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

**St Kenelm's Church,  
Church Enstone, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by  
James McNicoll-Norbury and James Lewis**

**Site Code: KCE10/41**

**(SP 3795 2512)**

# **St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**

**for the**

**Incumbent and Church Warden of St Kenelm's Church**

by James McNicoll-Norbury  
and James Lewis  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code KCE 10/41

**July 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SP 3795 2512

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 25th-27th of May and 23rd-24th June 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** James McNicoll-Norbury

**Site code:** KCE 10/41

**Area of site:** c.60.5 sq m

**Summary of results:** The watching brief has observed what may be the remains of earlier (medieval), demolished phase of the church, three graves, one of which is of medieval or earlier date, and a small amount of disarticulated human bone. Pottery finds included sherds of Roman, medieval and post-medieval date.

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

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# **St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone, Oxfordshire**

## **An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by James McNicoll-Norbury and James Lewis

**Report 10/41**

### **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone, Oxfordshire (SP 3795 2512) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Michael Clews, of Acanthus Clews Architects, Acanthus House, 57 Hightown Road, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 9BE, on behalf the Incumbent and Church Warden of St Kenelm's Church, Church Enstone.

Planning consent (08/1330/P/FP) has been granted by West Oxfordshire District Council to construct a single-storey boiler house, an above ground storage tank (shielded by planted trees) and an oil filler point with connecting service pipe. Due to the possible presence of archaeological features, including human remains, a condition (8) was attached requiring an archaeological watching brief to be maintained during groundworks. This is in accordance with BE13 of the Local Plan and *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990) although it is acknowledged that the latter is superseded by *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5, 2010). The field investigation was carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by, and based on a design brief provided by, Mr Hugh Coddington, Deputy County Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Coddington 2010). The fieldwork was undertaken by James McNicoll-Norbury and James Lewis between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 24<sup>th</sup> June 2010. The site code is KCE 10/41.

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

### **Location, topography and geology**

The village of Church Enstone lies just north of Enstone and south-east of Chipping Norton (Fig. 1). The site is located at St Kenelm's Church between Church Road and Little Tew Road and is currently occupied by the church and graveyard (Fig. 2). The land around the village is characterized by open fields and numerous small woods and plantations. Located to the west and the south of the site is a small, steep valley which separates Enstone from Church Enstone and through which runs the River Glyme. The underlying geology is described as Chipping Norton limestone (BGS 1968) and the site lies at an elevation of approximately 150m above Ordnance Datum at the point where the valley levels out into a plateau.

## **Archaeological background**

The church is a Grade II\* Listed Building (LB 253223) dating between the late 12th and late 13th centuries with many additions, and according to the listing (RCHM(E) 1988) the tower was added in the early part of the 16th century. There are records of contributions from the parish towards the cost of the tower in 1531 and 1546 (Sherwood and Pevsner, 1974, 593). It has, as most churches have, been modified a number of times, especially by the ubiquitous G. E. Street in 1856. Nothing has been found of an earlier Saxon church on the site but the south aisle is thought likely to have been a 12th-century addition to this earlier church. Several (albeit fragmentary) parts of the 12th and 13th-century structure remain (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 593–4). There are marked graves north of the church and it is quite possible that further unmarked graves survive *in situ*.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the construction of the boiler house and the service trench.

Discovery of any human remains which were of post-medieval or modern date was to be summarily recorded but not otherwise to be archaeologically excavated. The bones were to be returned to the church for re-interment. Any human remains of medieval or earlier date were to be archaeologically recorded and excavated and permission obtained from the consistory court if removal from the site was required for further study.

## **Results**

### The Boiler House (Figs 3-5)

The footings for the boiler house were hand dug to a width of 0.50m and a depth of up to 0.76m, covering an area of 3.6m by 2.8m. The stratigraphy comprised up to 0.24m topsoil (50) overlying up to 0.52m of dark grey brown subsoil (51) which contained moderate amounts of disarticulated human bones, a single piece of post-medieval pottery, two pieces of iron slag and a coin. The natural geology was not observed. The disarticulated human bones were noted and returned to the church for reburial.

A wall (58) and the remains of three graves (1, 2 and 3) were recorded during the excavation of the southern trench for the foundation of the boiler house (Fig. 5, section 1).

The earliest feature was cut 3, which was observed in the base of the footing and this feature was only partially excavated in order to establish its function. It was found to be a grave which contained a single

inhumation (Skeleton 56) and because it was not threatened by the present development it was left *in-situ* and not disturbed.

