

T H A M E S      V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Church of St Michael and All Angels,  
Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andrew Muddin**

**Site Code: WCB17/52**

**(SP 7402 1697)**

# **Church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief (Drainage)  
For the Incumbent and Church Wardens of  
St Michael and All Angels**

by Andrew Mundin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

WCB 17/52c

**September 2018**

## Summary

**Site name:** Church of St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SP 7402 1697

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 28th August to 14th September 2018

**Project coordinator:** Andrew Muddin

**Site supervisor:** Luis Esteves

**Site code:** WCB 17/52

**Area of site:** 630 sq m

**Summary of results:** The excavation of the drainage trench encircling the Church was observed, as were exploratory pits to locate and repair existing drainage to the north-west and south. Excavation against the east wall of the standing Chancel located stonework underlying the existing foundation, as was also the case to the south and south-east. This formed an exterior edge of an underlying foundation of earlier than 14th century date. Disarticulated human bone was also recovered generally throughout the areas of excavation, though the higher proportion was recovered from overburden deposits on the exterior of the north aisle door. Two sherds of Medieval pottery were recovered from overburden deposits exterior to the south aisle. A second stone foundation was recorded under the buttress to the east of the rebuilt south porch.

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

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# **St Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

By Andrew Munding

**Report 17/52c**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire, HP18 0JP (SP 7402 1697; Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Ms Zoe Sawbridge of Acanthus Clews Architects, Acanthus House, 57 Hightown Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 9BE on behalf of the Incumbent and Church Wardens.

A faculty of works has been gained from the Diocese of Oxford to repair or replace existing drainage at the Church. A French drain would be created around the perimeter of the Church, linking to existing downpipes for the roof, and allowing water to be kept away from the base of exterior walls. The runs would exit the graveyard to the south and to the north-west. In light of the possibility of these works encountering earlier elements of the church, or human remains, potentially of archaeological interest, archaeological monitoring was required.

These works have been carried out in accordance with a generic specification provided by Diocesan Archaeological Advisor, Mr Julian Mumby. The investigation during the excavation of the new drainages was carried out by Luis Esteves and Andrew Munding between 28th August and 14th September 2018. The site code is WCB 17/52 and is the third report produced in regards to archaeological investigation carried out at the Church. Other reporting has been regarding watching brief observation of exterior and interior test pit survey (Munding 2017), and additional observation of exterior percolation test pits at potential new soakaway locations (Sanchez and Munding 2017).

## **Location, topography and geology**

The Church is on the western side of the village, which is developed on both sides of the A41, 10km west of Aylesbury. The Church is on the northern side of the road with a slight rise in the ground from road level to the position of the Church in the graveyard. Access is from the west and the south. The modern use of the graveyard is to the north of the Churchyard. The Church sits on a slightly raised terrace just south of the high point of the Church, but in its centre. A linear group of 18th-and 19th-century gravestones are immediately south of the Church and including one late 18th-century chest tomb (Grade II Listed; 1159177) to the south-west. There is a small group of 18th-century headstones north of the Church, and 19th-century graves to the east. The underlying

geology is mapped as an outcrop of Kimmeridge Clay Mudstone with Ampthill Clay Mudstone in the surrounding area and glacial sand, gravel and silt to the south (BGS 1994). Clay natural was at the base of excavation of all test pits of the nave, which was light brown sandy silt clay, but a grey brown clay natural was to the north (Mundin 2017). A benchmark is located on the lowest stage of the south-west corner buttress of the tower and is at 107.6m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

## **Archaeological background**

Waddesdon (*Votedone*) is mentioned in Domesday Book, and in 1066 was held by Beorthric, from Queen Edith (Williams and Martin 2002), wife of Edward the Confessor. Until the late 13th or early 14th century the Hundred of Ashendon was divided to the three hundreds of Ixhill, Ashendon and Waddensdon. Waddeson covered the parishes in the north and north-west, Ixhill the south and south-west containing Long Crendon, and including the detached parishes of Towersey; and Ashendon, covering central and north-west areas including Brill (VCH 1927a). From the 14th century until the 17th century, Waddesdon and Ixhill were mentioned less and they were eventually amalgamated.

The extant Church of St Michael and All Angels (Listed Grade II\*; 111780) dates from the early 13th century and incorporates repositioned pieces of 12th-century architecture (RCHME 1912), and the exterior structure shows signs of further modification or rebuilding in the 14th, 15th and 19th centuries.

