

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Baker Barracks Solar Farm, Thorney Island,  
Emsworth, West Sussex**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Will Attard and Aidan Colyer**

**Site Code: BBT22/148**

**(SU 7612 0305)**

# **Baker Barracks Solar Farm, Thorney Island, Emsworth, West Sussex**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
for Armour Heritage Limited**

by Will Attard and Aidan Colyer  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BBT 22/148

**September 2022**

## Summary

**Site name:** Baker Barracks Solar Farm, Thorney Island, Emsworth, West Sussex

**Grid reference:** SU 7608 0324

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 20th-29th July 2022

**Project coordinator:** David Sanchez

**Site supervisor:** Will Attard

**Site code:** BBT 22/148

**Summary of results:** The excavations of the main cable trench for the solar farm were monitored but no archaeological deposits nor artefacts were recorded.

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

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[www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp](http://www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp).*

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# **Baker Barracks Solar Farm, Thorney Island, Emsworth, West Sussex An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Will Attard and Aidan Colyer

**Report 22/148**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Baker Barracks, Thorney Island, Emsworth, West Sussex (SU 7608 0324) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Sue Farr, of Armour Heritage, Foghamshire Timber Yard, Foghamshire Lane, Trudoxhill, Frome, Somerset, BA11 5DG.

Planning permission (WT/20/03047/FULEIA) has been granted by Chichester District Council for the installation of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic array together with associated infrastructure, security fencing, CCTV, access gate, and cable route. The consent is subject to a condition (3), which requires a programme of archaeological work, in this case a watching brief, is carried out on groundworks associated with the proposed construction work.

This is in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2021) and the district's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification (AH 2021) approved by the Archaeology officer at Chichester District Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Will Attard between 20th and 29th July 2022 and the site code is BBT 22/148.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site lies within Baker Barracks, located on Thorney Island south-east of Portsmouth. Thorney Island is separated from the mainland by an area of marsh and two narrow creeks (the Little and Great Deep). The site consists of an irregular parcel of land located on the eastern edge of Baker Barracks which includes a selection of military and residential buildings. Baker Barracks was formerly an RAF station, and the old runways lie immediately to the east of the site, now used for drills and training. Further south-east lies the village of West Thorney. The rest of the surrounding land is flat grassland, formerly farmland. The underlying geology is recorded as river terrace gravels and aeolian deposits (brickearth) (BGS 1994). The site itself lies a height of between 4-5m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk based assessment produced by Armour Heritage (AH 2019). This noted a moderate level of evidence for prehistoric activity, with sites excavated in the vicinity, including within the barracks. These comprise scatters of worked flint dating to the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age periods as well as Bronze Age pottery discovered during a watching brief at the sports field at the Barracks (Anelay 2014). A Neolithic axe was recovered during construction works on the airfield in 1971, and a Neolithic/Early Bronze Age flake found during an evaluation in a similar area (Tooze 2017). Early Iron Age pottery was recovered at the edge of the airfield (Winbolt 1937) and a Bronze Age cinerary urn containing human remains in 1949, which was recovered towards West Thorney.

Evidence for Iron Age activity, including some on an otherwise Middle Bronze Age site, was recovered from trial trenching and excavation to the west of the current site (Tooze 2017; Russel and Anderson 2019). Extensive evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity was discovered to the southwest during work carried out in the 1930's (Winbolt 1937).

Medieval evidence is rather limited, although Domesday Book records a saltpan on the eastern shoreline (Copley 1958). A Grade I listed 12-century church is the only other item of note for this period. The medieval bell was still in existence at least until the mid 20th-century (Salzman 1953).

Later periods saw the land used for farming until an RAF airfield that was constructed in the 1930s. The airfield was decommissioned in the 1970s and the site converted to Barracks for the Royal Artillery in the 1980s.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by invasive groundworks. Specifically this included the following aims:

- to confirm the date of any archaeological remains by means of artefactual or other evidence;
- to determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;
- to determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains; and
- to determine the degree and complexity of the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy.

