

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**New gas pipeline, St Thomas' Churchyard and
Lybbes Almshouses, Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Maisie Foster and Benedikt Tebbit

Site Code: TGO 19/09

(SU 5982 8071)

New gas pipeline, St Thomas' Churchyard, and Lybbes Almshouses, Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
For The Trustees of Lybbes Almshouses**

by Maisie Foster and Benedikt Tebbit
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TGO 19/09

February 2019

Summary

Site name: St Thomas' Churchyard and Lybbes Almshouse, Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5982 8071

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 8th February 2019

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Benedikt Tebbit

Site code: TGO 19/09

Summary of results: Monitoring was undertaken of the hand excavation of an 8m long linkage trench from the Almshouse to the mains gas pipe that exists in the east of the churchyard. Three features of probable archaeological origin were observed including part of a medieval tiled floor. Natural geology was not reached.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 19.02.18 Steve Preston ✓ 19.02.19
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Report 19/09

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Thomas of Canterbury's Church and Lybbes Almshouses, Goring, Oxfordshire (SU 5982 8071) (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 Trustees Lybbes' Almshouses, Woodland House, Reading Road, Goring-on-Thames, Berkshire, RG8 0LH.

A faculty (2018-026835) has been granted by the Diocese of Oxford to lay a new gas pipe from the Lybbes' Almshouses across the churchyard of St Thomas of Canterbury to link to the existing gas main. The Faculty was subject to conditions requiring archaeological observations (a watching brief) to be undertaken during the excavations. The fieldwork was undertaken by Benedikt Tebbit on 8th February 2019 and the site code is TGO 19/09.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located within the churchyard of St Thomas of Canterbury, a Grade I Listed building (1194201), which stands in the south-western part of the village of Goring-on-Thames in South Oxfordshire, with the River Thames and the county boundary with Berkshire directly to the west (Fig. 1). The churchyard is bordered to the north and east by roads and immediately adjacent to the churchyard to the south-east, but outside its boundary wall, stands the Lybbes' Almshouses, a Grade II listed building (247281; Fig. 2). The current works were within the churchyard, immediately north of the almshouses, in a grassed area clear of headstones 1.5m east of the war memorial (Fig. 3). The topography of the churchyard and Lybbes Almshouses is largely flat, at a height of *c.*45m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is recorded as Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation (BGS 2000).

Archaeological background

The potential of the site stems from its locations in the historic core of the village. First documented as ‘Garinges’ at the time of Domesday Book, the manor was held by Robert d’Oilly (Williams and Martin 2002, 434). There is also earlier Roman and Saxon evidence of settlement nearby at Gatehampton as well as its earliest prehistoric (Mesolithic) occupation.

A charter of Henry II describes a church here before 1181 with ‘a church attached to nuns in Goring’, from the benefactor, Thomas de Druval (Blair 1987, 194). The oldest structural elements of the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury may well have been existing by *c.*1135, before the monastic use was added, with its earliest elements consisting of the early 12th-century lower stages of the west tower, parts of the nave and the original apsidal form of the east chancel. This latter part would have been demolished in the 1180s for the addition of the nuns’ church to the east (VCH 1907). Exterior detail on the existing south wall shows corbels where a cloister roof adjoined (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 614). Through excavation by Percy Stone, in 1892-3, the original Norman apsidal east end was rediscovered. The dedication to St Thomas is likely to have come after the martyrdom of Thomas à Beckett soon after 1200, and was likely to have been transferred from the earlier parochial church to the later nunnery church (Alder and Carleton Williams 2014, 4). At the Dissolution, from 1536, this church and the rest of the priory building was demolished, leaving the parish church standing. The apsidal end of the church was reinstated in 1888, after its rediscovery in the excavations.

The ‘Lybbes’ Almshouses are a small pair of cottages, once a row of four, dated originally from 1768. These are located *c.*30m to the east of the church, outside the enclosure wall of the graveyard. They are brick-built, with a date-plaque on the front. Refurbished in 1967, and reduced to two properties (Alder and Carleton Williams 2014, 17), they are again being modernised.

