

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**  
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**  
**S E R V I C E S**

**Rear of 13-25 Kent Road,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Steve Ford**

**Site Code: KRR08/78**

**(SU 6957 7310)**

**Rear of 13–25 Kent Road,  
Reading, Berkshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
For Calcot Developments Limited**

by Steve Ford  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

SiteCodeKRR08/78

**March 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** Rear of 13–25 Kent Road, Reading, Berkshire

**Grid reference:** SU 6957 7310

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 17th December 2009 – 25th February 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Danielle Millbank

**Site code:** KRR 08/78

**Summary of results:** Previous use of this site as a builder's yard set in an artificial terrace, coupled with its topographic location, led to an opportunity to examine basal gravel deposit exposures. Nearby gravel pits on the same geological outcrop had recovered prolific Palaeolithic flintwork and some faunal remains. No such finds were recovered in this project but the remnants of a river palaeo-channel were recorded.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston✓ 18.03.10
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# Rear of 13-25 Kent Road, Reading, Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Steve Ford

Report 08/78

## Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on the land to the rear of 13–25 Kent Road, Reading, Berkshire (SU 6957 7310) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Philip Shell of Architectural Services, Woodside, The Common, Charter Alley, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 5PY on behalf of Calcot Developments Limited, 10 Thomson Walk, Calcot, Reading, RG31 7DP.

Planning consent (07/00747/FUL) has been granted by Reading Borough Council to construct three new houses on the site. The consent is subject to a condition (20) relating to archaeology, which requires a watching brief to be carried out during groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Borough's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Ms Mary O'Donoghue, Archaeological Officer for Berkshire Archaeology, advisers to the Borough on archaeological matters. The fieldwork was undertaken by Rob Skinner, Jo Pine, Danielle Milbank and Steve Ford between 17th December 2009 and 25th February 2010 and the site code is KRR 08/78.

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

## Location, topography and geology

The site is located off Kent Road that lies just to the north of Tilehurst Road in Reading (Fig. 2). The site was previously occupied by a former builders yard and a number of small sheds. The underlying geology is described as plateau gravel (BGS 1946), which has been reclassified as Lynch Hill terrace (Wymer 1968, 77; 1999, map 6). Topographically, the site lies beyond the summit plateau of the gravel terrace and is on the slope of the valley side of the Thames. At some point close to this location, the margin of the eroded gravel terrace was expected to lie with *in-situ* gravel, head deposits and the underlying solid geology (Reading Beds) all possibly present.

The builders yard had been formed by a terrace cut into the steep slope several decades previously. On the uppermost portion of the site, the terrace has been formed by a truncation with a height of *c.* 3.6m whereas on

the very lowest portion of the site, to the rear of the gardens of Kent Road properties, it is possible that the original ground level might still be present. The current yard surface lay at a height of *c.* 57.6m AOD in the south and sloped down to *c.* 52.1m AOD in the north.

## **Archaeological background**

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location within the archaeologically rich Thames Valley with a wealth of sites and finds from both prehistoric and later periods. There are several entries of archaeological interest in the Historic Environment Record relating to the surrounding area, though none recorded for the site itself. Stray finds and reports of occupation and burial sites of various periods have been recorded, especially from the many quarry sites in the area. Recorded close to the site to the west are a Saxon spearhead and Mesolithic flint blade and to the east is the findspot of a Neolithic flint axe. Further to the west at Grovelands Pit, Middle and Late Bronze Age deposits were encountered as well as those of Roman date.

However, this particular location has more specific potential archaeology of regional or national significance for the Palaeolithic period. The higher gravel terraces of the Thames Valley are particularly noteworthy for the presence of Palaeolithic flint and stone tools, representing some of the earliest known human occupation of the British Isles (Wymer 1968; 1999). The extensive Groveland Pit lay *c.* 250m to the west of the site and was worked by cutting into the bluff to extract the gravel and underlying sand (Reading Beds). At a depth typically of 3.9m (13') many flint finds were recovered both in fresh and rolled condition and, most unusually, associated with faunal remains (Wymer 1968, 155).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the groundworks. This involved examination of all areas of intrusive groundworks, in particular geotechnical test pits, any ground reduction and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs.