Overlying this was a stone built wall (58) part of which was removed during the excavation of the footing trench. The wall was located in the south-east corner of the footing trench and in a service trench which connected the main church building to the footings. During cleaning up of the wall, a sherd of medieval pottery was found. The wall consisted of four courses of irregular shaped limestone which were not bonded, and measured 2m long and 0.80m wide. The stones measured between 0.1–0.3m long by 0.1 to 0.3m wide and were 0.1m thick. It continued east and was aligned with the northern wall of the nave (north aisle) of the present church which has been dated to the late 13th century (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 593). If this is correct then this indicates that the grave below is medieval and dates from before around 1280.

In the north facing section of the southern footing grave 1 was partially uncovered, exposing an articulated arm and the leg bones of a juvenile (SK52). Due to the damage which would have been inflicted on the bones during the construction of the boiler tower these bones were retrieved and returned to the church for reburial. In addition, the grave back-fill (53) contained a small clay/stone ball, coffin nails and ad two sherds of pottery, one of Roman and one of early post-medieval date.

In the south-west corner of the southern footing was another grave (2). In this grave only the partial remains of a pelvis, an articulated ulna and radius were retrieved and returned to the church for reburial (SK55). The remainder of the skeleton extended beyond the excavation boundary and so was left *in situ*.

### Service Trench (Fig. 3)

A service trench aligned north-south was excavated leading from the oil tank along the existing footpath just outside the graveyard, and terminated immediately adjacent to the lych gate at the point where the oil filler cabinet is to be located. The service trench measured 57m in length, 0.5m wide and 0.5m deep. It cut through two layers; the top layer (61) was the surface of the footpath, which was very compact gravel and patches of Tarmac within a matrix of brown sandy clay. This overlay loose, light brown, sandy clay which contained significant stone inclusions approximately 40% of the volume (59). The natural geology was not exposed. This fill contained 19th-century (or later) pottery and several small fragments of disarticulated human bone. In addition in the area around the lych gate several fragments of animal bone were recovered, one of which displayed signs of butchery.

A small trench connected the boiler house footings to the main service trench. This measured 2.85m in length, 0.5m wide and 0.5m deep. Two cuts were observed in the north-facing section (Fig. 4, section 2).

Cut 5 was only partially observed as it extended beyond the eastern end of the trench. The observable measurements were 0.85m wide and at least 0.3m deep. It was not observed in the base or the opposite section and so it is assumed that the trench just clipped the edge of a larger feature. The cut appeared to extend from just beneath the topsoil (50) and it contained loose friable brown sandy clay with significant amount of limestone (c.60%). No dating evidence was found in this cut but it did contain three fragments of human bone, two pieces from the cranium and the other unidentified. It is not clear what this cut represents.

Cut 6 was recorded at the western end of the small trench and only one side of the cut (the east side) was measured. The west side of the cut might have been destroyed during the excavation of the service trench however no cut was observed in the base of the service trench. Alternately cut 6 could be the remains of a previous graveyard boundary, possibly a wall, which was extended during the 19th century. It contained the same fill (59) as that found throughout the service trench and within this were found three very small fragments of human bone, several pieces of animal bone and both Roman and Post medieval pottery.

Both cuts 5 and 6 truncated a layer of compact brown sandy clay (62) which contained significantly fewer stone inclusions (10%) than other recorded contexts. No finds came from this layer which represents subsoil which had been built up during the use of the graveyard.

## **Finds**

### *Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 24 sherds with a total weight of 380g. The bulk of the assemblage was of post-medieval or early modern date, although two residual Roman and a single medieval sherd were also present. The material was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OXAM:	Brill/Boarstall ware, AD1200 – 1600. 1 sherd, 18g.
OXDR:	Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 4 sherds, 135g.
OXBEW:	Staffordshire manganese wares. c. 1700-1800. 3 sherds, 30g.
WHEW:	Mass-produced white earthenwares, 19th - 20th C. 14 sherds, 188g.

In addition, two sherds (9g) of residual Roman pottery were also present. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 2. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The sherd of OXAM is from the base of a bowl, with a pale green glaze on both surfaces. It is a typical 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century product of the industry.

### *Slag and Industrial Debris* by Steven Crabb

Two fragments of slag were recovered from the subsoil (51) of the site. The smaller fragment is unfortunately undiagnostic iron slag and therefore not indicative to one process. The larger lump however is dense, dark grey in colour with moderate porosity and is most likely to be furnace slag. The small volume of slag recovered combined with its recovery from the subsoil suggests that although iron working occurred nearby it is highly unlikely to be from this site.

