

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**S E R V I C E S**

**Chantry House, Hill Green, Leckhampstead,  
West Berkshire**

**Archaeological Recording Action**

**by Will Attard**

**Site Code: CHL20/36**

**(SU 4493 7598)**

**Chantry House, Hill Green, Leckhampstead,  
West Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Recording Action**

**for Mr and Mrs Esam**

by Will Attard

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code CHL 20/36

**November 2020**

## Summary

**Site name:** Chantry House, Hill Green, Leckhampstead, West Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 4493 7598

**Site activity:** Archaeological recording action; watching brief & building recording

**Date and duration of project:** 23-26th March 2020

**Project coordinator:** Danielle Milbank

**Site supervisors:** Will Attard

**Site code:** CHL 20/36ra

**Summary of results:** Monitoring of groundworks revealed deposits and features of Medieval, early post-Medieval & Modern date.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with a local museum service willing to accept archive material in due course.

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 30.10.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 30.10.20

# Chantry House, Leckhampstead, West Berkshire An Archaeological Recording Action

by Will Attard

**Report 20/36**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological recording action carried out at Chantry House, Hill Green, Leckhampstead, West Berkshire (SU 4493 7598). The work was commissioned by Ms Sharon Brentnall, Partner at Bluestone Planning, Consultants, Suite 5, Enterprise Centre, Building 41-42, Shrivenham 100 Business Park, Major's Road, Watchfield, Oxfordshire, SN6 8TZ, on behalf of their client, Mr and Mrs Esam.

Planning consent (19/01327/HOUSE & 19/01327/LBC2) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the demolition of an outbuilding and the extension of the extant house, including above-ground works and the installation of a basement. On arrival on site, it was established that plans for the basement have now been abandoned, but that invasive groundworks would still be taking place in order to lay a concrete pad for the new extension. As such, the same footprint was implicated in terms of archaeological monitoring and potential damage to archaeology.

These works were undertaken in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2019), and the 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 supervised by Will Attard between 23rd and 26th March 2020 and the site code is CHL 20/36.

Building recording of the extant building (Chantry House; formerly Chapel Farm House) has already taken place and a report produced (JPH 2018). Additional recording was undertaken, as part of the recording action, in order to properly document new modifications to Chantry House, and to provide a photographic record of elements of the building revealed during groundworks.

The archive is currently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading, and will be deposited with a West Berkshire Museum, Newbury in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located approximately 1km east of the village of Leckhampstead on the Berkshire Downs (Fig. 1). The natural geology is recorded as Clay with Flints (superficial) and Seaford Chalk Formation (bedrock) deposits. Modern landscaping work on the property has produced a large number (>20) of sizeable sarsen stones (>1.5m x 1m). The area monitored during this component of work extends from the south-west facing edge of the extant house on a north-east/south-west alignment. It occupies an area formerly used as a driveway (Tarmac and gravel) and a portion of the lawn. Both the driveway and the lawn were reported by the groundworks manager to have been modified within the last five years, including the addition of topsoil to raise the level of the lawn and groundworks to a depth of approx. 0.50m to stabilise and level part of the area of the driveway.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems primarily from its location on the archaeologically rich Berkshire downs. Many sites and landscape features have been recorded in this area from the air and through fieldwalking (Richards 1978). Leckhampstead itself has Late Saxon origins and is documented in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002), importantly described as a tithing attached to Chieveley (VCH 1924). Of particular significance for this project is the documented presence of a demolished chapel, *c.*50m from the site. The chapel was demolished in 1859, when a new church (St. James) built elsewhere in Leckhampstead. The historic parish church is usually considered to lie close to the core of a settlement, and thus has potential for this recording action to reveal evidence of settlement associated with this structure. There was also the potential to encounter associated burials and human remains. The current dwelling (Chantry House; formerly Chapel House Farm) is thought to have early 16th century origins and is Grade II listed. Building recording of the extant building has taken place and a report produced (JPH 2018).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of this recording action was to monitor all invasive groundworks and modifications to the extant dwelling at Chantry House ahead of the construction of the proposed extension. All archaeological features were to be excavated and recorded, with samples taken where appropriate. All stripping of overburden was undertaken

with an 8 tonne 360-type excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machine work was conducted under continuous archaeological supervision.

The specific aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present
- to determine if elements of late Saxon/early Medieval settlement are present
- to determine if the site was used as a late Saxon/early Medieval burial ground
- to determine if there are surviving late Saxon/early Medieval farm features
- to determine if there are surviving farm features contemporary with the earliest phases of the current farmhouse

## **Results**

The monitoring of the area was carried out successfully and several features were exposed, including modern truncations and a scattering of in-situ medieval deposits.

