the dismantling of the castle keep, until the landscaping and water management of the land for the canal was ultimately reordered in the later 18th century.

The ditch seems to fit with the eastern side of a N-S ditch for one of three meadows seen on 17th century mapping of the castle, but other than the fills presenting a prolonged sequence of waterlogging, no firm date of their creation, and infilling can be presented from the evidence of the evaluation. The evaluation has not recorded any other deposits of archaeological interest. No finds were uncovered and no well preserved environmental deposits seem to be present for appropriate sampling (neither humic nor organic-rich deposits). Made ground in Trench 8 was confirmed as no earlier than the early 20th century.

The evaluation has confirmed what was anticipated, in that the archaeologically relevant levels are deeply buried beneath made ground, typically 2m or more thick (Appendix 1).

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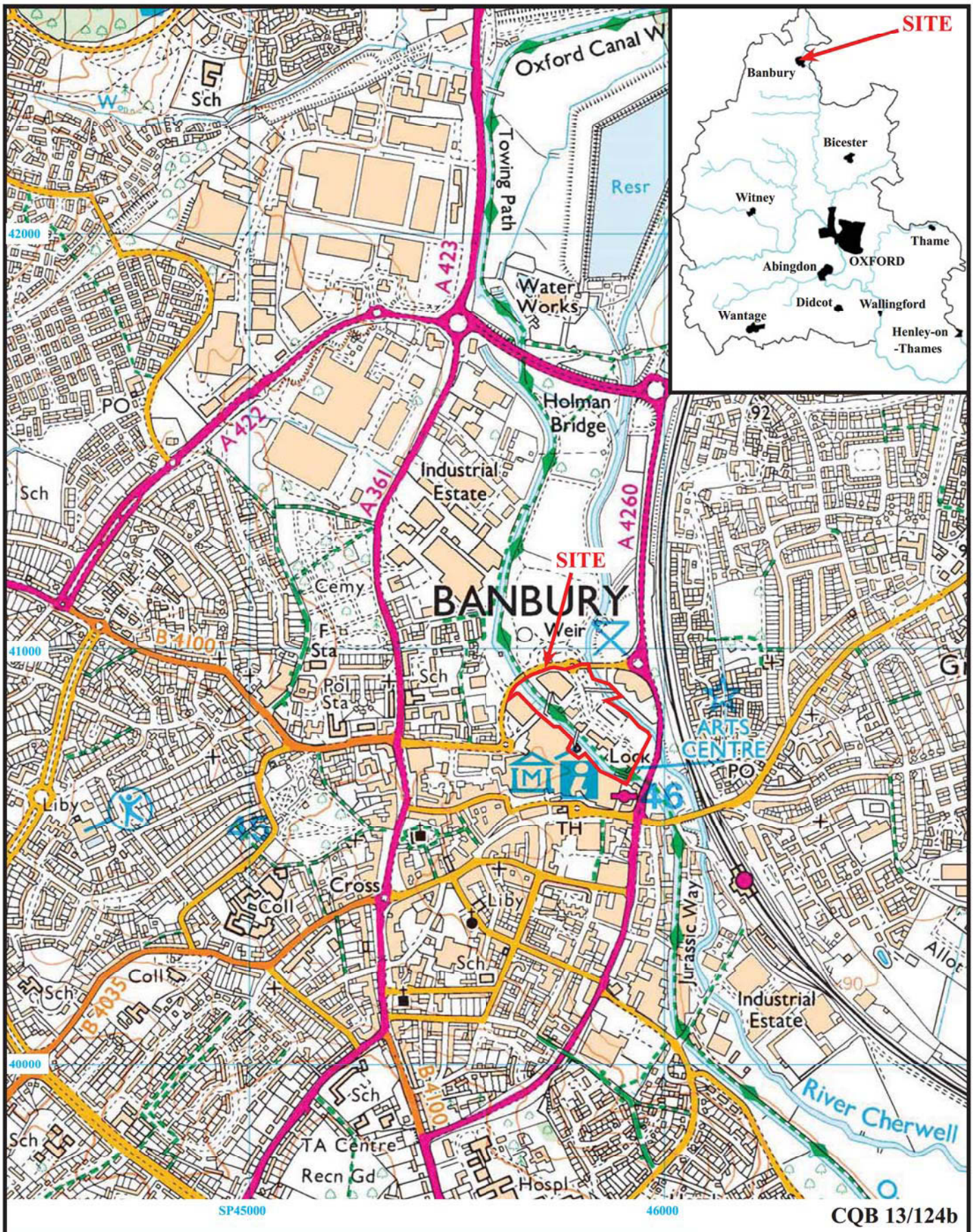
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at NW, SW, W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	8.60	1.75/2.75	2.11	0-0.035m Tarmac + hoggin, 0.35-0.81 mixed orange clay/grey sandy clay made ground, 0.81-0.90 hoggin made ground, 0.90-1.10m orange grey sandy clay made ground, 1.10-1.45m dark grey clay silt made ground, 1.45-1.90m mid orange brown sandy clay layer, 1.90m+ Alluvium. [Pls 1 and 2]
3	5.00	2.00	1.45	0-0.015m Tarmac, 0.15-0.35m hoggin, 0.35-0.56m grey clay made ground, 0.56-0.89m yellowish brown silty clay, 0.89-1.41m yellowish grey sandy clay, 1.41m+ light yellow alluvial sand. Ditch 1. [Pls 3 and 4]
5	3.20	2.00	2.20	0-0.10m construction gravel, 0.10-1.20m light red brown silty sand made ground, 1.20-1.90 hard core, 1.90-2.20m dark greyish brown clay made ground, 2.20m mid orange brown gravel and clay natural geology. [Pl. 5]
6	2.30	2.00	2.20	0-1.20m light brown sand made ground, 1.20-1.60m hard core, 1.60-1.80m mid brown sand made ground, 1.80-2.00m light grey sand made ground, 2.00-2.20 hard core, 2.20m + light brown alluvial clay
7	3.00	2.00	2.30	0-0.70m light orange brown sand made ground, 0.70-0.90m light brown sand made ground, 0.90-1.10m hard core, 1.10-1.50m light orange brown sand made ground, 1.50m+ hard core.
8	2.80	2.00	2.05	0-0.10m gravel. 0.10-0.70m light orange brown sand made ground, 0.70-1.40m mid brown sand and sand stones made ground, 1.40-2.05m light greyish brown alluvial clay, 2.05m+ light brown gravel and clay natural geology. [Pl. 6]