### *Metalwork* by Steven Crabb

A small number of iron coffin fittings and nails were recovered from feature [1] they are not significantly unique to be able to date the burial. Due to the effect of corrosion there is mineralised wood present around the shafts and heads of many of the nails. They are square or rectangular in cross section indicating that they were not made from drawn steel wire, but hand forged.

A coin was recovered from context 51 however this was too badly corroded to identify and date it.

### *Human Bone* by James Lewis

The human bone was identified on site and remained in the church for reburial.

### *Animal Bone* by Danielle Milbank

A small assemblage of disarticulated animal bone was hand collected from a single context (deposit 59) during the watching brief. This comprised 4 large fragments weighing 404g.

The preservation of the remains was good, with little surface erosion and large fragment size. Two pieces were not identifiable to species but were parts of large animal (horse or cattle) long bone and skull. The two remaining fragments consisted of one cattle left radius-ulna (proximal end) and the left radius-ulna of a sheep/goat (also proximal end).



Butchery marks were visible on two of the bones: on the cattle bone, which were shallow knife marks which suggest flesh removal; and on the large piece of long bone which had been cut neatly and cleanly at each end, possibly with a sharp saw. This would have been done in order to extract the marrow from the bone.

No other information could be retrieved from the small assemblage, and it is likely to represent domestic waste.

### *Worked Stone* by Tim Dawson

A single artefact of worked stone was found during the excavation. It was small spherical stone or clay ball which measured 16mm in diameter. It is possibly a rare stone musket ball but, much more likely, a marble.

## **Conclusion**

The watching brief at St Kenelm's Church has observed what may be the remains of earlier, demolished phase of the church, three graves and a small amount of disarticulated human bone.

The length of unmortared limestone wall which was aligned with the northern wall of the nave (north aisle) of the present church appears to represent an earlier, demolished phase of the church dating to the late 13th century (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 593). The demolished wall probably originates from the fifth archway of the central aisle which was destroyed during the construction of the tower in the 16th century. As such, the grave which pre-dates this wall is at least of medieval date, if not earlier.

The other two graves although undated appear to post-date the construction of the tower and originate at some point after the 16th century, most likely in the 19th. Pottery of 19th century date was recovered from the made ground from the service trench beneath the footpath. The presence of this relatively recent material may account for the lack of any graves recorded in the service trench as they may well be present underneath this layer.

## References

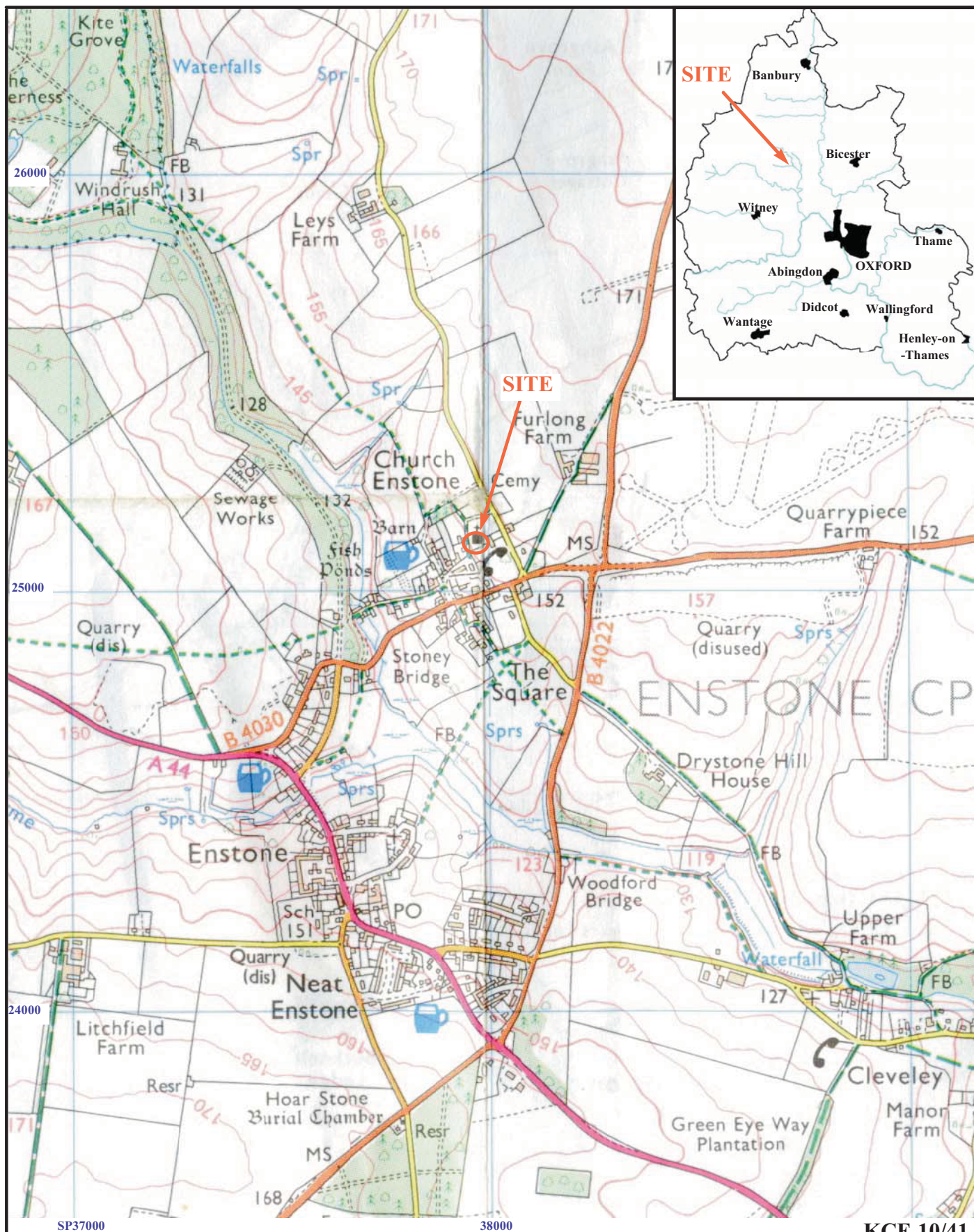
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## APPENDIX 1: Feature list