The present main drainage run, down the southern church path on its east side, is blocked. The north side also has existing drainage which exits the churchyard in the north-west. In 2017, archaeological investigation observed the condition and construction of the foundations on either side (north and south) of the Church. The north drain found a brick wall fronting the aisle foundations containing a drainage gully separate from the later, present drainage, lower than foundation level. The soil to the north of the Church contained heavy clay and was retaining water. In the south, there was also a brick facing, though this was removed to expose the stepped, stone foundation on the south-west corner of the south aisle. Ground conditions here were dry, and made up of a clay silt (Mundin 2017). Additionally, a number of soakaway locations were suggested by the architect, and the ground conditions were tested for their suitability and drainage (Sanchez and Mundin 2017). These locations were only to be required should the existing blocked drainage be not able to be cleared.

The first recorded reference to any previous restoration work at the Church, is large scale refurbishment by the Diocesan Architect, William White at the end of the 19th century (VCH 1927b). The last roof repair was undertaken by J. Chatwin in 1862 (Pevsner and Williamson 1994, 707). These works were finished in 1877

(RCHME 1912). Soon after this though a structural fault, required the tower to be pulled down and rebuilt. The reconstruction of the tower is also attributed to White and a foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Reading in 1891, placed on top of the first stage of its base. Due to this placement the base of the current tower is likely to be the foundation of the 14th-century original. The south porch was completely rebuilt of brick in 1902, and replaced a 15th-century original, as a part of a second round of restoration and rebuilding work under Rector Thomas John Williams. Lead hoppers are attached to either side of the porch, bearing a date 1736, with initials CW, IG, IF and obviously predate the Victorian work, with 'roughcast' facing covering the brick which was in place at the latest by 1912 (RCHME 1912).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by digging the drainage runs at the Church. The aims of the archaeological works for the works was:

- to minimize the impact of groundworks on any surviving remains of the earlier church;
- to determine the extent to which human remains survive in excavated areas, and generally observe the presence of burial vaults and graves; and
- to signal, before further groundworks proceed, the discovery and height of archaeological structural elements that could not be lifted or removed, record and identified the need for further action, if required.

All human remains that were disturbed by the works were to be examined and retained on site for reburial; human remains that were uncovered and deemed to be in situ would be recorded but not lifted. Marked gravestones and associated burials were to carefully avoided, to minimize unnecessary disturbance or damage. Existing drains were to be jet washed or rodded prior to excavation from existing access points, and excavation of the French drain was undertaken by small mini-digger after consultation with the architect to assess ground conditions.

## **Results**

### *Exploratory trenches*

Excavations began in the north-west Churchyard, looking to locate the existing drain leading out to the north west. Five exploratory trenches were excavated, most between 1.5m to 3m long and between 0.6m and 1m wide, dug to a depth between 0.5m and 0.8m. They traced the line of the existing storm water drainage pipe (Fig 2: 3 ,

4 and 5) that lead to an existing soakaway outside the Churchyard. No human remains were identified during these excavations. A small trial hole (3) excavated to a depth of 0.8m to the north-west of the tower located the junction of the existing pipe as it turned eastwards towards the northern church path. Excavation just to the north of the boiler room (2 and pipe trench) on the north side of the Church for the new junction in the existing pipe, created a run to a new trench dug around the exterior of the Church. The trench was dug to a depth of 0.65m. The trench between here and linking to the north-west corner of the north aisle was excavated and this found scraps of disarticulated human bone, and a single piece of ceramic floor tile.

### *New manhole trench*

A new manhole (1), was excavated, 1.2m by 2m, and 0.8m deep, adjacent to the location of Test Pit 1 from the 2017 works (Mundin 2017). More disarticulated human bone was recovered from overburden deposits here, no deeper than 0.45m. The remaining excavation for the manhole was dug through natural clay to 0.9m.

The overlying brick of the previous drainage trough included purple-grey bricks, stamped. The centre of the trough contained a drainage trap beneath and glazed ceramic pipe linking the to the main drainage just to the north. These were stamps marked 'Jubilee', 'Diamond Jubilee' or '1837 – 1897 Diamond Jubilee' (Pl. 1). This was in reference to Queen Victoria's 60th anniversary as Queen of England. These bricks must have been laid during the early 1900's restoration works under Rector T. J. Williams. They may also indicate the last time the drainage improvement occurred at the Church and was associated with the Victorian refurbishment.