### *Cistern*

A large brick structure (51) was partially exposed in the eastern part of site next to the house itself (Figs 3 and 4; Pl.4). The structure was in a circular cut (1), measuring 3.7m in diameter as exposed. At the time of excavation the structure was in use as a water tank, fed in part by a modern water pipe and tap. It was constructed of salt-glazed bricks, rendered on the inside to make it watertight. The bricks are laid to a stretcher bond forming a gently domed top, with a central hole measuring 0.65m diameter. As mentioned, the structure was in use as a water tank or cistern at the time of excavation, though the size is suggestive of an ice house. The earliest examples of these are of mid-17th century date, usually attached to high status households as a means of supplying preserved ice throughout the summer, and this example appears to be of later, possibly late 18th or early 19th century date. It is worth noting, though, that due to the rendering of the interior it was not possible to identify any means of access to the theorised ice house and a cistern seems a more likely interpretation.

### *Extension Area Strip (Figs 3 and 4)*

The extension area strip was reduced in two episodes approximating to 0.3 and 0.6m depths.

### *Upper*

Initially, two spreads were revealed within the watching brief area Spread (53) consisted of a dark grey-brown sandy silt in the north-eastern corner of the site. It measured 3.8m by 3.5m, truncated in the south by the cistern cut [1]. A maximum thickness of 0.2m was observed. Animal bone, brick/tile, pottery and flint facing flakes were recovered from this deposit. It is located very close to the flint-faced portion of the current dwelling, which is thought to be of medieval date. Pottery from spread (53) suggests a late Medieval 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century date, and ceramic tile recovered supports a late medieval date.

Underlying spread (53) was a dark grey-yellow sandy clay deposit (54). This spread continued beyond the watching brief area in the north and south, and extended approximately 10.3m west from the standing wall of Chantry House. A maximum thickness of 0.30m was observed in a small test pit dug just to the south-west of the cut for the brick water tank (Fig. 3). Brick/tile and pottery recovered from (54) suggests an earlier date of 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century for this deposit.

A series of intercutting truncations (cuts [3-5] and other cuts [2,8]) (Fig. 3) were investigated due to the presence of medieval material, but finds of frequent china and modern brick dated these features as modern. Re-deposited earlier ceramics were recovered from [3], and dated to the 15th-17th century. This cluster of truncations cut through medieval spread (54), and were located to the south-west of spread (53).

### *Lower*

A ditch was revealed underlying spread (54), truncated in the south-west by modern disturbance, and terminating within the area of excavation. This feature was investigated in a single slot targeting the terminal [7] (Figs. 4 and 5; Pl. 2). It measured 0.91m in width, with a depth of 0.21m (Fig. 5). It contained a single fill of dark grey-brown clay silt (59). The feature had gently sloping sides and a slightly concave base. No finds were recovered, but as ditch [7] underlies spread (54) it can be assigned a broad date of earlier than 12th-13th Century.

During the groundworks, the water pipe feeding brick water tank [1] was breached, and the subsequent flow of water revealed a portion of possible wall foundation [6] roughly aligned with the southern limit of excavation, and extending outwards from the extant wall of Chantry House and mostly lying beyond the extension area. The feature appeared to consist of degraded chalk and large, un-worked flint nodules. Due to flooding it was not possible to fully investigate, but it was observed that it underlay deposit (54) (Fig 4). This possible feature lay just outside the area of the proposed extension, and no finds were recovered.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Sue Anderson*

Five sherds (81g) were collected from two contexts during the fieldwork.

Quantification was carried out using sherd count, weight, estimated vessel equivalent (eve) and minimum number of vessels (MNV). Fabric codes were assigned from the author's fabric series (unpub.), based on descriptions of pottery from Newbury (Vince 1997) and elsewhere (e.g. Pearce and Vince 1988). Methods follow MPRG recommendations (MPRG 2001) and form terminology follows MPRG (1998). The results were input directly onto an Access database, which forms the archive catalogue.

#### The assemblage

The five sherds were all in different fabrics, all of broadly local and regional origin.

From (53) there was a green-glazed body sherd of Minety-type (NW Wiltshire) ware, and an unglazed body fragment of Coarse Border ware (Surrey whiteware), suggesting a date for this context of 14th/15th-century.

Context (54) contained a large fragment of base from a Cotswold-type limestone-tempered cooking pot, a small body sherd with abundant limestone/chalk tempering (possibly equivalent to Vince's Fabric 41 or 51 from Newbury), and a jar rim in Kennet Valley/Newbury A flint- and sand-tempered fabric. The latter is comparable with several jar rims in Fabric 3 from Newbury (e.g. Vince 1997, nos 16, 17, 35, 47). However, unlike Vince's Newbury A group, this vessel appears to be wheelmade. The group is likely to be of mid 12th–13th-century date.