This was to involve examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks along the lines of the cable trenches and the area for the inverter cabin. The overburden was to be removed using a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket. All spoil was to be monitored for artefacts and all excavations were to be supervised by an experienced archaeologist.

## Results

Monitoring of invasive groundworks was undertaken as intended (Figs 2 and 3; Pls 1-4).

The cable trenches were a consistent width of 0.6m, with an average depth of 0.9-1.0m. Representative sections were recorded at intervals along the length of the trench (Fig. 3). The majority of the sections recorded a stratigraphy of thin turf/topsoil overlying made ground levelling deposits. The northern end was cut through an old runway. Natural geology when encountered was as expected, consisting of a mix of clay, sand and gravel.

Multiple disused cables and field drains were discovered during the excavation, along with one known active cable and a live gas main. Due to the presence of the gas main, the initially intended line of the cable trench was diverted (Fig. 2)

No archaeologically significant material was encountered during this watching brief. Spoil heaps were monitored for stray finds, but none were present. The remains of a late Victorian farm building were identified towards the northern end of the cable trench in the form of a concrete and rubble spread.

Where the cable trench crossed the extant road, the underlying natural geology had been truncated to the full depth of the trench.

## Finds

No artefacts of archaeological interest were recovered.

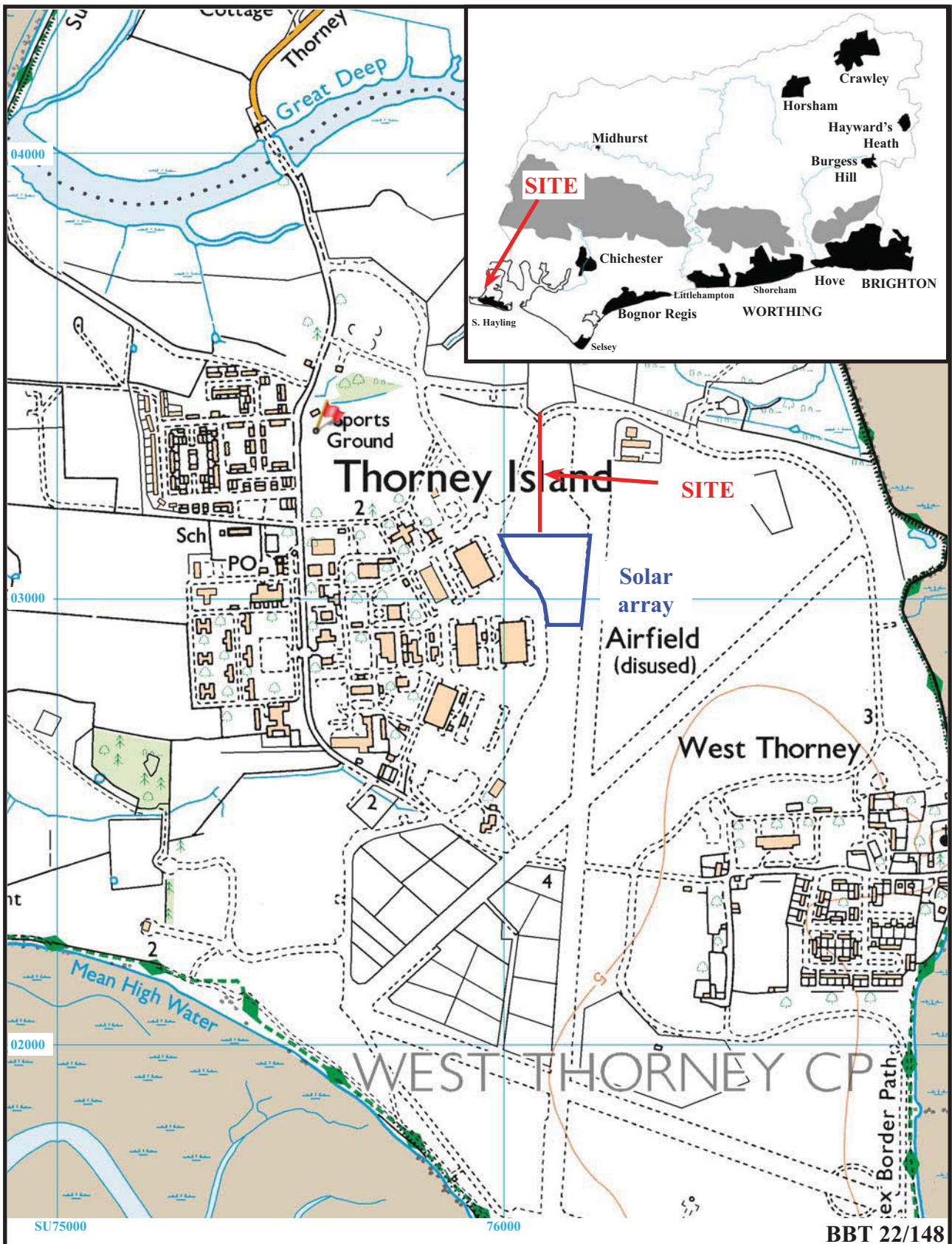
## Conclusion

Despite the moderate archaeological resource recorded around the site this particular area has revealed no deposits of archaeological interest.

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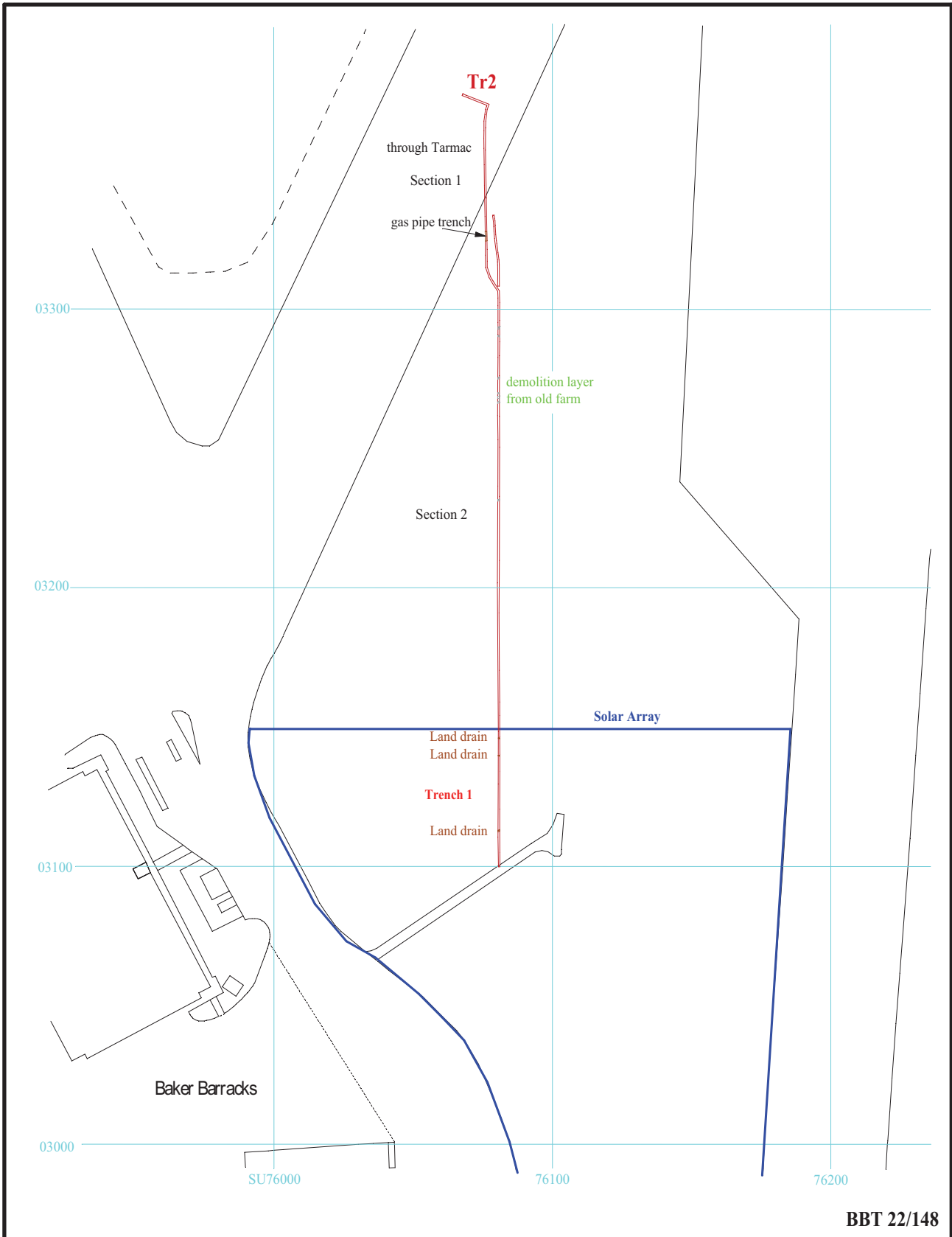
Figure 1. Location of site at Thorney Island and within Hampshire.