### *New drainage trench*

The excavation of the new drainage trench exterior to the Church was a maximum of 0.6m wide and 0.6m deep. During excavation, against the north aisle in a trench only 0.4m wide as it was excavated by hand, fragments of human bone were found no deeper than 0.45m, within the graveyard made ground. The amount of bone was not in any great concentrations. None was deemed to be from *in situ* grave deposits. The red, and occasional grey, brick fronting contained a drainage channel at the base of the foundation, no deeper than 0.6m. Excavation continued exposing the brick front to the north aisle foundation which linked to land drainage on the north-west corner. This brickwork sat in front of the original stone foundation and its existence had been identified during the 2017 archaeological test pits. A sample of this red brick shows it to have a shallow frog and likely to be late 18th-century in date. This would mean it pre-dates, and is not at all associated with, the Victorian drainage trough. A single sherd of Post-Medieval, glazed earthenware pottery seems to reinforce this interpretation or at

least for its construction as it was found directly underneath a brick taken from the structure on the south aisle. All the buttresses on the north aisle had broken up this brick structure and it was strange to observe different types of construction to the foundations. This suggests these were built at different times from the 15th century onwards. The buttresses themselves were also built to various depths away from the aisle wall furthering evidence suggesting differing construction date.

Once the excavation of the trench reached the north wall of the Chancel, the brick facing continued. Around the base of the wall, 0.35m above foundation level, there was a 0.23m short-chamfered step also on the north-east buttress, representing the first stage. This buttress, at its base was angled to the corner and was 1.78m long. The brickwork was set into the foundation of the NE joint of the buttress to the north Chancel wall. The buttress was a later addition to the 14th-century east Chancel wall. Most of the windows on the north side had been modified in the later 19th century, either completely, with two new lancet windows, or with the older window to the north-west, which has the bottom pane filled in and was also heavily repaired. This window seems to have older origins than others seen on the Chancel (14th century), though heavily restored, and loosely matching the very restored Gothic window in the south-west Chancel. The windows to the north-east and south-east are in Perpendicular style (15th century).

On the south side of this buttress, mortared stone coursing of a lower foundation was uncovered (Wall 150; Pl. 2), at the base of excavation at 0.58m and representing the top of a foundation course that had previously been retained. No construction cut for this wall was visible. The stone of the lower foundation covered the width of the trenches, 0.65m wide. The top of the foundation was at a depth of 0.59m. At the point where the trench turned to front of the east Chancel wall, an eastern edge of a lower foundation was located. The construction of this wall and the buttress seems contemporary. The limestone, and light-yellow mortar bonding it were distinctly different from the rubble construction of the 14th-century foundation above. No datable finds were recovered from the excavated soil over the wall. The turf and topsoil overlay homogeneous limestone rubble and chalk silt overburden to a depth of 0.54m to the top of the mortared wall. Two fragmentary pieces of human bone were recovered from the overburden.

Compacted, chalk-bonded, rounded limestone and rounded chalk rubble surrounded the south-east Chancel buttress foundation, with a high proportion of chalky limestone surrounding/supporting the existing buttress foundation. It seemed to be compact enough to assume it gives structural stability to this corner of a 15th-century rebuild of the south-east Chancel. It was decided, after consultation with the architect, that it was best not to remove more than the 0.33m deep material that had already started to be removed. The step of the existing 15th-



century foundation, linking into the construction of the buttress, was observed at a shallow depth below ground level, stepping out 0.38m from the wall. This supported the wall above, along the south-east of the Chancel and ran under the later 18th-century buttress to the right of the south Chancel doorway. The wall of the Chancel here is also thicker than the earlier wall, protruding 0.25m into the interior. This step on the Chancel foundation is consistent at 0.45m, taken in addition to the chamfered step to create an overall step of 0.68m. The earlier foundation contained no such step, which was exposed on the SW side of the Chancel. No underlying, earlier mortared masonry was located, even at a depth of 0.6m. Under the 15th-century stepped foundation, at 0.68m deep there was an underlying south mortared foundation, with the southern facing edge visible and positioned slightly skewed to the other (Pl. 4). It is likely a contemporary of the east wall (150). The southern edge is 0.51m from the exterior wall near the buttress but 0.58m from the wall near the east side of the south door buttress. The top and the south edge of the stone were only exposed at the base of the trench at 0.68m. The stone was mostly sub-angular and mortared, though the greater thickness of this was under the later foundation.