### *Ceramic Building Materials by Danielle Milbank*

A total of 69 pieces of brick and tile were recovered in the course of the recording action, all hand collected and in fairly poor, fragmented condition. They were examined under x10 magnification and are summarised in Appendix 2.

Truncation 2 (52) contained a range of tile pieces in a typically medium hard, slightly rough clay with occasional fine sandy inclusions and a sandy base, with strawmarks present on several examples. One piece has a reduced (grey) core while overall they are a light red colour, and the thickness ranges from 10mm to 15mm. Several pieces have thickened edges and one has a peg hole present, and they are likely to be late medieval or early post-medieval in date.

Deposit (53) contained a similar range of tile pieces, 12mm to 16mm thick, with a piece of brick in a dark red, evenly-fired fabric with frequent coarse sand and occasional manganese inclusions, and a thickness of 50mm. The material is of broadly late medieval to early post medieval date, with several of the fragments more likely to be medieval.



Deposit (54) contained two pieces each 14mm thick, with a slightly uneven finish and thickened edges, with occasional coarse sandy inclusions, and a broadly late medieval to early post medieval date.

Truncation 3 (55) contained a range of pieces including examples ranging from 9mm thick to 15mm, with thickened edges. One example appears to represent a piece of floor tile, in a sandy fabric with a pale red colour and reduced grey core. It is 25mm thick, with smooth edges angled slightly inwards towards the base. The upper surface has a splashed green glaze and the cross-section shows that two slabs of clay were fired together to form the tile, with one edge with a wiped finish and one trimmed with a knife. It is likely to be of late 15th to early 17th century date and may have been used alone or in combination with stamped, decorated tiles.

The modest range of material on the site reflects the medieval and post medieval development of the site. Overall, the brick and tile material recovered in the course of the recording action can be characterised as domestic, with a narrow range of forms present. The date of the material is fairly coherent and represents the later medieval to early post-medieval period, with several medieval examples, and one example of higher status tile.

### *Animal Bone by Ceri Falys*

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from two contexts within the investigated area. Weighing 42.5g, a total of four fragments of non-human bone were present for analysis (Appendix 2). The remains were poorly preserved, as the cortical bone surfaces were eroded and the elements were each fragmented to differing degrees.

Initial analyses roughly sorted elements based on size, not by species, into one of three general size categories: “large”, “medium”, and “small”. Horse and cow are represented by the large size category, sheep/goat, deer and pigs are represented in the medium size category, and any smaller animal (e.g. dog, cat etc.) are designated to the “small” category. Wherever possible, specific identification to species and side of origin was attempted using reference to Hillson (1992). A minimum number of animal individuals present, both within and between species.

A minimum of one “large” animal was represented within the small assemblage. This individual was identified by two fragments of non-descript long bone shaft fragments in 3 (55). No further information could be retrieved from the small assemblage of poorly preserved animal bone.

## *Struck Flint* by Will Attard

A small representative sample of 6 pieces of struck flint was temporarily retained during the fieldwork. Struck flint was present in features and deposits dating to the late Medieval/post-Medieval periods, and no evidence for prehistoric flint working or other activity on site was encountered. The pieces recovered represent all stages that might be expected from on-site facing of flint blocks for use as a construction material. This is consistent with the use of flint in the walls of the oldest part of the extant dwelling.

Deposit **53** contained a significant (c. 15%) proportion of struck flint inclusions, and was located immediately adjacent to and abutting the extant flint-faced wall (Fig. 3). A mixture of discarded flint blocks and facing flakes were noted, along with small spalls, flakes and chips. The latter categories of waste flint are rarely transported far from their point of production, and their presence here is interpreted as being strongly indicative of the flints for the wall being worked on site. The presence of un-worked and 'tested' flint nodules in the modern overburden of the site supports the interpretation of on-site knapping.

All flint working appears to have taken place using a hard percussor, likely a metal hammer or large hammer stone. There is no evidence of platform preparation or deliberate core reduction for the production of usable flakes, something that might be expected if the assemblage contained residual prehistoric material.

In conclusion, the struck flint assemblage from Chantry House is consistent with medieval flint-working, presumably close to the site of intended use for the faced flint blocks produced. The location of a flint-rich deposit abutting the oldest part of the house, itself flint-faced, supports this interpretation. The assignation of an earlier date (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century) to this deposit compared to the 16<sup>th</sup> century standing building does, however, raise the possibility of an earlier structure from which the flint blocks were reused.

