

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Theale C of E Primary School,
North Street, Theale**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Joshua Hargreaves and Maisie Foster

Site Code: TST18/122

(SU 7810 7380)

Theale C of E Primary School, North Street, Theale, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Kier Construction

by Josh Hargreaves and Maisie Foster
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code TST18/222

November 2019

Summary

Site name: Theale C of E Primary School, North Street, Theale, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6378 7154

Site activity: Archaeological Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 28th March - 30th September 2019

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Josh Hargreaves, Will Attard, Pierre Manisse, Aidan Colyer, Anne-Michelle Huvig

Site code: TST 18/222

Summary of results: Ground reduction and excavated pits were observed targeting areas of soil stripping and excavation on the location of pile caps for the new school building. No archaeological deposits were revealed or features observed.

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

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www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 15.11.19 Steve Preston ✓ 15.11.19

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Report 18/222

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Theale Church of England Primary School, North Street, Theale, West Berkshire (SU 6377 7152) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Peter Stephens, of Hunters Architects (South), Corn Exchange, Baffins Lane, Chichester, P019 1BF on behalf of Kier Construction, 1410 Arlington Business Park, Theale, RG7 4SA.

Planning consent (app 16/00724/COMIND) has been granted by West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new primary school, with associated landscaping. The planning consent is subject to a condition (18) relating to archaeology, which requires a watching brief to be carried out during the early phases of development, specifically the stripping of overburden deposits and/or the excavation of pile caps. This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) and West Berkshire Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Senior Archaeologist for West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Will Attard, Aidan Colyer, Josh Hargreaves, Pierre -Damien Manisse and Anne-Michelle Huvig between 28th March and 30th September 2019. The site code is TST 18/222.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum (Newbury) in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located in a land parcel bordered to the south by the Englefield Road, to the west by North Street and the north by the access to Theale Golf Club (Fig. 2). The site is a relatively flat, grassed parcel of land and used to be the western most part of the parish playing fields. The site lies at a height of *c.* 44m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is mapped as Beenham Grange Gravel Member (BGS 2000), a terrace of the River Kennet.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Kennet Valley (Lobb and Rose 1996; Dils and Yates 2013). The site lies close to areas containing extensive cropmarks forming

linear enclosures, and possible isolated areas of curvilinear features (Gates 1975, map 10). Roman and Medieval settlement deposits to the north have been found during archaeological works on the Theale to Bradfield pipeline (Raymond 1997). Geophysical survey and archaeological monitoring was undertaken on the western side of the land parcel during these works, but nothing of archaeological interest was recorded.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks for the new development. This included monitoring the excavation of footing trenches, ground level reduction and foundation trenching. All trenching and ground level reduction was undertaken with a small 360⁰ type excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. Spoil heaps were monitored frequently for archaeological material and metal detectors were used to enhance the recovery of metal finds.

Results

The invasive groundworks observed comprised the stripping for a new access road, and trench digging for footing trenches and foundations for a septic tank (Fig. 2).

Access Road

The area being prepared for the new access road was only reduced by 0.35m onto a dark grey brown sandy silty subsoil with frequent gravel inclusions (Pl. 1). As the trench did not reach the archaeologically relevant horizon, no features or deposits of interest were noted and the only finds in the topsoil or subsoil were two 19th-century coins.

Footings and Foundation Trenches

A total of 84 footing trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision (Fig. 3) The trenches were all c. 1.5m x 1.5m with occasional small variations, except trench 83 which was 4.3m x 1.3m, and typically went to a depth of 1.1–1.3m. The topsoil was removed from this entire area, revealing a 0.4m thick deposit of made ground overlying the remaining subsoil (Fig. 4 and Pl. 2). Natural geology was observed at a varied depth between 0.5m and 0.8m in all trenches, and consisted of sandy mid brownish yellow flint gravel with occasional bands of grey gravel.

Septic tank

A foundation trench for a septic tank was excavated in the south eastern corner of the site, measuring c. 8m x 5m. The stratigraphy matched what had been observed in the footing trenches with the natural geology being recorded at a depth of 0.6m. The natural geology in this foundation trench was a mid grey silty gravel, a change in the natural geology was recorded.