During excavation to the east of the south aisle, the brick trough contained stamped bricks like these to the north. These were stamped 'Hamblet' (Pl. 1), which was an active brick maker between 1883-1915 suggesting a similar date for this drain as the northern one, *c.* 1900. Two courses of red brick fronted the foundation, though the two recorded courses were partial, broken in places and with poorer construction than the north drain. The land drain adjoining the wall at 0.65m was at the corner where the chancel and nave join. The reason there were only two courses was likely due to the fact that the brickwork was constructed on top of a stone step of the original stone foundation, at 0.35m deep. This construction had also been observed and dismantled in Test Pit 2 of the 2017 investigation. It may have been laid initially to attempt to drain the ground next to the wall, but with negligible effect as the scheme would just retain wetness trapped behind the original foundation.

Much of the south aisle wall was likely to have been a rebuild of an earlier construction, once it was extended to the west and east after the 14th century. The brick fronting, as in the north, is 18th/early 19th century construction, based on the shallow frogged handmade bricks used, and the fact it was linked into land drainage, and not a glazed ceramic drainage system. The brickwork was also disturbed by the later construction or rebuilding of the buttress, as it had been on the north aisle.

An original construction date of most of the other buttresses, unlike those on the Chancel corners (15th century), is assumed to be relatively recent, early 19th century or later. Under the buttress adjacent to the south porch, a large piece of masonry was located (Wall 151; Pl. 3), 0.85m wide and extending to the south the width of the pipe trench 0.6m. The top of the surviving stone structure was 0.37m deep, with a single course of large

sub-rounded stone blocks making up the only visible face of the wall. It is likely to extend lower than the bottom of the excavated pipe trench (0.6m). It was not as wide as the upper foundation for the existing buttress and it is not obvious to what period of construction this work should be attributed. Investigation of this feature during the interior works may offer a chance to identify how it relates to the south aisle. On excavation of the trench to both sides of the south porch, the top surviving foundation of the 15th-century structure was located under the upper, rubble foundation of the 20th-century one, at a depth of 0.44m. The stones of this foundation had an 'ashlar' face to the exposed west face. The foundation was offset eastward 0.28m to the west of the overlying foundation and westwards, 0.22m to the east on its eastern side. The 1902 rebuild, therefore, was a like-for-like scale replacement. The brick fronting continued, fronting the south-west foundation and the re-excavation of Test Pit 2 from the 2017 works marked the end of the drainage run.

## **Finds**

A small collection of disarticulated human bone was recovered from the excavation. Much of it was from mixed overburden deposits and represents broken or partial pieces. A single copper-alloy button of 19th-century date was also found. Much of the disarticulated bone was found in the soil near the north door. The only location where probable articulated remains were located (parts from the top of a skull), was east of the south aisle at a depth of 0.5m. The bone was recovered from the east section of the trench towards the base of excavation. Further remains from this location were not present due to disturbance of the ground to the east by a perpendicular drainage run as well as earlier field drainage from the north-west. All bone remains were retained at the Church for re- interment.

A few pieces of ferrous metal were recovered, mostly nails, though one was a latch. Three sherds of porcelain pottery of late 19th- or 20th-century date were also noted. To the south of the Church, two sherds of pottery of some interest were recovered. One piece, at a depth of 0.45m was a sherd of green-yellow glazed ware from local Buckinghamshire Medieval manufacture. The glazed sherd is distinctive of vessels from this part of the County which would have supplied nearby monastic houses from the 12th century onwards, with pitchers particularly common (Farley and Hurman 2015, 162). The likely source would be the Brill industry in the 14th century, and a single sherd of unglazed, dark-grey Medieval ware, again from Brill, is likely of earlier date, found at a depth of 0.32m deep.

One piece of patterned floor tile, likely a corner piece of a Buckinghamshire 'Penn' tile (c.1350-80) (Taylor-Moore 2010, 173) was recovered from the spoil heap from the excavation of the service trench north of

the boiler house. Similar tiles are common in religious buildings in the area, such as Notley Abbey and Great Missenden, and parish churches, such as Long Crendon Church and Rycote Chapel (Perkins and Williams-Hunt, 1938, 117).

All of these finds were recovered from overburden deposits no deeper than *c.*0.5m.

## **Conclusion**

The works have successfully located structural remains pre-dating the standing aspects of the south and east wall of the Chancel. This seems clearly earlier than the 14th century, as there is a clear separation in construction of the higher and lower foundations. Page (VCH 1927b) notes that, in the early 14th century, the chancel was 'completely rebuilt after the nave was lengthened eastwards by 20 feet'. The south and north aisle contained this eastern extension identified as 15th-century additions. An earlier phase of construction is also present, as reused chalk material in the ground, to consolidate the SE corner buttress of the chancel. This predates the 15th-century rebuild and may represent the early 14th-century work or even earlier. The brown sandstone used in tracery, is likely to be 14th century, though most of these windows have been modified later.