The pipeline works thus had the potential of finding medieval deposits of the demolished priory. There is also a general potential for archaeological deposits due to the location in the historic core of Goring-on-Thames, which has potential of prehistoric dated finds to domestic deposits of Medieval and Post-Medieval date.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was:

- to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the digging of the pipe trench in both the churchyard and any extension areas;
- to examine the nature of the foundations of the church or priory, if encountered and look for any earlier structures; and

to observe the presence of any graves and vaults and remove any remains that cannot be preserved *in-situ*.

The pipe trench was excavated by hand from the southern end towards to the churchyard path. Any features observed were recorded from ground level and a representative sample of finds was bagged and removed for later identification. Spoil heaps were monitored for finds.

Results

Pipe Trench (Fig. 3)

The pipe trench was dug using a spade and trowel to a length of 8m, depth of 0.3m and width of 0.4m. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.3m of topsoil (50) which contained a mixture of modern debris, medieval tile and Victorian clay-pipe stems, overlying three features of archaeological interest (Appendix 1) at its maximum depth.

A wall foundation (2) was observed at 6.9m from the southern end of the trench. The remaining wall foundations (53) consisted of mortar with flint inclusions and appears to have been truncated by the churchyard pathway at the northern end of the pipe trench (Pl. 1).

At 1.7m from the southern end of the trench a medieval tiled and mortared surface (52) was observed 2m in length, probably set within an east-west cut (1) (Pl. 2). The tiles recovered from the topsoil probably derived from this surface but this was not conclusively demonstrable. The trench was not excavated deep enough to disturb this surface, which was left *in situ*.

A small linear gully aligned E - W was also observed (3) at 5.5m from the southern end. Measuring 0.4m in length and 0.3m in width, the possible gully was not excavated as the pipe trench did not reach a depth that would impact it.

No other finds or features of possible archaeological potential were observed, but an electrical cable was identified aligned E - W at 7.4m from the southern end of the trench.

Finds

Ceramic Building Materials by Danielle Milbank

A total of five pieces of floor tile (1916g) were recovered from deposit 50 encountered in the watching brief. These are all of a similar fabric (a hard evenly fired red clay with occasional sand inclusions and a light red colour). Three of the examples were complete. Of these, the first measures 116mm x 116mm, and 21mm thick,

with a slight bevel to the sides. The upper surface has a thin coating of a very dark brown glaze and a diagonal incised line. Wear on the surface of the tile shows it has been in use.

A second example is 121mm x 121mm, 17mm thick and has a light green glaze to part of the surface. The third complete tile has a very thin layer of glaze which is almost completely worn and any pattern present has been lost. It is possibly a bi-chrome inlaid tile with the stamped design not fully applied. These examples are of broadly medieval date.

Two partial bi-chrome inlaid tiles were recovered (Pl.3). Both pieces bear the same motif, a pair of lions rampant (Pl. 3). The similarity in pattern is close enough for them to have been produced by the same stamp. The depth of the design (1mm) suggests they are likely to have been produced by the same stamp. The motif is not represented in any of the catalogues consulted, though parallels may exist in assemblages recorded elsewhere and these pieces could potentially be the subject of further research.

Although two-colour inlaid tiles were produced from the 13th century, the method of manufacture and the motif are broadly suggestive of a 14th or 15th century date (van Lemmen 2000). Inlaid tiles of this type were produced in great quantities in the periods in Penn, Buckinghamshire but other production sites are recorded elsewhere.