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
3	1	56,57,58,59	Ditch	Unknown	Cartographic suggests 17th century, but not conclusively

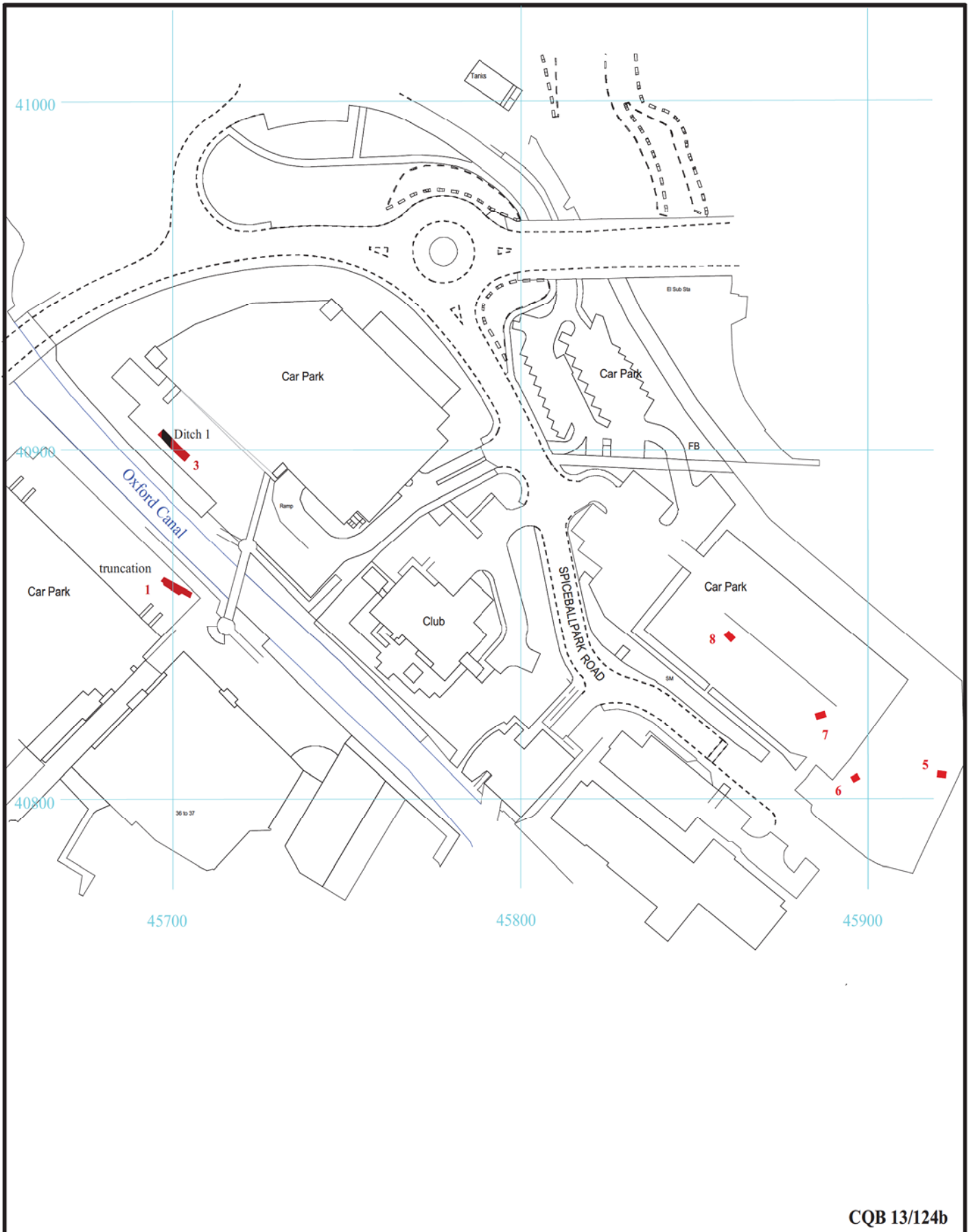


**Castle Quay, Banbury,
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Figure 1. Location of site within Banbury and Oxfordshire.