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
	50	Topsoil	-	-
	51	Subsoil	-	-
1	52, 53	Grave	14th century or later	Stratigraphy
2	54, 55	Grave	14th century or later	Stratigraphy
3	56, 57	Grave	not later than 13th century	Stratigraphy
	58	Wall	late 13th century	Information plaque
5	60	Grave	16th century or later	Stratigraphy
6	59	Cut	19th century	Pottery
	61	footpath	19th century	Pottery and stratigraphy

## APPENDIX 2: Catalogue of pottery

		Roman		OXAM		OXDR		OXBEW		WHEW	
Feature	Context	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
	50							1	14		
	51							2	16		
6	59	1	8			3	99			14	188
4	Wall 58			1	18						
1	53	1	1			1	36				
	Total	2	9	1	18	4	135	3	30	14	188



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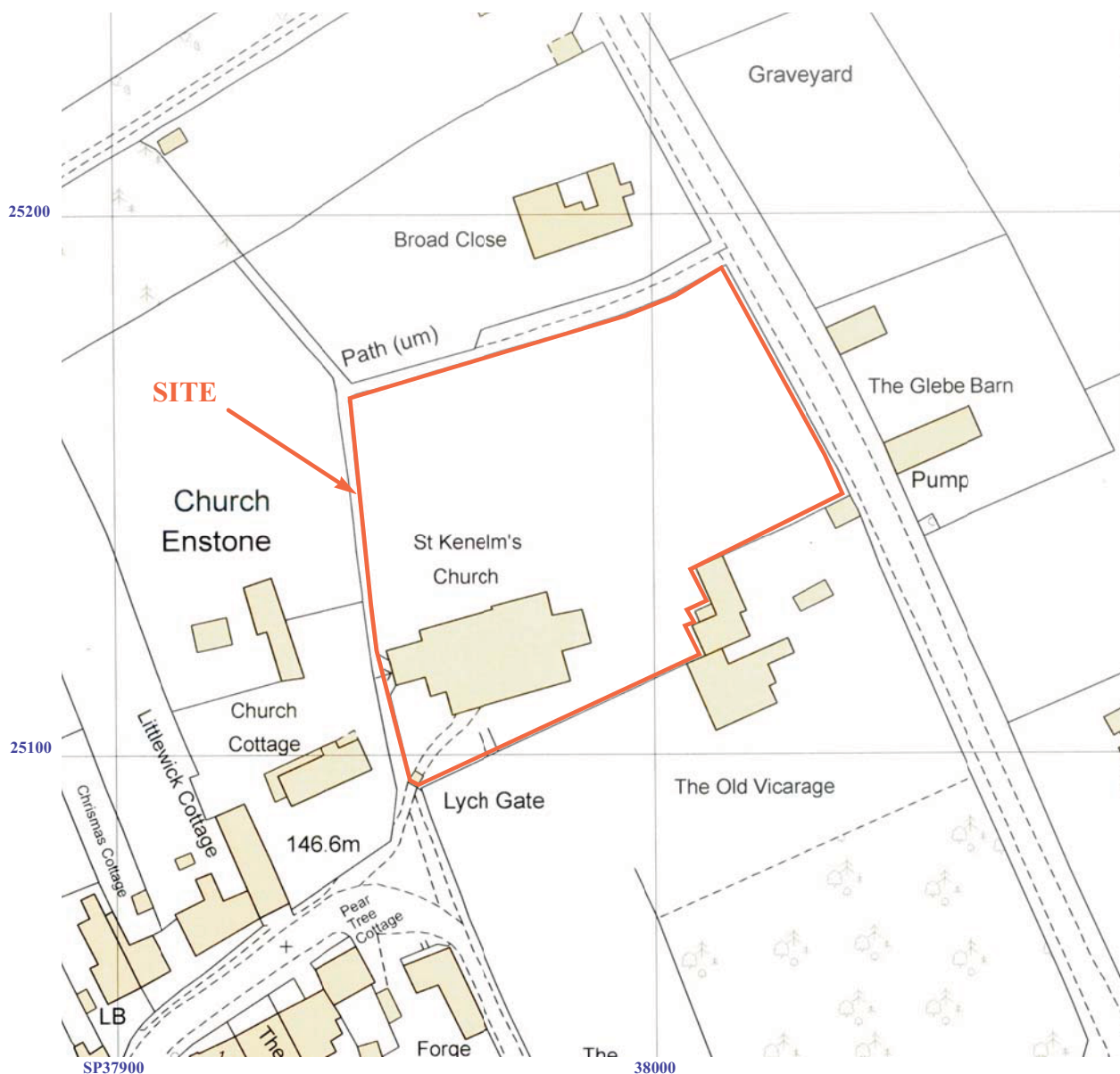
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Figure 1. Location of site within Church Enstone and  
Oxfordshire.