Conclusion

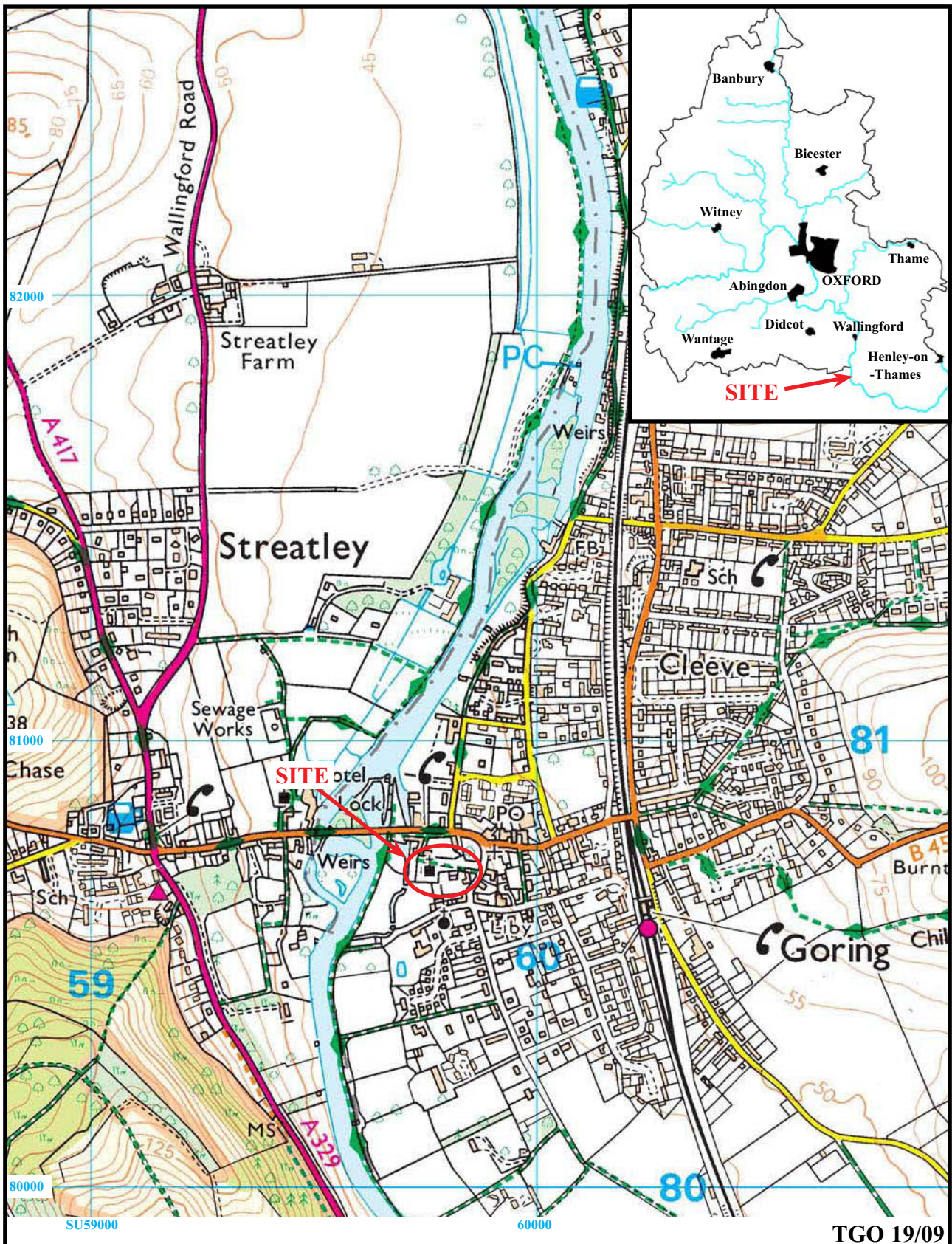
The excavation of the pipe trench was monitored in an area of clear ground north of the Lybbes' Almshouses and 1.5m east of St Thomas' war memorial. A total of three archaeological features including two structures were identified and recorded. The few finds recovered suggest a medieval date for the tiled floor surface. No human remains were disturbed.