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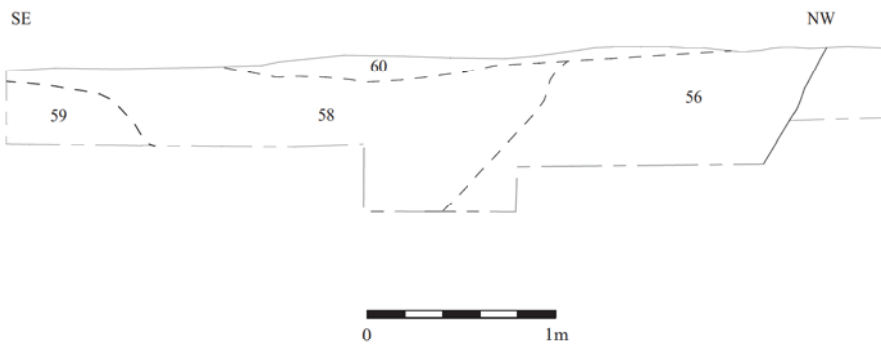
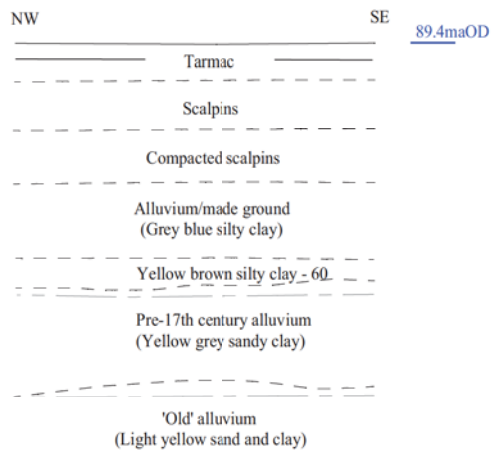
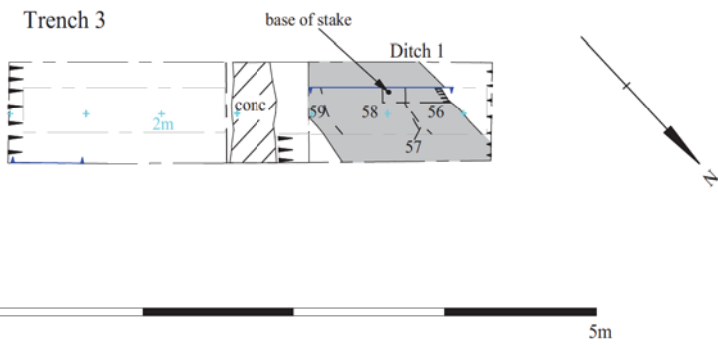
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Figure 2. Location of trenches.