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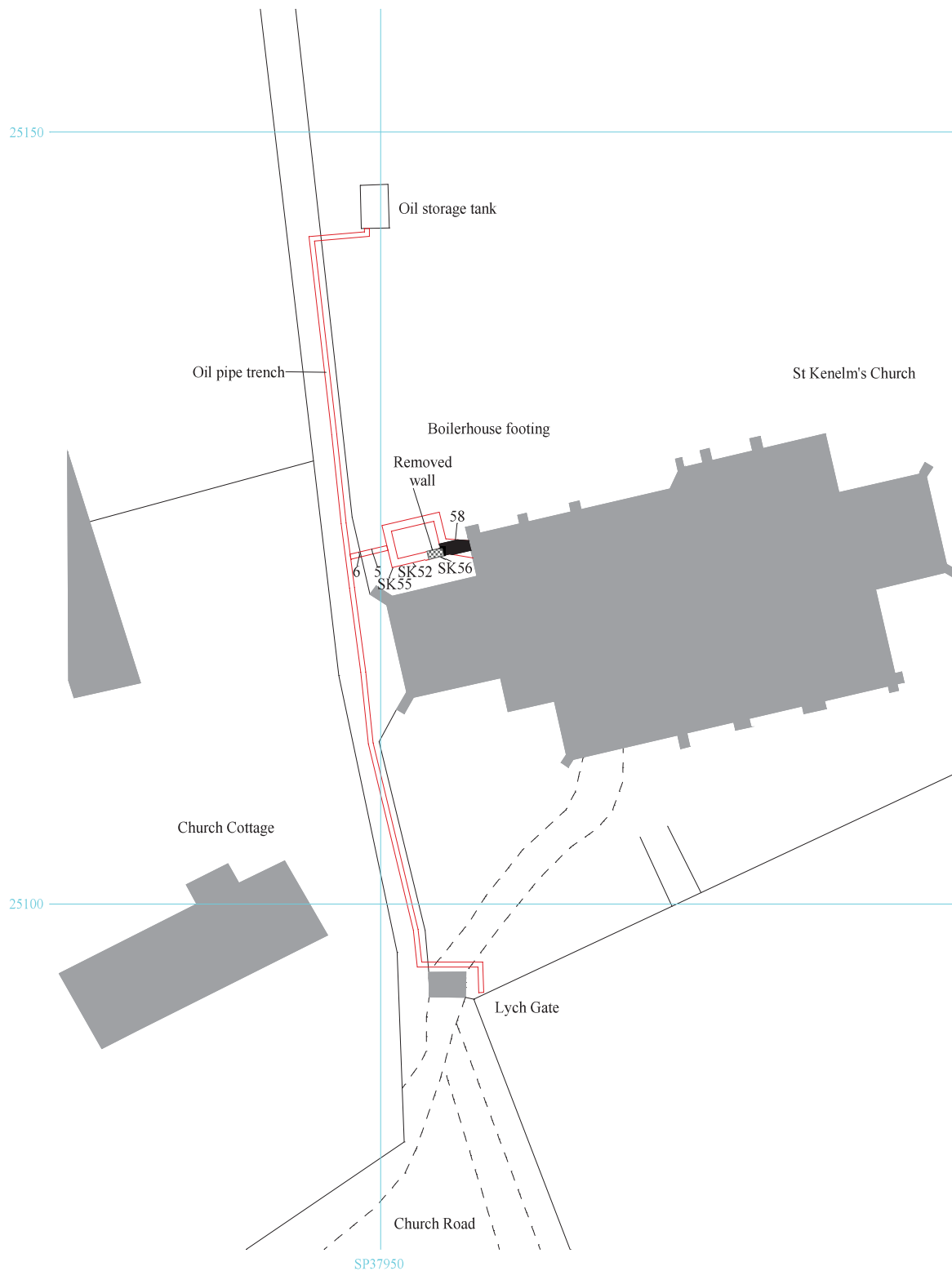
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