## **Conclusion**

This recording action has produced evidence of activity at the site pre-dating the majority of the extant Chantry House, and suggesting that the oldest part of the house is either somewhat earlier than previously thought (JPH 2018), or that the faced flint blocks present in the standing structure were re-used from an earlier structure.

The presence of 12th-13th Century pottery suggests a fairly long-term use of the site in the medieval period prior to the construction of the 16<sup>th</sup> century portion of the current dwelling (c.3-400 years), which is consistent with the site's location near a chapel (JPH 2018) and posited associated settlement.

The deposits and material recovered from this watching brief are indicative of activity at the site throughout the medieval period and into the early post-medieval period, by which point the oldest extant portions of Chapel House were built. Extensive development and remodelling of Chapel House and its grounds in modern times is evidenced by the presence of modern truncations and the large brick-built cistern.

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**APPENDIX 1: Pottery catalogue**

<i>Context</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt/g</i>	<i>MNV</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>Rim</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Spot date</i>
53		MIN	D	1	6	1			fs, oolites, occ shell	14-15
53	<1>	CBW	U	1	6	1			fairly coarse sandy whiteware, wheelmade	14-15
54		COTS	B	1	37	1			coarse limestone, occ shell and oolites, some sand	L.11-13
54		MCWC	U	1	7	1			abundant fine white limestone/chalk, moderate Fe	12-14?
54		NEWA	R	1	25	1	jar	everted beaded	WM, sand, common coarse flint, some limestone	M.12-13

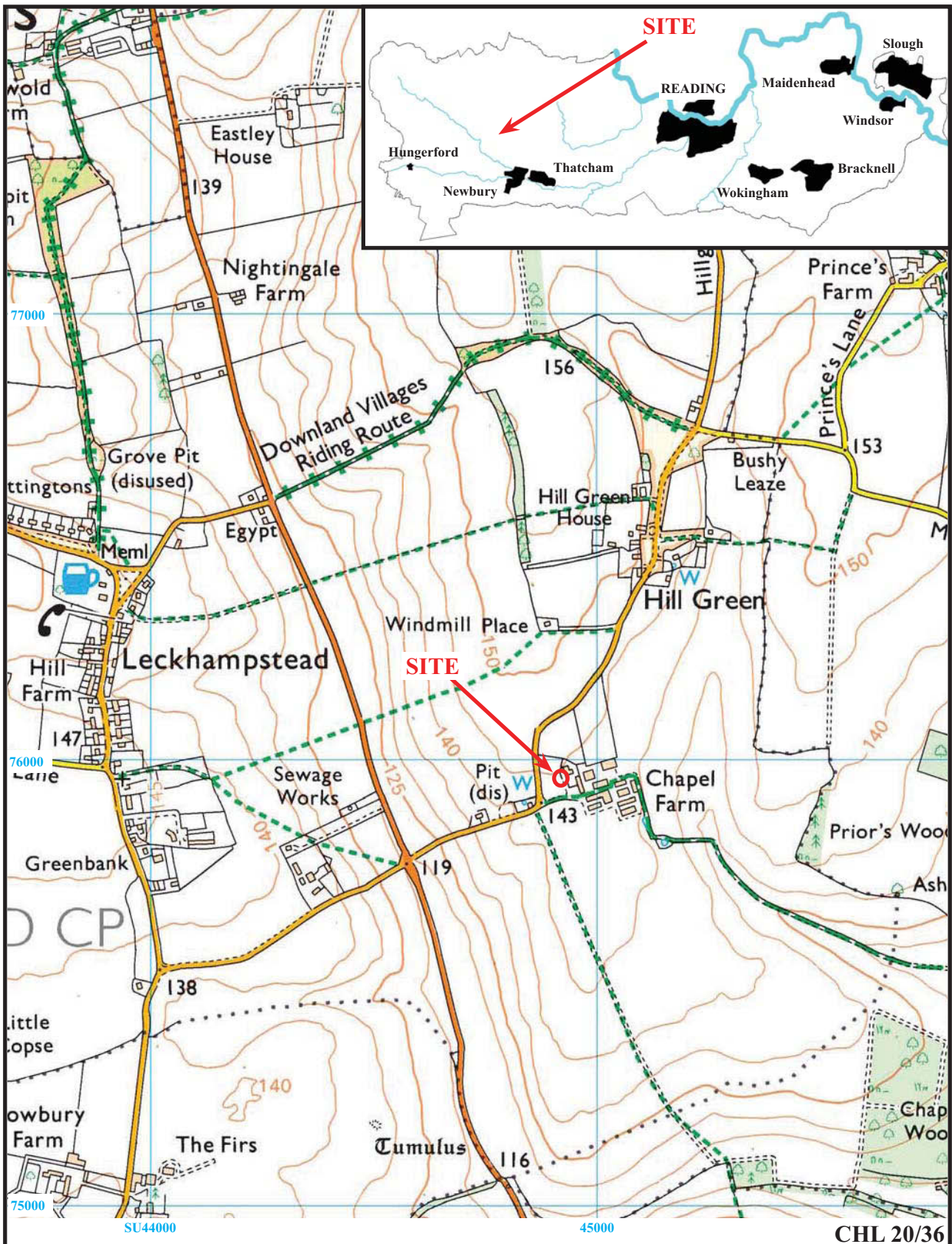
Fabrics: MIN – Minety ware; CBW – coarse border ware; COTS – Cotswold limestone-tempered wares; MCWC – chalk-tempered medieval coarseware; NEWA – Newbury A (Kennet Valley) ware.  
 Type: U/D – undecorated/decorated body shrd; R – rim sherd; B – base sherd.