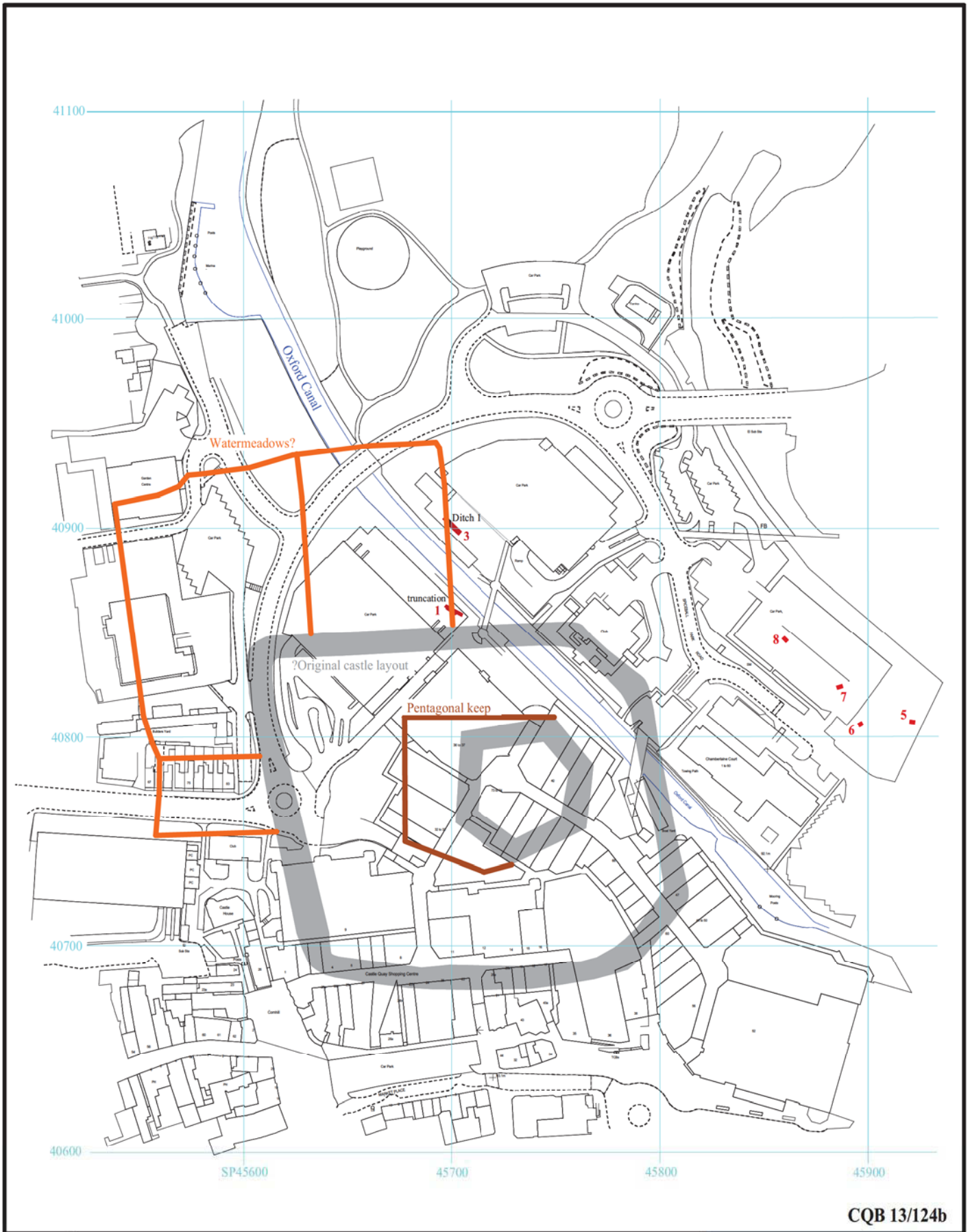
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Figure 3. Detail of Trench 3 and sections.