What has been found under the Chancel could be the east and south walls of a pre-1320 phase of the building (Fig. 3) and predating the building of the Chancel archway. The portions represented are associated with a likely small 12th-century chapel, rather than the alternative, a small, cruciform structure of late 12th-13th century date. The only problem with this interpretation is the similarity of length of the Chancel compared to the length of this new foundation. If the extension had happened after the 1320's, the Chancel would not have needed extending. An arched doorway to the north of the chancel arch seems to have been uncovered during the 19th century, with it not exposed to the nave. If it is, it is likely to pre-date 1320 and lend itself to a position within a west wall of a different building, with the south door stonework coming from a contemporary west end exterior doorway. The chancel arch is 14th century, and the wall it sits in has been recorded more precisely as 1320-1340 (VCH 1927b). The stoup on the south nave wall at the east end also dates to 1320 (RCHME 1912).

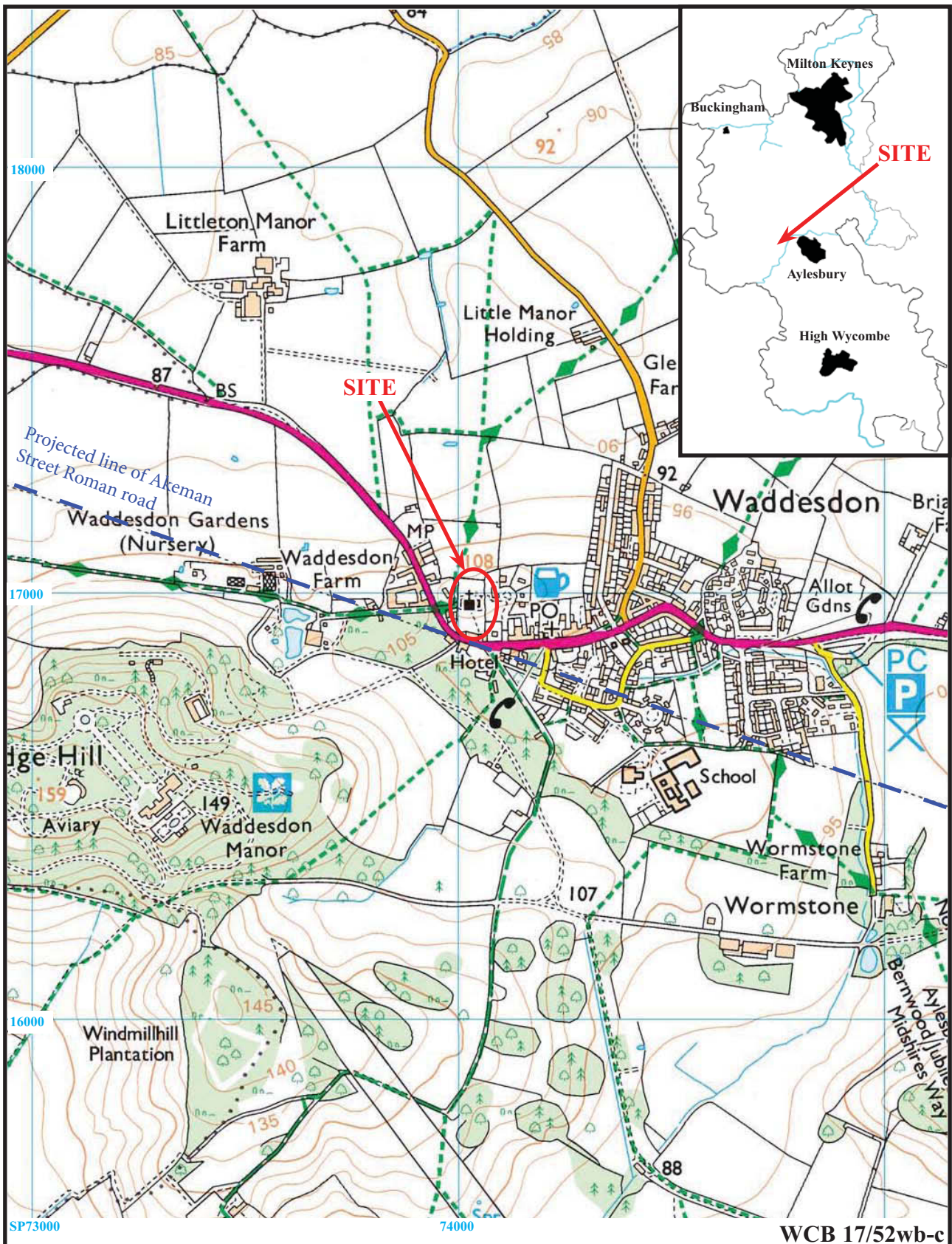
This phasing seems consistent with the primary description of the Church in the early 20th century by RCHME (1912). It furthers its interpretation with the newly uncovered foundation data. It seems more possible that decorated, but structural, stone from an earlier phase building could have been introduced in rapidly changing early 13th century construction phase of the Church. These changes seem likely to coincide with the establishment of the Prebendal next to the Church in 1229 (Lispcomb 1847). Unfortunately, a lot of the historic fabric was lost in redevelopment in the Victorian period and later, but the footprint could be based on a