## **Results**

### *Removal of former yard surface*

The overburden forming the former yard surface was removed to expose gravel, sand and modern disturbance on the site. This was systematically searched for artefacts or faunal remains but none were observed.

### *Footing trenches (Fig. 3)*

The footing trenches for the houses were dug on two levels. For the lower house plot (3), the trenches were 0.6-1.0m wide and 0.6m deep. At the northernmost portion of the site the trenches were dug through up to 0.25m of a dark brown gravelly clayey topsoil below which was 0.35m of an orange/brown gravelly clayey subsoil above sand (Pl. 1). It is possible that, in this marginal location, this represents the original natural stratigraphic sequence. However, a short distance further to the south, truncation was present and the foundation trenches were cut directly into the Reading Beds sand, which formed the solid geology on the site. It was clear that truncation for the yard surface had removed all of the relevant levels for post-glacial archaeology in this location, and that the levels of interest for Palaeolithic archaeology had long before been eroded away by natural geological agencies.

For the higher plots (1 and 2) the foundation trenches were 1.1m wide and 0.8m deep. At the southern margin of the site, it was clear again that the footings were cut directly into the archaeologically sterile Reading Beds sand. However, further to the north it became clear that the expanse of gravel was occupying a shallowly sloping depression aligned approximately east-west. The depression was 0.8–1.0m deep (from the stripped surface) and *c.* 8m across (Figs 3 and 4). It is considered that this represent a former palaeochannel of the river system which laid the gravel down. The channel infill comprised fine gravel/pea grit at the base, becoming fractionally coarser above. The upper layers were mostly sandy interspersed with silty clay lenses (Pl. 2).

Both the exposed trench faces and spoilheaps were searched for flint artefacts or faunal remains but none were observed.

### **Finds**

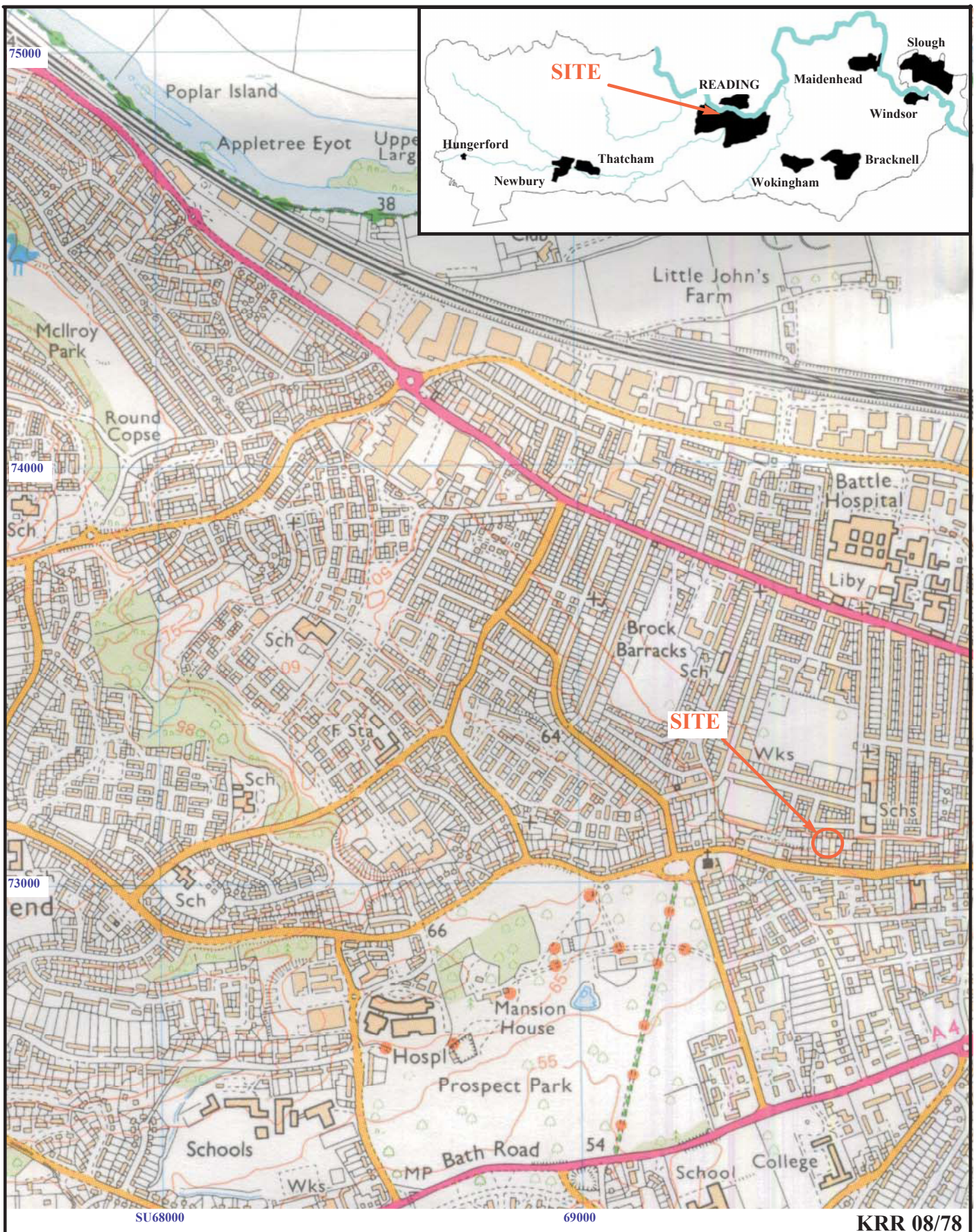
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the site.