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Figure 4. Location of trenches with interpretations of castle layouts and castle meadows.



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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking south east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

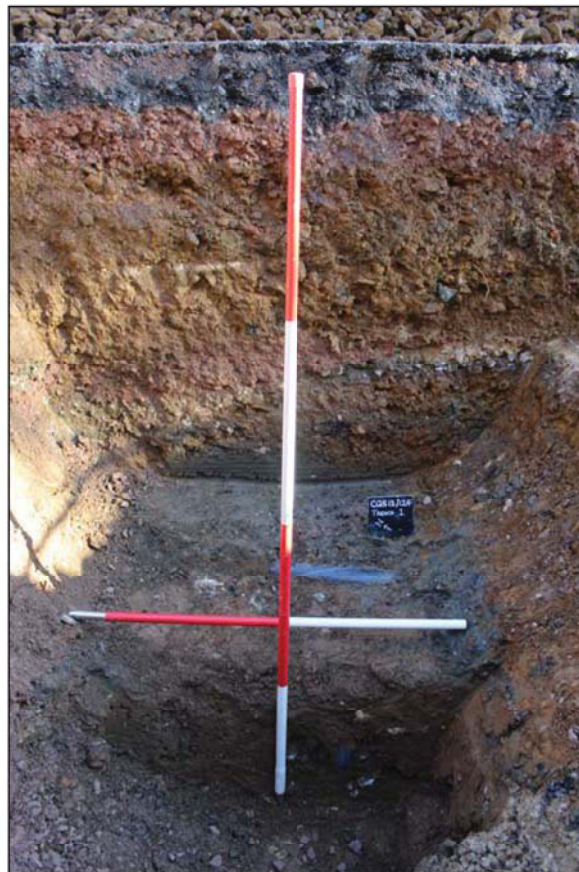


Plate 2. Trench 1 section, looking north east, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 1 - 2.

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Plate 3. Trench 3, looking south east, Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.



Plate 4. Trench 3, looking north west and ditch 1, Scales: 1m, 0.5m and 0.3m.

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Plates 3 - 4.

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Plate 5. Trench 5, looking south, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 6. Trench 8, looking south west, Scales: 2m and 1m.

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Plates 5 - 6.

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Plate 7. General setting of Trench 1, looking north.