**APPENDIX 2: Catalogue of ceramic building material**

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
2	52	?	7	330
	53	?	4	937
	53	? Sample <1>	47	910
	54	?	2	362
3	55	Pit	8	765
7	59	?	1	3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>3307</b>

**APPENDIX 3: Inventory of animal bone**

<b>Context</b>		<b># of Frag</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>Identified fragments – by animal size</b>			<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Cut</b>	<b>Deposit</b>			<b>Large</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Small</b>		
3	55	3	42	2	-	-	1	“large” long bone shaft fragments
7	59	1	0.5	-	-	-	1	very small, non-descript fragment
<b>Total/MNI</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>42.5g</b>	<b>2 fragments (1 “large animal)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2 fragments</b>	<b>-</b>



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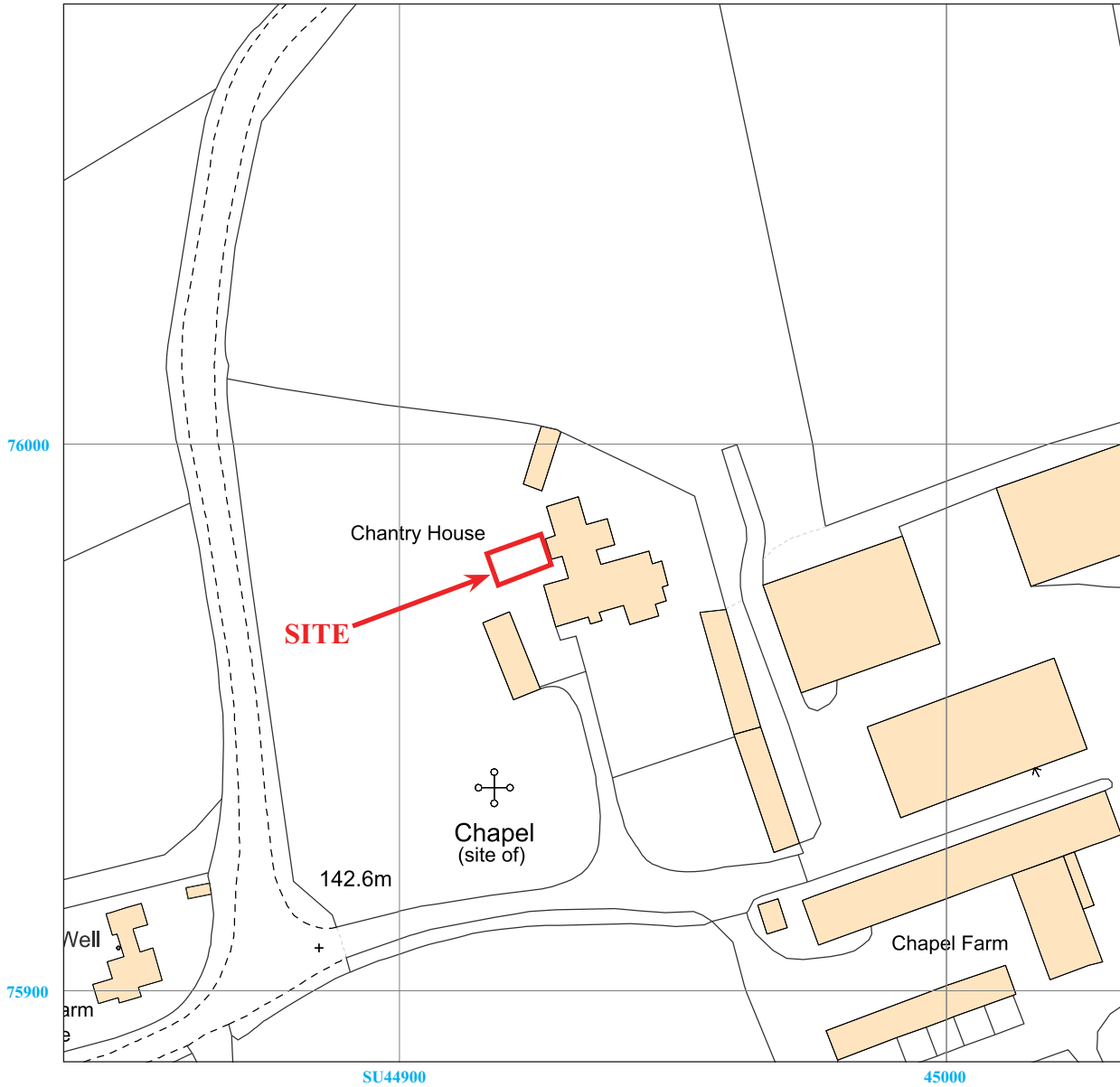
Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Hill Green,  
Leckhampstead and within West Berkshire.