### **Conclusion**

The circumstances of this watching brief project allowed examination of geological strata of particular interest to Palaeolithic archaeology which are not usually exposed by the shallow foundations typical of this type of development. In the event, despite the presence of gravel strata likely to be of archaeological interest, no remains of interest were found.

### **References**

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth  
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO  
Wymer, J, J, 1968, *Lower Palaeolithic Archaeology in Britain*, London  
Wymer, J J, 1999, *The Lower Palaeolithic occupation of Britain*, Salisbury



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Figure 1. Location of site within Reading and Berkshire.

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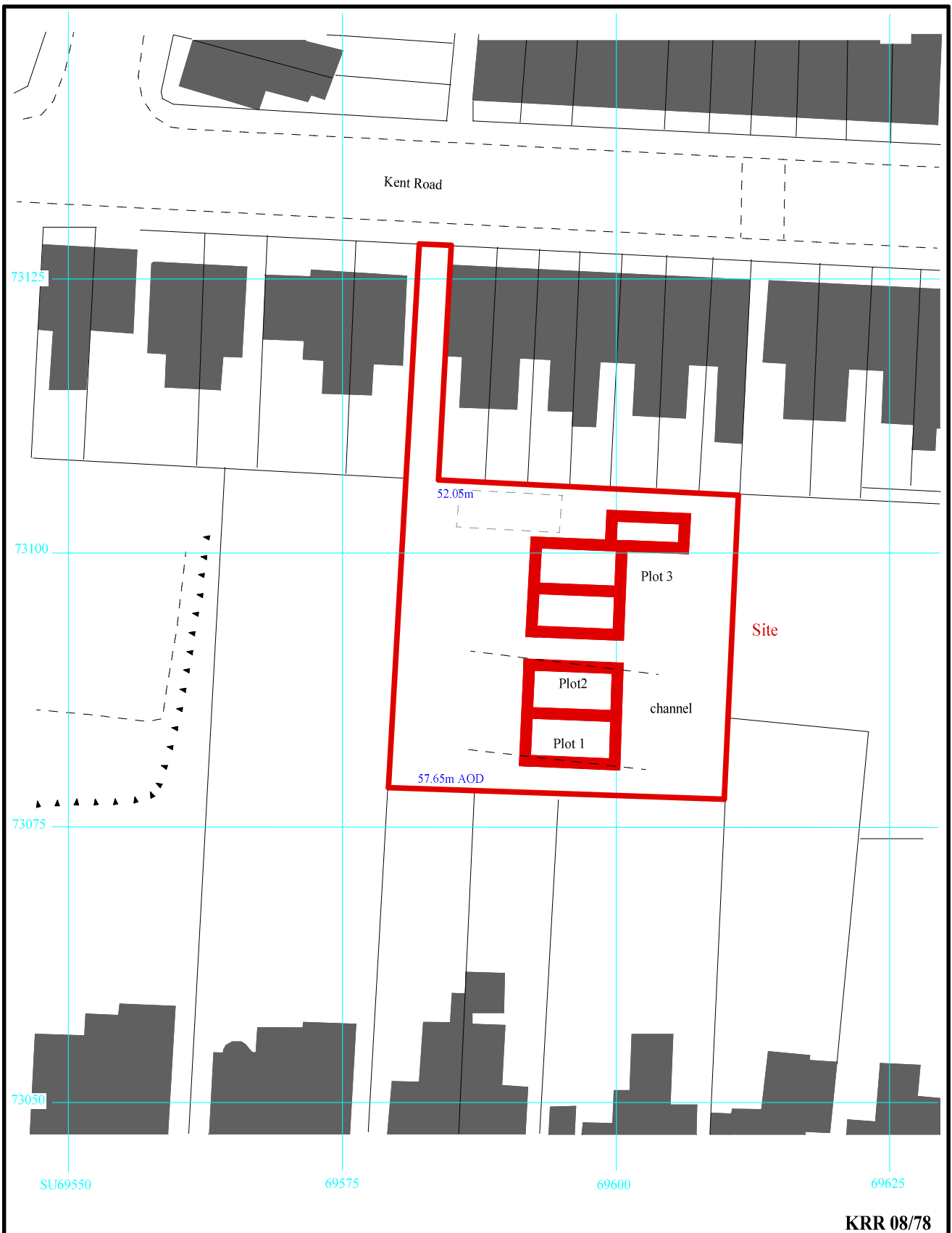
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Figure 2. Location of site off Kent Road.

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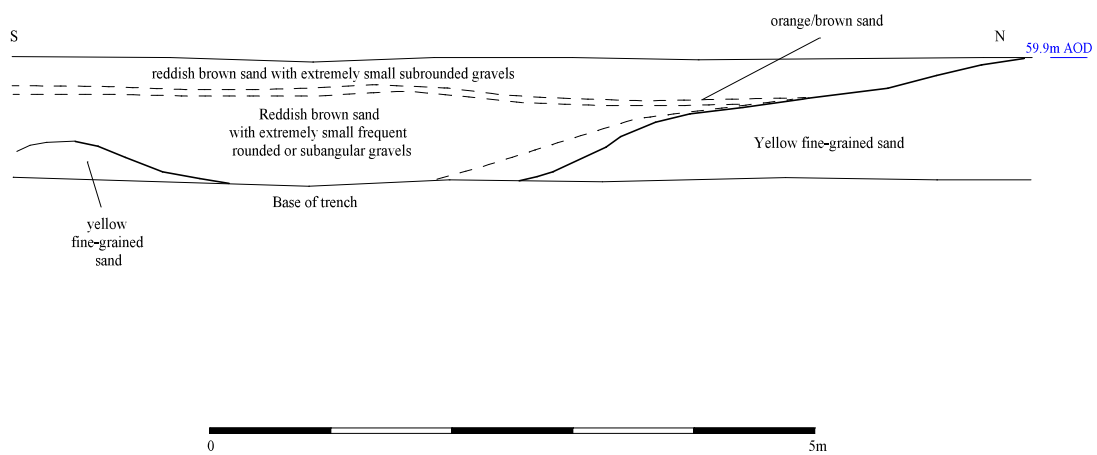


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Figure 3. Location of groundworks observed.



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Figure 4. Section of channel exposed in eastern footing trench of plots 1 and 2.



Plate 1. Plot 3 foundation trenches looking north east, scale: 2m



Plate 2. Plot 2 north side looking south east, scale: 0.3m.