seemingly interior core of Elizabethan construction (Pevsner and Williamson, 1994, 708). The involvement of the Deanery after this date saw a rapid development of the building in the 13th century, developing its size, incorporating the earlier decorated fabric and enhancing its ability to service the population over a large area.

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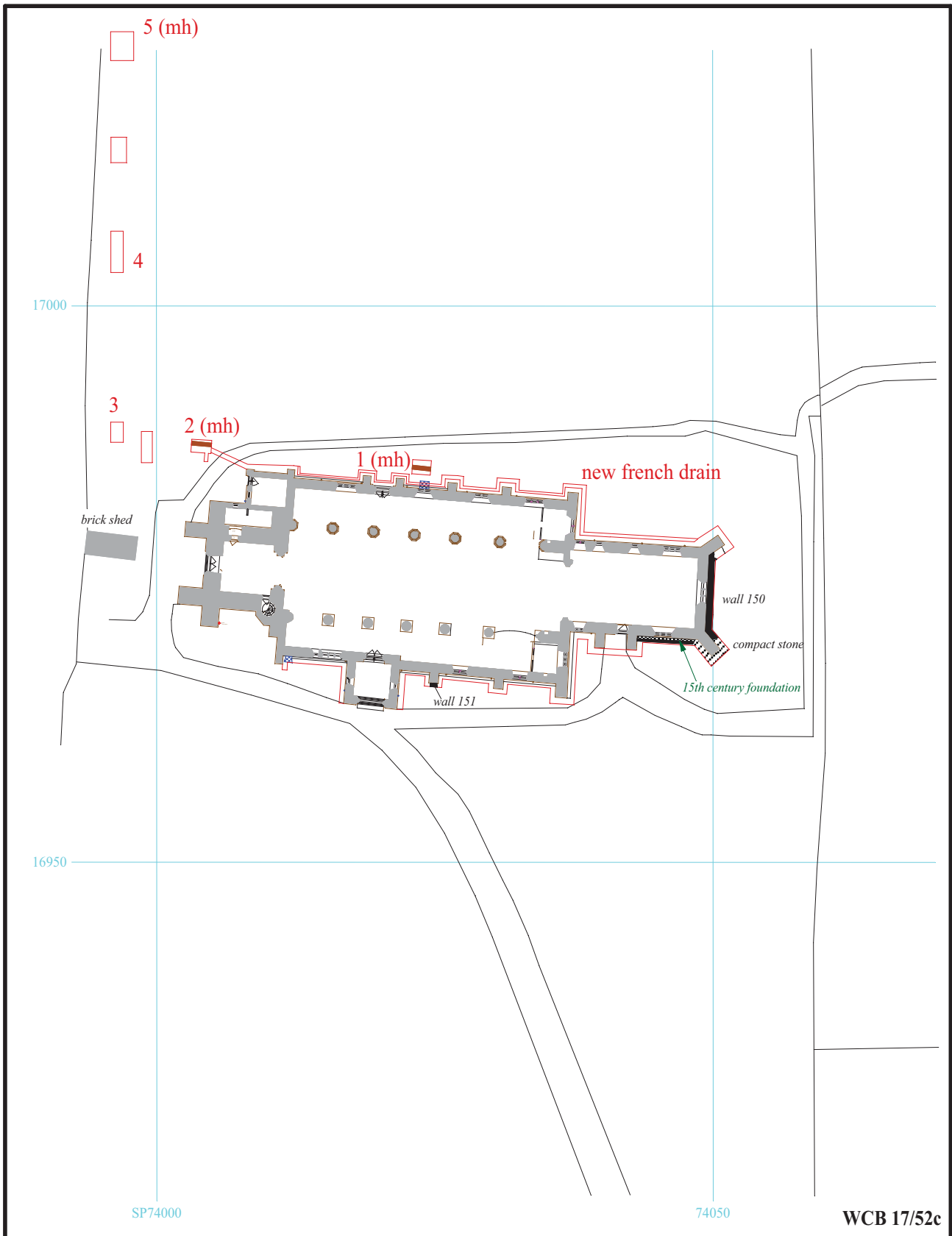




**Church of St Michael and All Angels,  
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 Figure 1. Location of site within Waddesdon and  
 Buckinghamshire.