References

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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of features observed

<i>Area</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating Evidence</i>
		50	Topsoil		
Pipe Trench	1	52	Tiled Floor	Medieval	Tile
Pipe Trench	2	53	Wall Foundation		
Pipe Trench	3	51	Gully	Unknown	

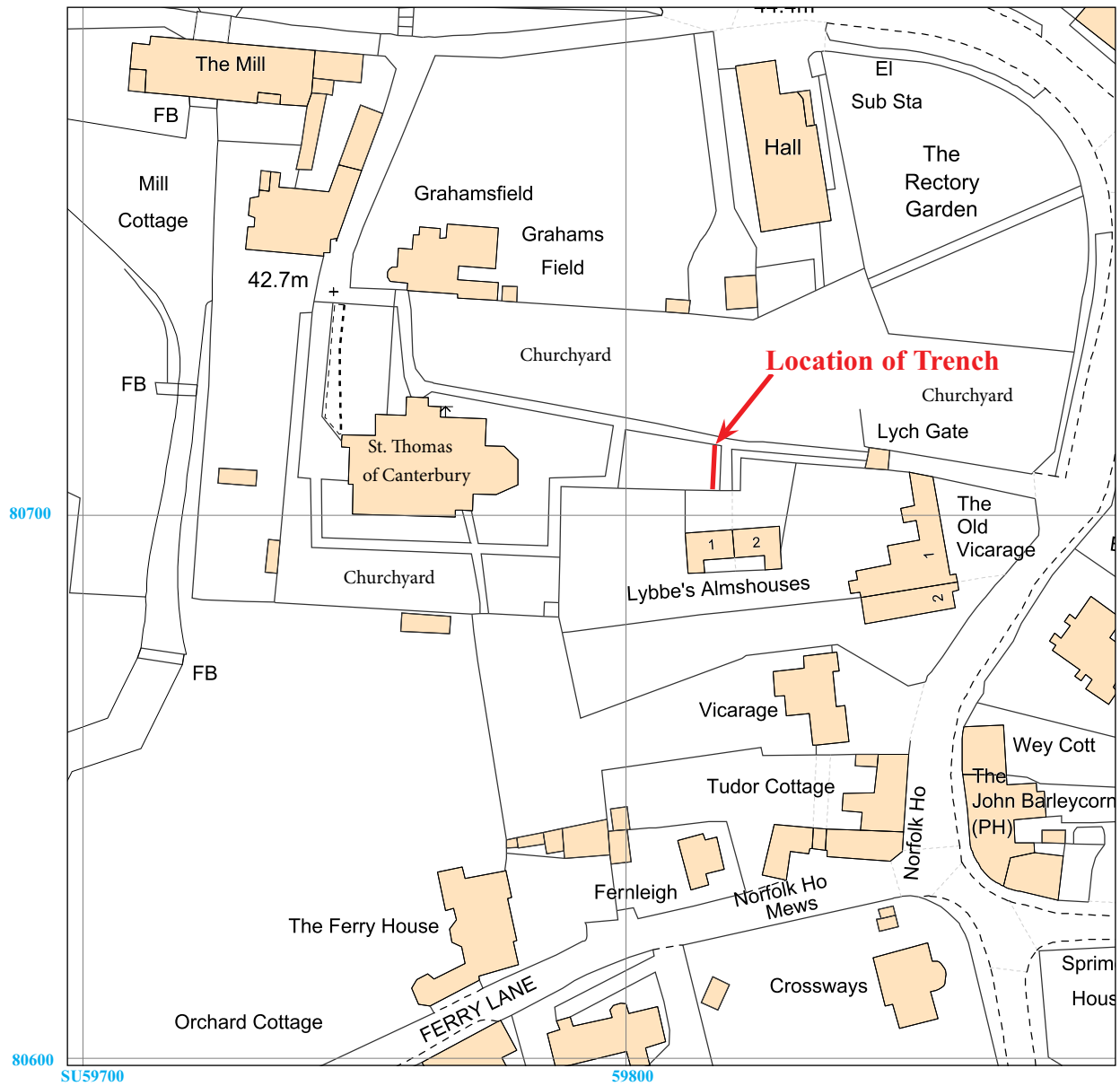


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Figure 1. Location of site within Goring and Oxfordshire.