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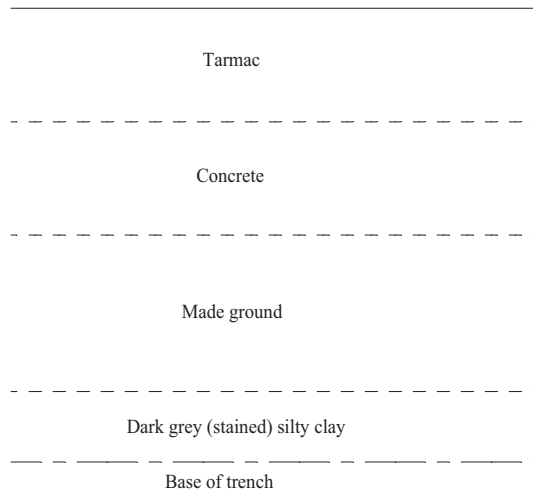


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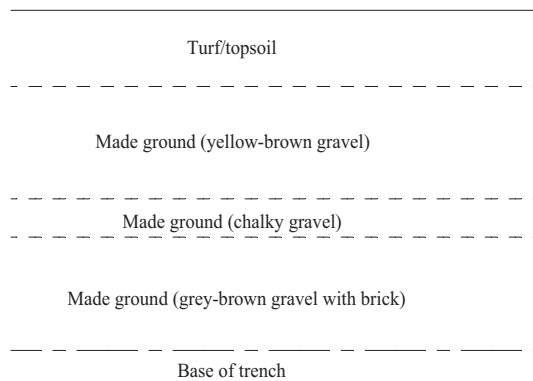
Figure 2. Location of observed areas.



**Runway**



**Field**



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Figure 3. Representative Sections





Plate 1. North route (Trench 2 turning into main Trench 1), looking South.



Plate 2. Trench section, looking East, Scale: 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench section through road, looking South.



Plate 4. Trench section, looking West, Scale: 1m.

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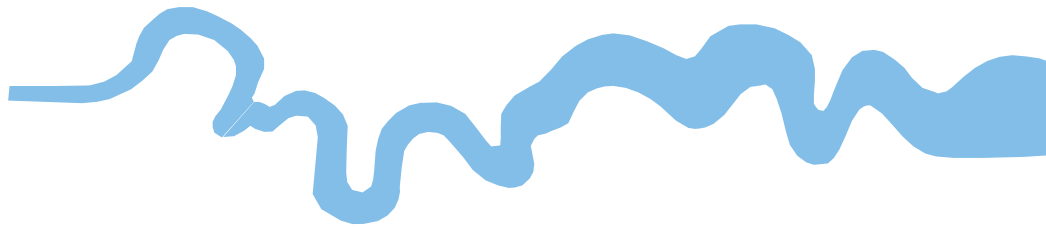
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Plates 3 and 4.**

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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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,  
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,  
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552  
Email: [tvas@tvas.co.uk](mailto:tvas@tvas.co.uk)  
Web: [www.tvas.co.uk](http://www.tvas.co.uk)**

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