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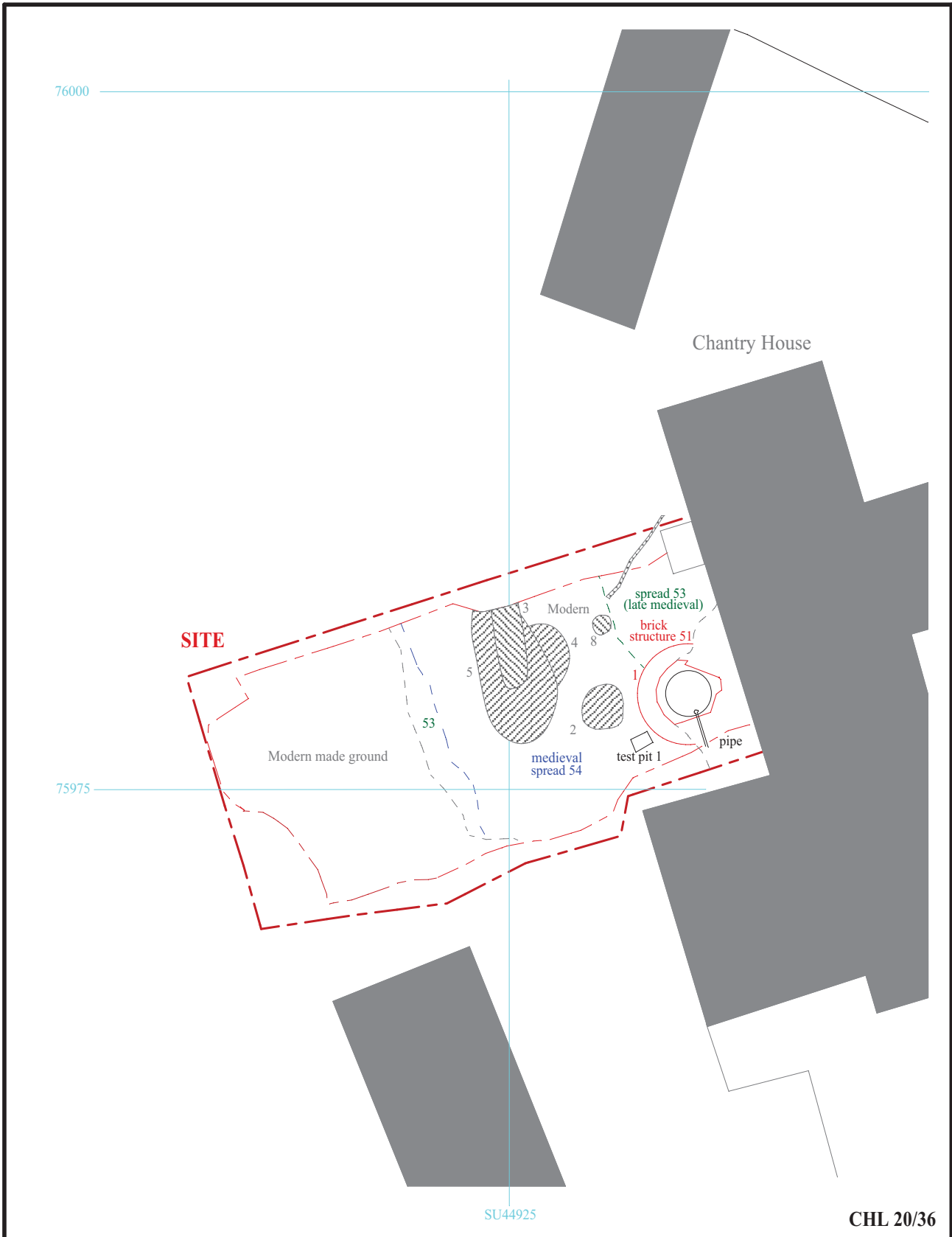
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.**