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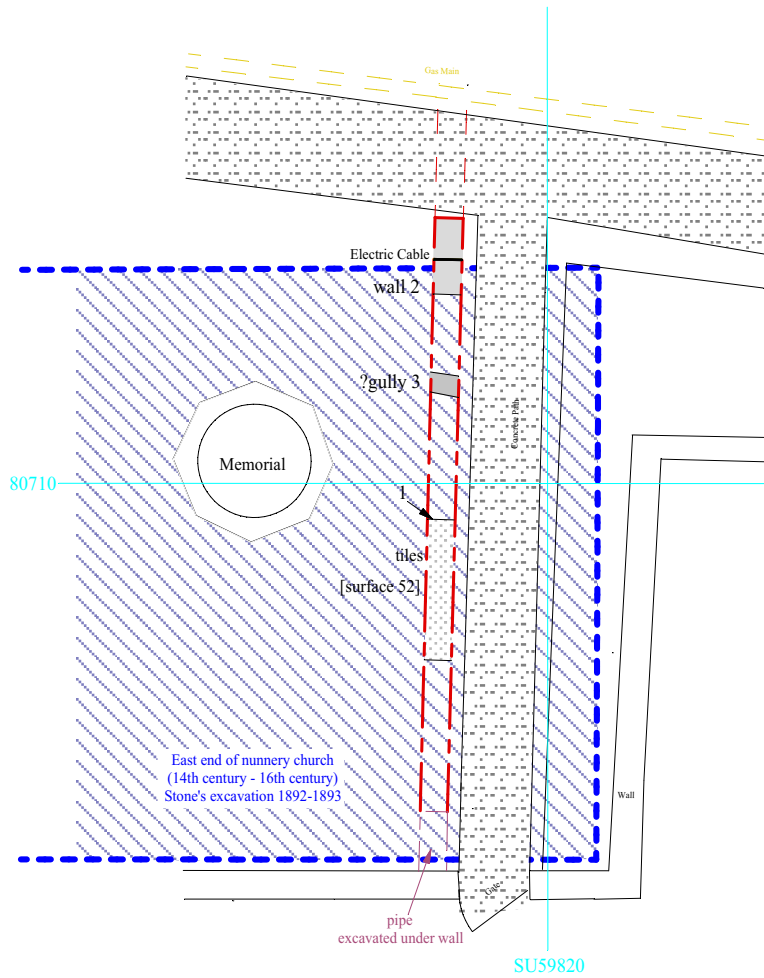
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Figure 2. Location of site within St, Thomas' Churchard, and Lybbes Almshouses.

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Figure 3. Detail of observed pipe trench crossing southeast Churchyard.



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Plate 1. Wall 2 (northern exterior wall), looking east.



Plate 2. Surface 50, looking south,
Scales: 1m.



Plate 3. Glazed floor tiles, from topsoil, Scale: 100mm.

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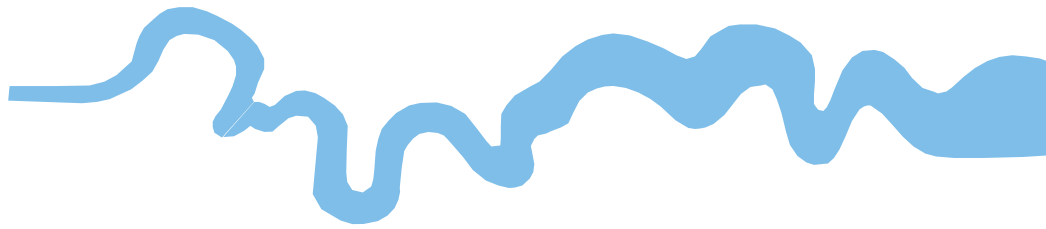
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Plates 1-3.**

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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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