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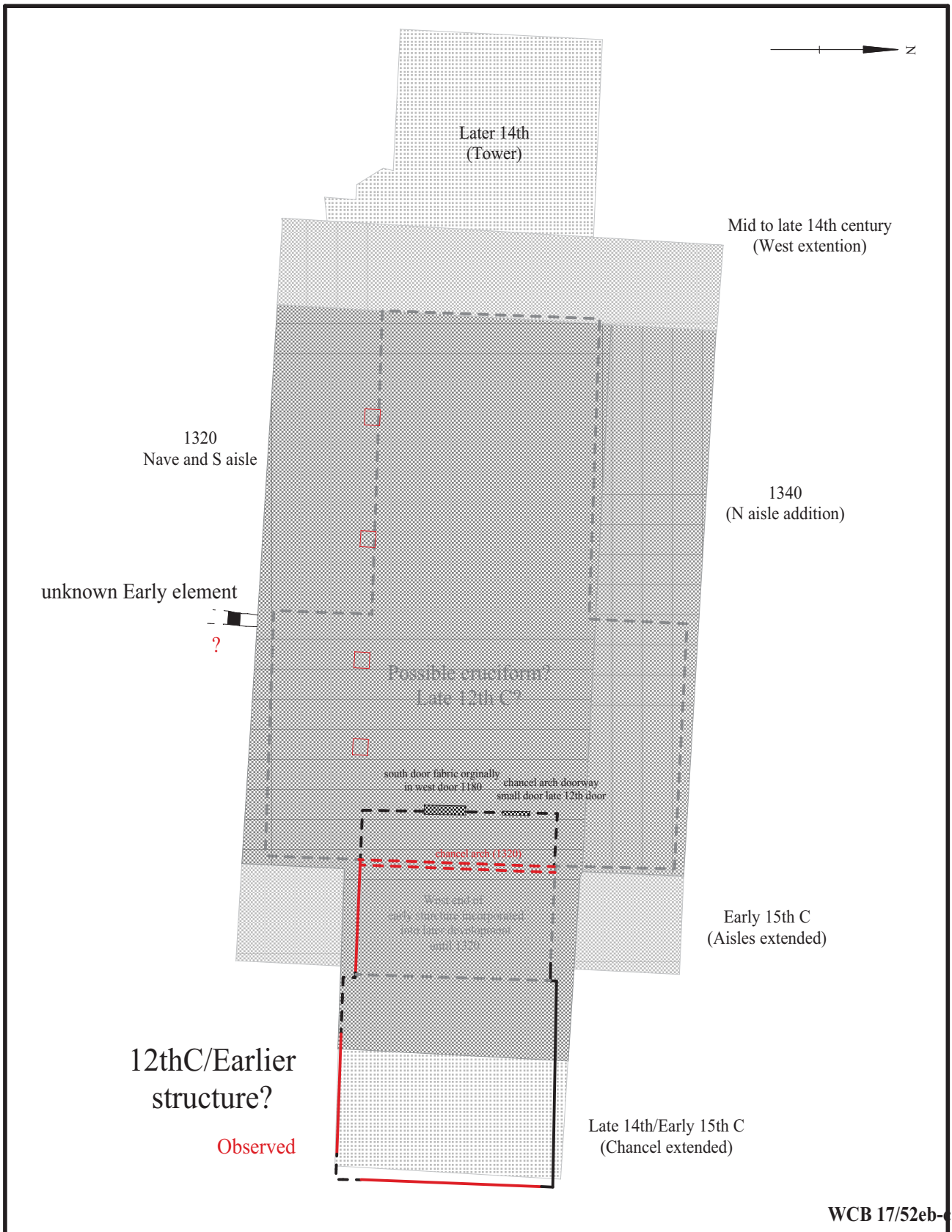


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Buckinghamshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 2. Location of observed areas.



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Buckinghamshire, 2018  
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 3. Primary interpretation of 14th century and earlier phasing.







Plate 1. Selection of stamped bricks from the Victorian drainage trough.