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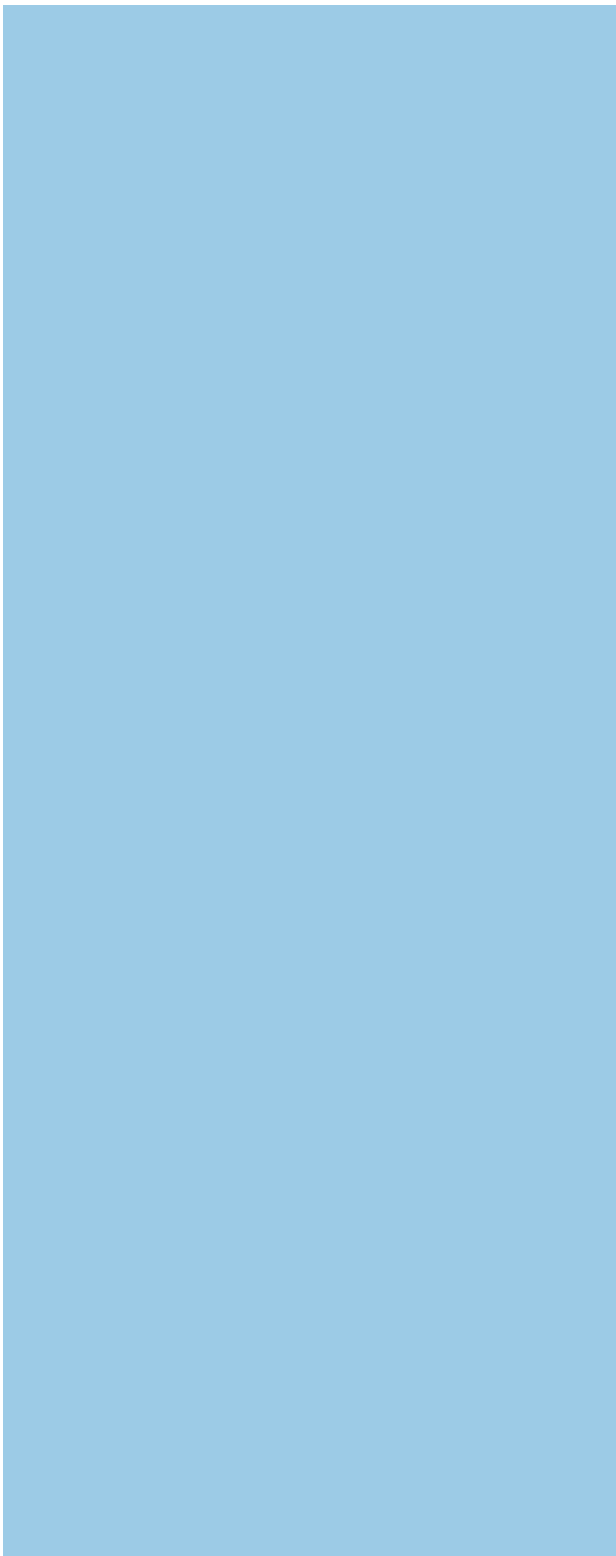
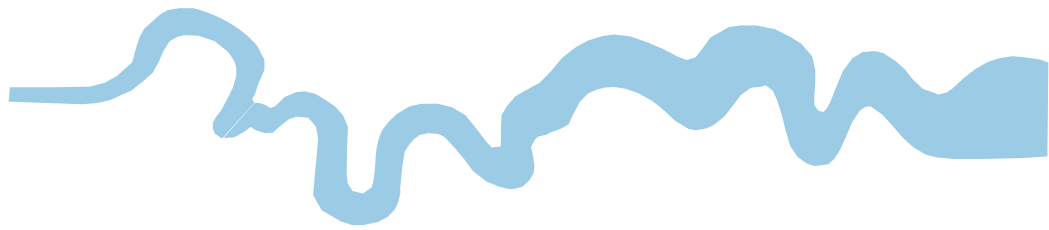
Plates 1 and 2

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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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