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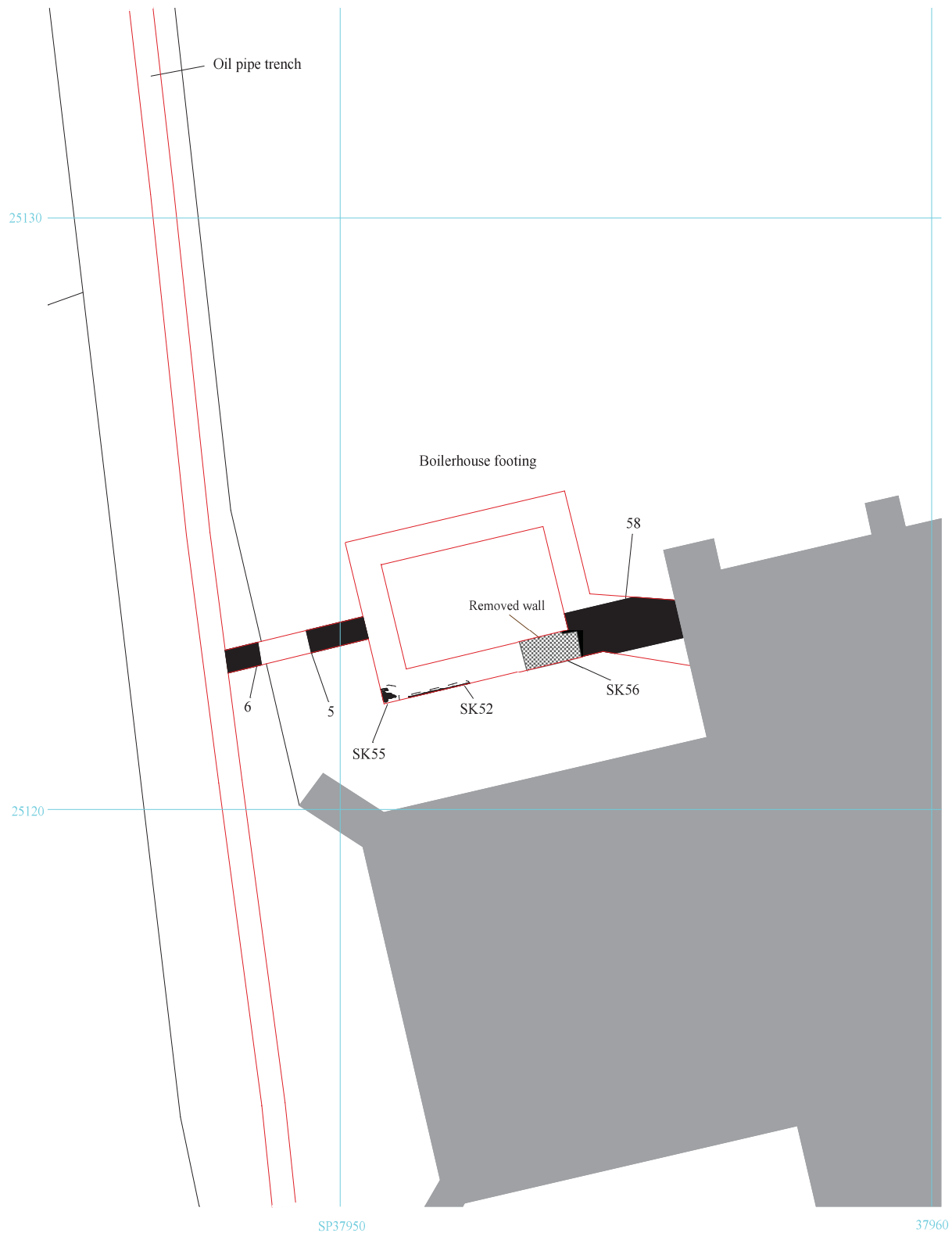