Plate 2. Underlying stone foundation (wall 150) to East Chancel wall, looking north,  
Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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**St. Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon,  
Buckinghamshire, 2018**  
Archaeological Watching Brief  
Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Wall 151 under south aisle buttress, looking north, Scales: 1m and 0.5m



Plate 4. The overlying 15th century foundation, with a lower foundation course beneath.

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**St. Michael and All Angels, Waddesdon,  
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Archaeological Watching Brief  
Plates 3 and 4.

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Plate 5. Medieval 'Penn' tile, recovered from the pipe trench north of the boiler room.

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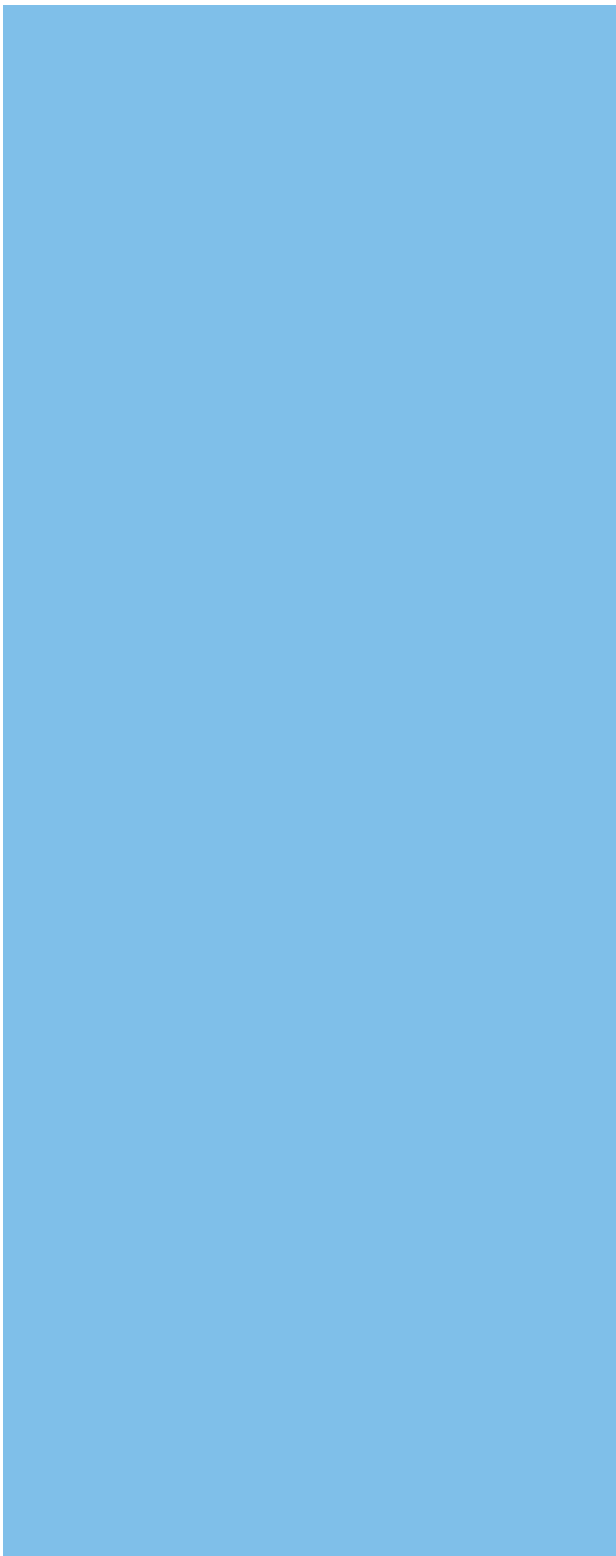
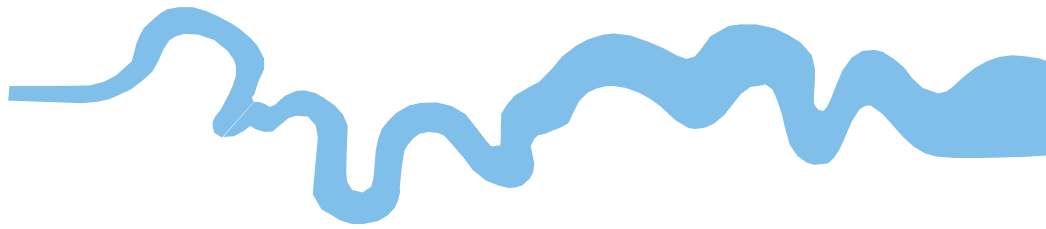
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Plates 5.

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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 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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