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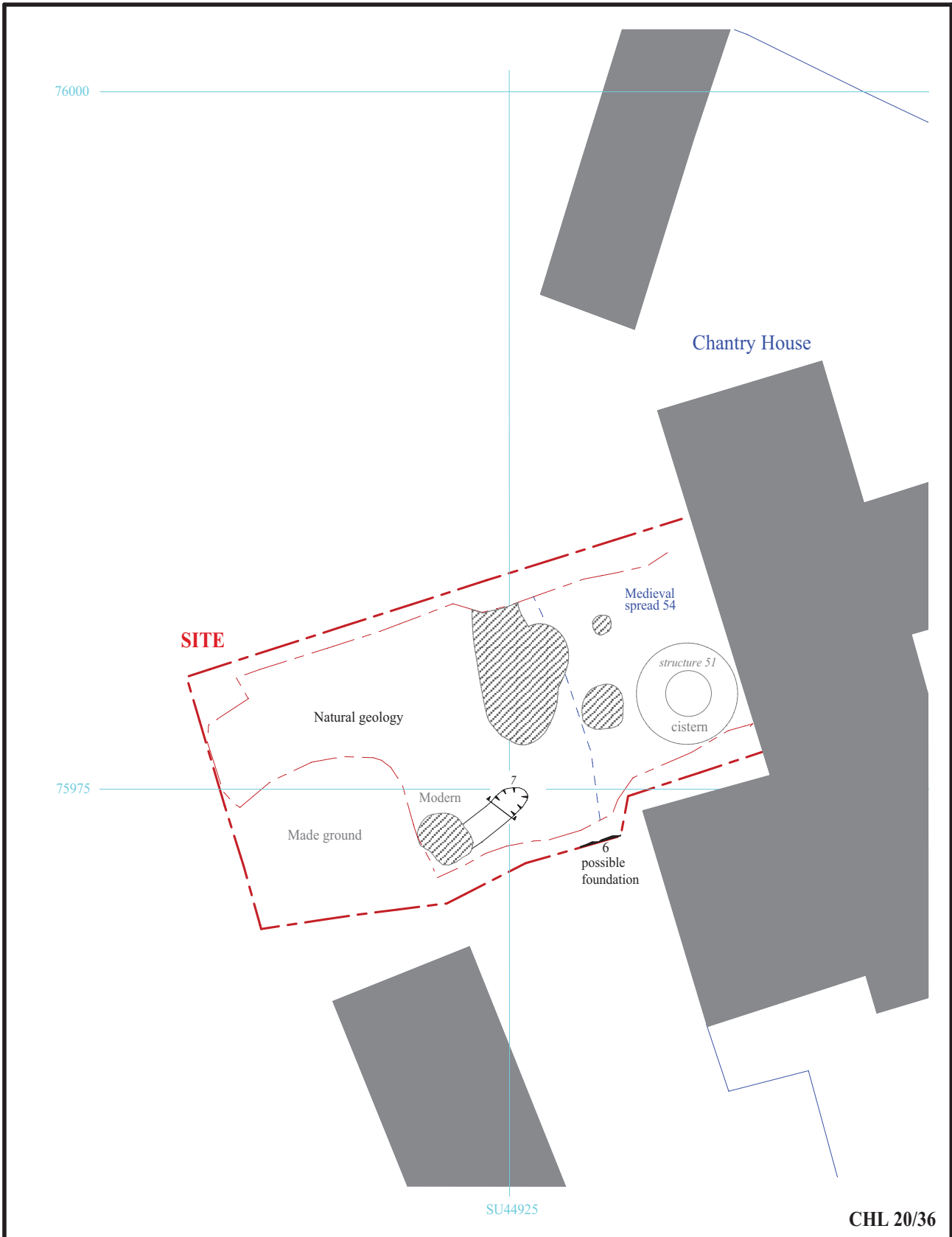
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Figure 3. Detail of excavation area at 0.30m depth.





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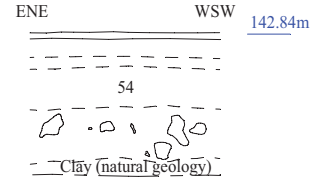
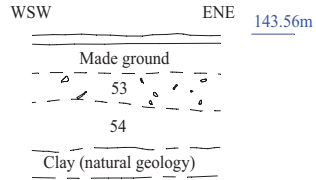
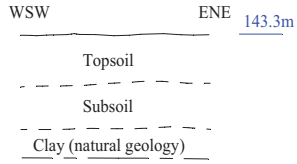
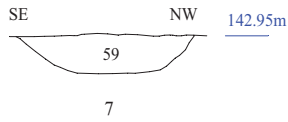


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Figure 4. Detail of excavation area at 0.60m depth.