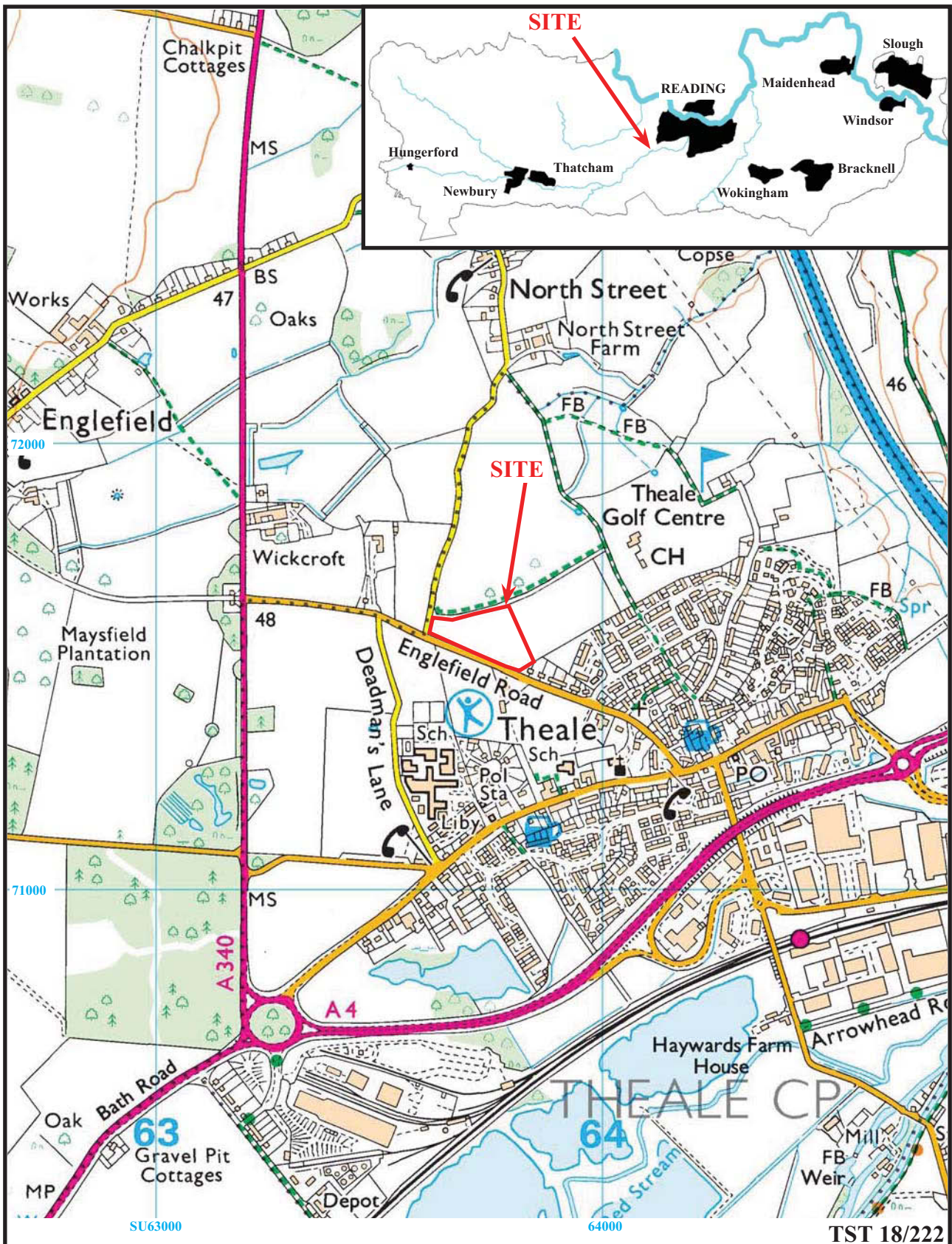
No deposits of archaeological interest were noted and no finds earlier than the 19th century were recovered in any areas during the watching brief.

Conclusion

Despite the potential for archaeological remains to be present on this site, no deposits or finds of any archaeological interest were observed during the course of the watching brief.