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Figure 3. Location of Groundworks



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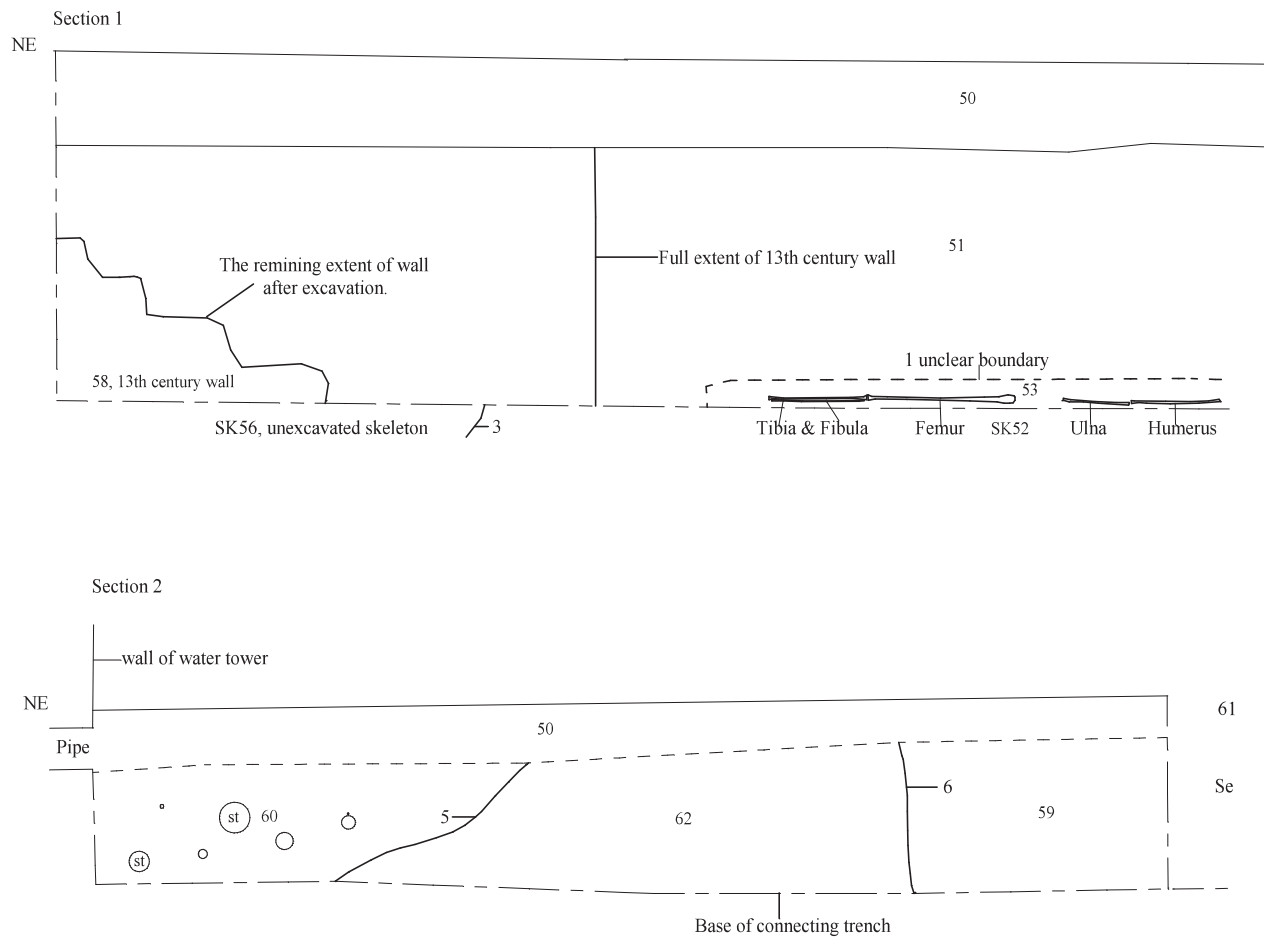
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Figure 4. Detail of boilerhouse groundworks.