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Figure 5. Sections.





Plate 1. Area of reduction exposing the natural geology on the site, looking South West, Scales: 1m.



Plate 2. Gully terminal 7, looking South West, Scales: 0.2m and 0.1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.

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Plate 3. Foundation of existing building, looking North East, Scale: 1m.



Plate 4. Cistern 51, looking East, Scales: 1m.

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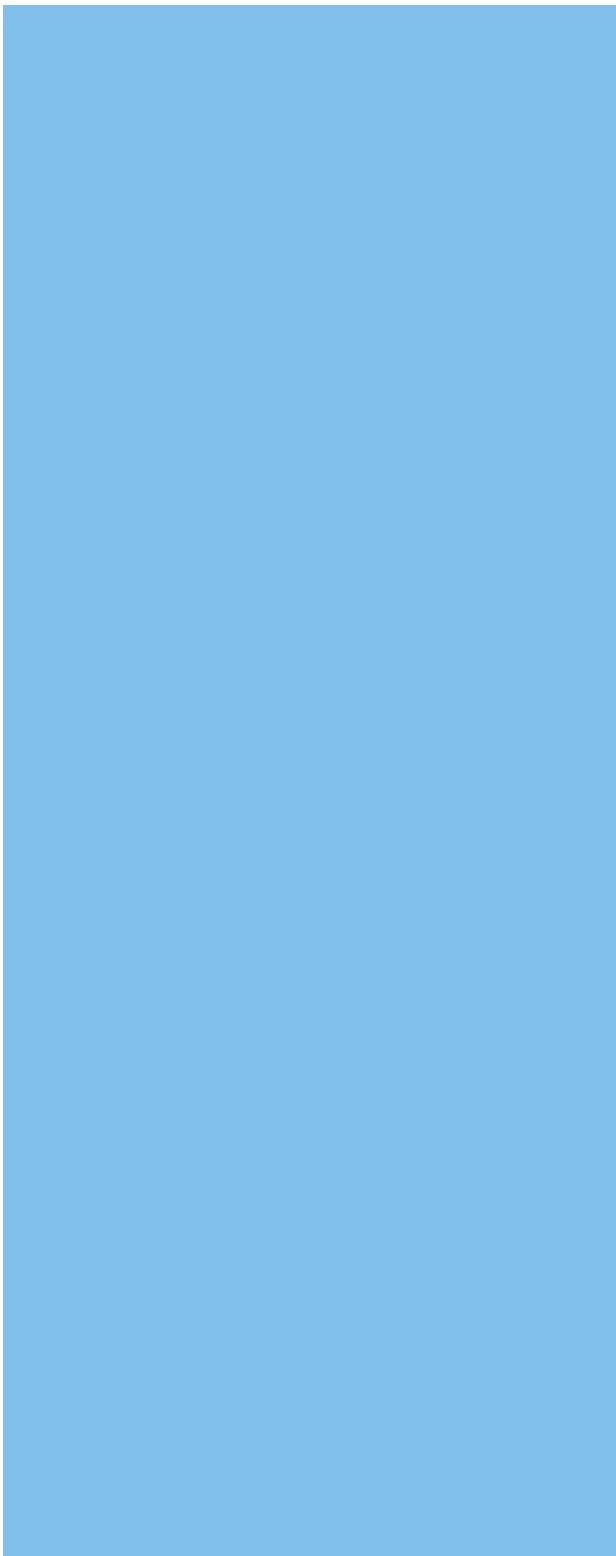
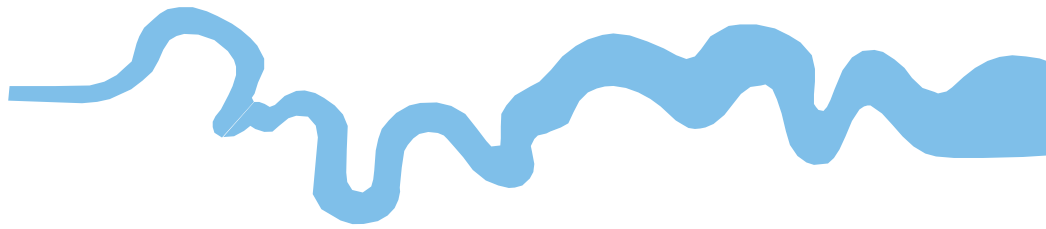
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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 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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