References

- BGS, 2000, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
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- Lobb, S J and Rose, P G, 1996, *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire*, Wessex Archaeol Rep 9, Salisbury
- Raymond, F, 1997, 'The investigation of Roman and medieval settlements found during the construction of the Theale to Bradfield pipeline, *Berkshire Archaeol J* 75 (for 1994–7), 41–73



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Figure 1. Location of site within Theale and Berkshire.

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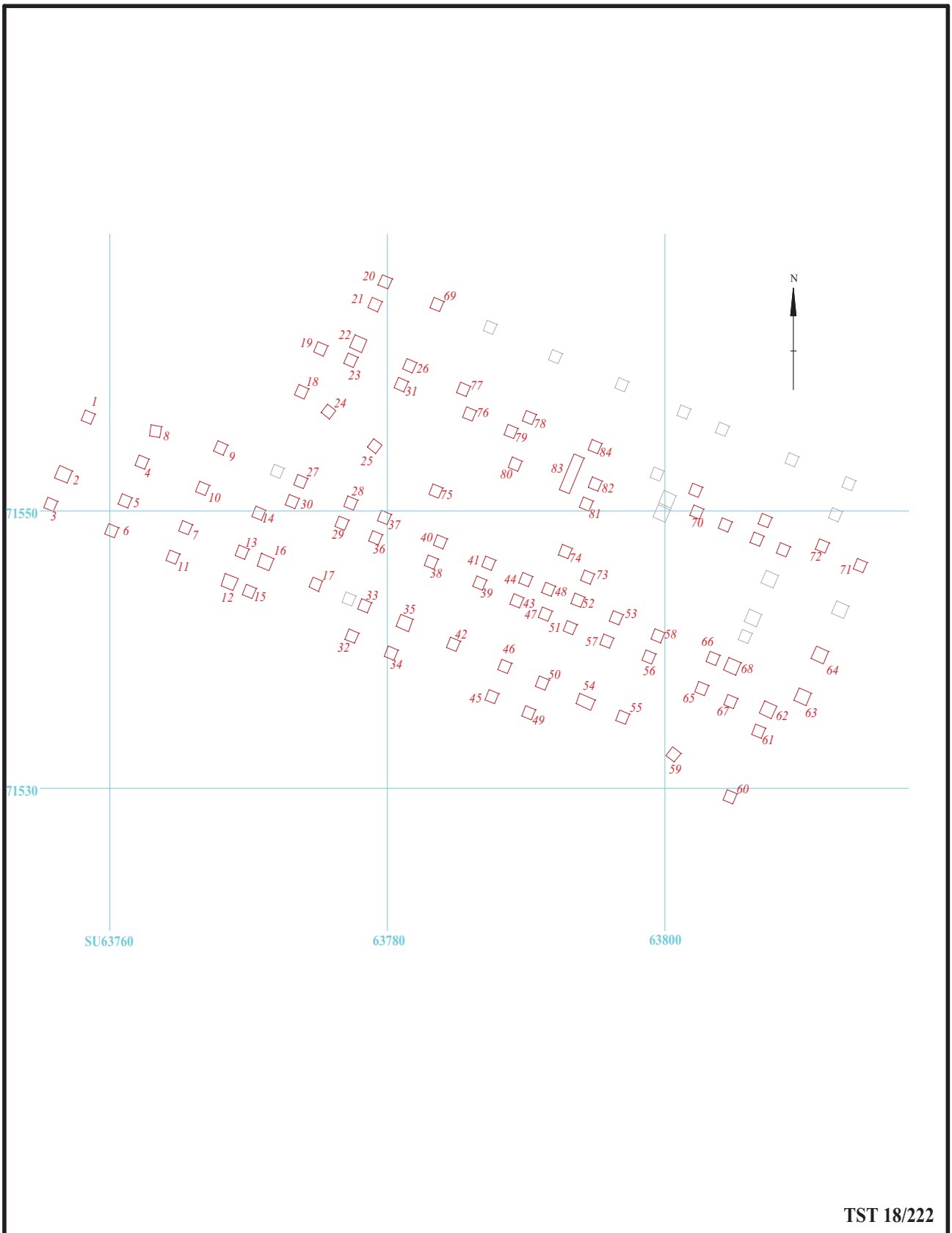
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Figure 2. Plan of site.



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Figure 3. Detail of pile caps.