Plate 8. General view of southern part of site looking south east

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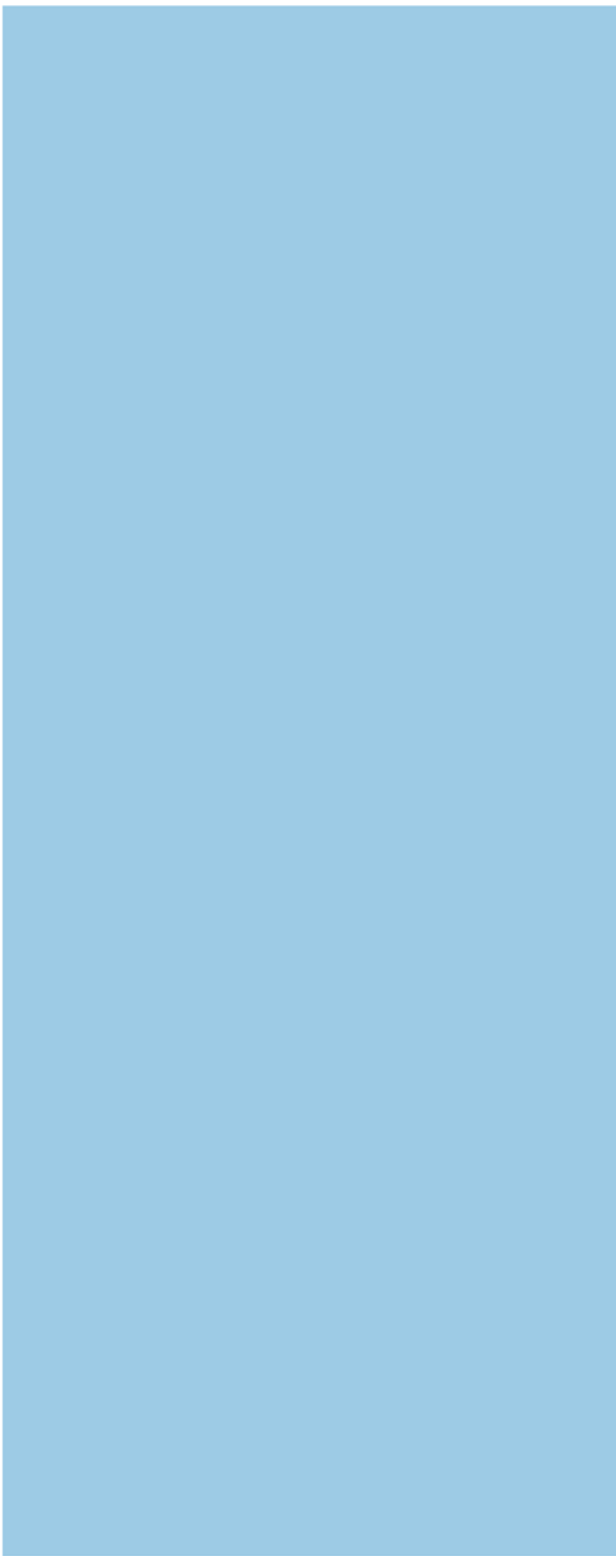
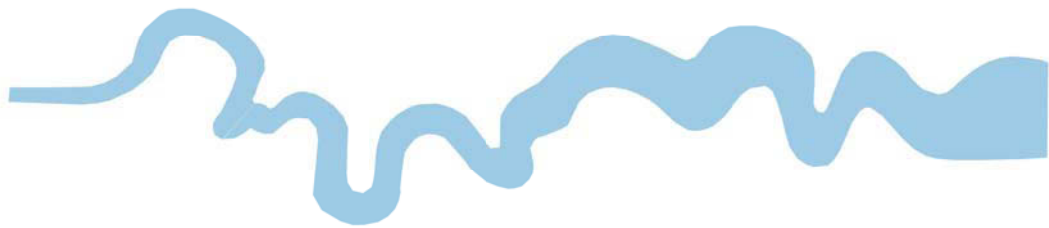
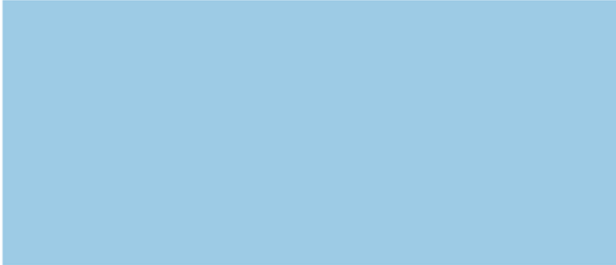
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Plates 7 - 8.

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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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