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Figure 5. Sections





Plate 1. Skeleton 56 looking east, scale: 0.1m



Plate 2. Wall 58 looking east

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Plates 1 and 2





Plate 3. Skeleton 52 looking southeast, scales: 1.0m (h), 0.5m (v)



Plate 4. Oil pipe trench looking south, scale 0.5m (v), 2.0m (h)

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Plates 3 and 4

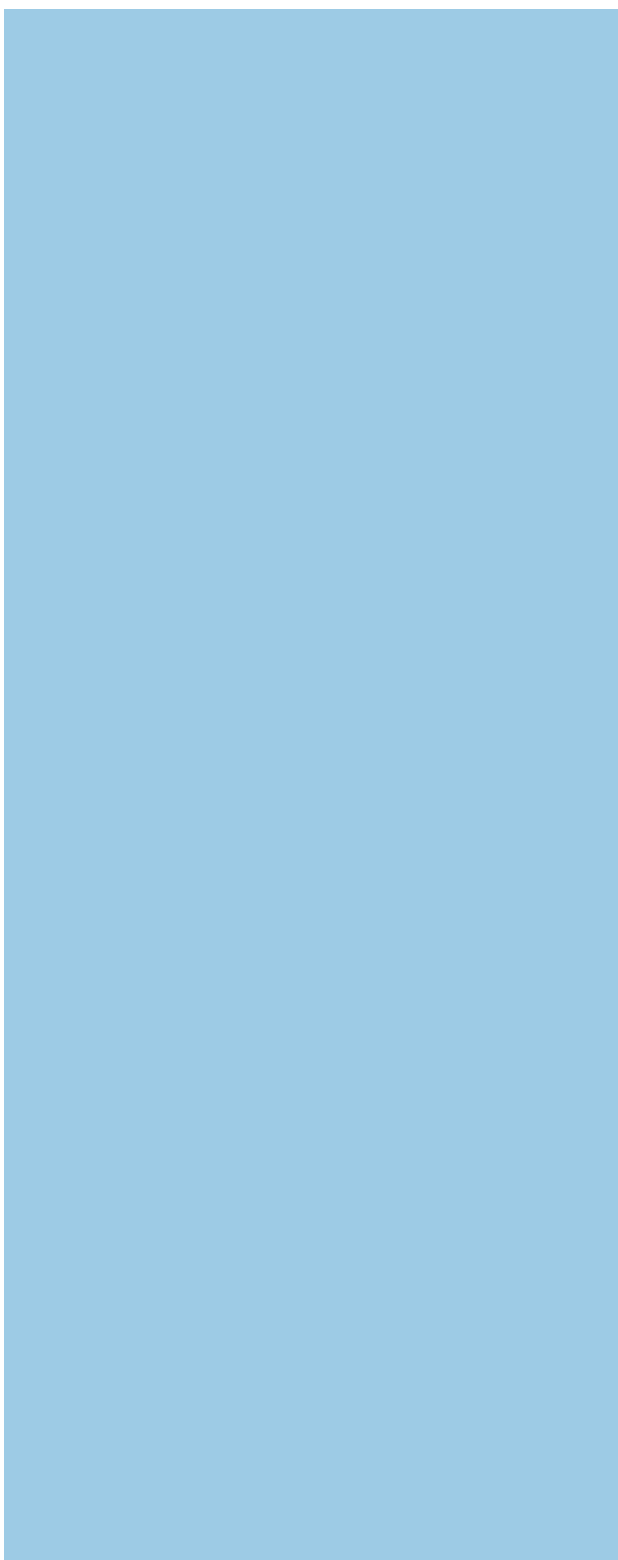
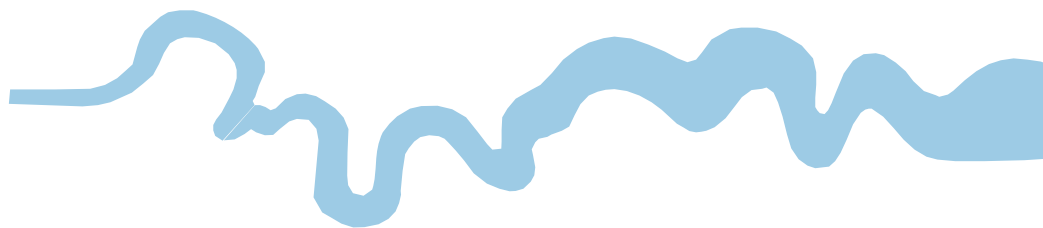
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## TIME CHART

### Calendar Years

Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43
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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