SE

NW

44maOD

Modern crush-piling mat (made ground)

Pale yellow brown silty clay (susboil)

Reddish brown gravel (natural geology)

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Figure 4. Pile cap sections.



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Plate 1. Access strip (topsoil only), looking north east.



Plate 2. Pile cap 80, looking south east, Scales: 1m.

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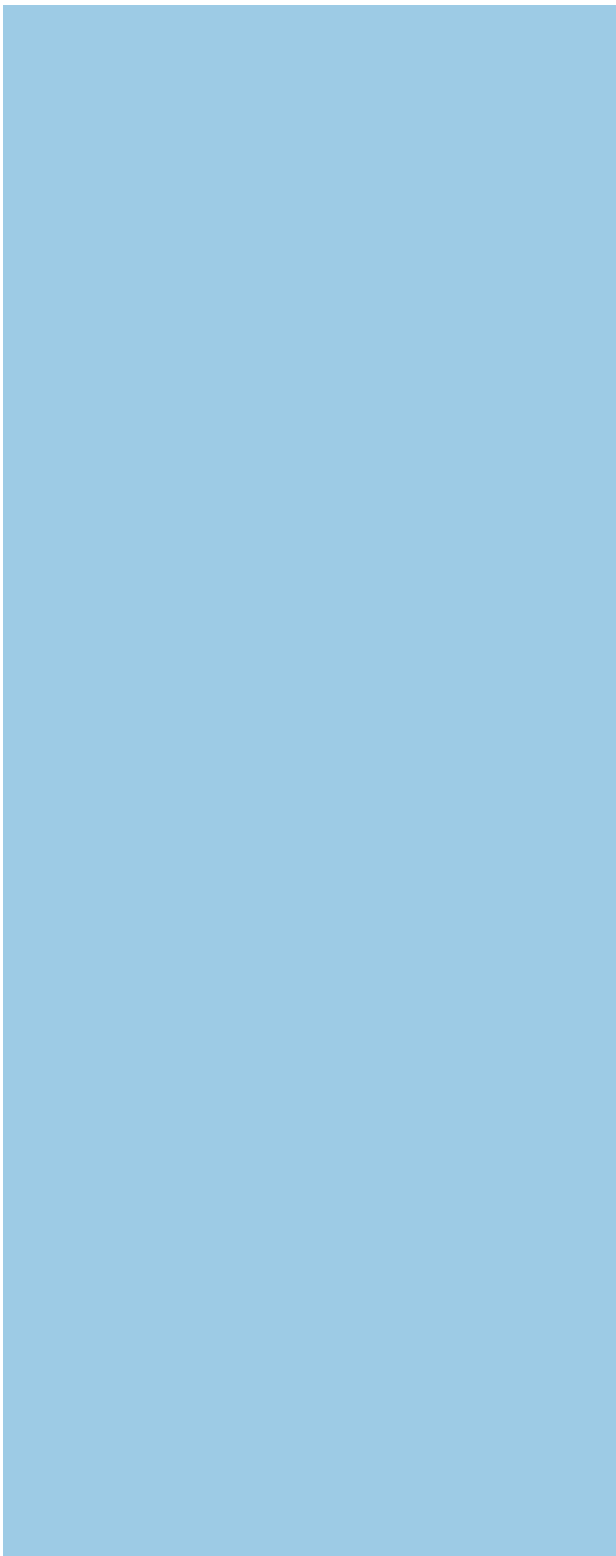
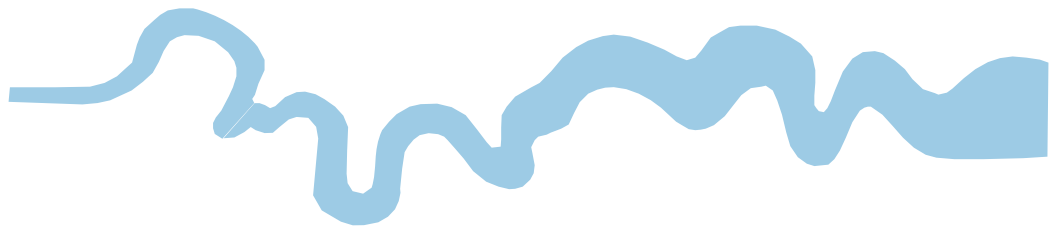
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Plates 1 and 2.**

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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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