

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land off Bell Lane, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell,
Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by James Lewis

Site Code: BLB10/79

(SU 5838 9098)

**Land of Bell Lane, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell,
Wallingford, Oxfordshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Lavender Developments Ltd**

by James Lewis
Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code BLB 10/79

August 2010

Summary

Site name: Land off Bell Lane, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SU 5838 9098

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 4th August 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: James Lewis

Site code: BLB 10/79

Area of site: 750 sq m

Summary of results: Two very shallow gullies, lying adjacent to each other were recorded and probably reflecting the presence of a boundary. The features are likely to be of late Saxon or medieval date. A single sherd of residual Roman pottery was also recovered. The site appears to have little archaeological potential.

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

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| Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 11.08.10 Steve Preston✓ 11.08.10 |
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Land off Bell Lane, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Wallingford, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by James Lewis

Report 10/79

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at land off Bell Lane, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, Oxfordshire (SU5838 9098) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul McGinty of Lavender Developments Ltd, 47 Deanfield Road, Henley, Oxfordshire, RG10 1UG.

Planning permission (P09/W0039) has been gained for the erection of a new dwelling and car parking at land adjacent to Brightwood, Bell Lane. A condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigations was attached to the planning permission.

This is in accordance with the *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16, 1990) and South Oxfordshire District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxford County Archaeological Services, archaeological advisers to the District. The fieldwork was undertaken by James Lewis and Susan Colley on 4th August 2010 and the site code is BLB 10/79. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located just to the west of Bell Lane within the village of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell to the north-west of Wallingford. Surrounding the site are a number of residential properties (Fig. 2). The village lies within an enclosed landscape characterized by a mainly by arable farming with a lesser amount of livestock farming also present. The underlying geology is Upper Greensand (BGS 1980) and the site lies at a height of 56m above Ordnance Datum at the foot of a steep valley side. The River Thames runs to the north and east of the site, but on the other side of the ridge.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (Oram 2010). In summary, the site lies within the historic centre of Brightwell-cum-Sotwell adjacent to two 17th-century houses and just north of a third. A possible medieval or post-medieval

moated site is located to the south west. Approximately 200m to the west of the site is the projected line of the Roman road which connected Dorchester to Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*). To the north-west of the village is an Iron Age fort at Castle Hill and Wittenham Clumps. Closer to the village, also to the north-west, is Brightwell Barrow (a presumed Bronze Age burial mound). Within the village, a watching brief carried out 40m to the south-west of the site uncovered archaeological features dating from the Late Neolithic to the medieval period (JMHS 2009). Brightwell was an Anglo-Saxon foundation, first mentioned in a charter of AD854 (although this might refer to a different Brightwell) (Mills 1998), and at the time of Domesday Book (1086) manors of both Brightwell and Sotwell were held by the Bishop and Abbey of Winchester (Williams and Martin 2002, 141; 145).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. The specific aims of the evaluation were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present; and
- to determine if any medieval or early post-medieval deposits are present on the site.

Two trenches were to be dug on the area affected by the construction of the new building. These were excavated using a JCB digger fitted with a toothless grading bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

Both trenches were dug as intended (Fig. 3). A detailed description of the trenches is presented in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 4 and Pl. 1)

Trench 1 was 12m long, 1.6m wide and 0.7m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of a 0.2m layer of topsoil, under which was a 0.4m thick layer of subsoil. This overlay a thin dark layer, possibly a buried soil of silty clay which was 0.05m thick and underneath this was found the natural geology (sand). The trench contained two shallow cuts, parallel and adjacent to each other, aligned north-south.

Cut 1 measured at least 1.2m in length, 0.25m wide but only 0.02m deep. It contained a single fill of brown/grey silty clay (50) which contained three sherds of pottery of Roman and late Saxon/early medieval date. Cut 2 was also at least 1.2m in length and was 0.12m wide and 0.04m deep. It contained a brown/grey silty clay with no inclusions (51).

Trench 2 (Fig. 4 and Pl. 2)

Trench 2 was 10m long, 1.6m wide and 0.65m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil overlying 0.32m of subsoil. Underneath this was a thin (0.10m) dark layer, possibly a buried soil of silty clay and this overlay the natural geology. No archaeological deposits were found in this trench.

Finds

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 3 sherds with a total weight of 11g. The pottery types are all common finds in the region. All the pottery occurred in a single feature, context 50 and consisted of two sherds (7g) of WA38: Wallingford ware (Mellor and Oakley 1984; Mellor 1994) and one sherd of Roman greyware weighing 4g. Wallingford waer was current from c. AD1050 – 1250. Given the small mean sherd weight, it seems likely that the pottery has been the subject of some attrition since original deposition, and so the interpretation of the feature as agricultural in nature seems entirely feasible.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed a small number of artefacts and deposits of archaeological interest. Two very shallow, ephemeral linear features were recorded in Trench 1 one of which is of late Saxon or medieval date (or later) from which a residual piece of Roman pottery was also recovered. The other linear feature was undated but, by association is of similar date. These features are possibly traces of a feature demarcating a boundary between two plots.

References

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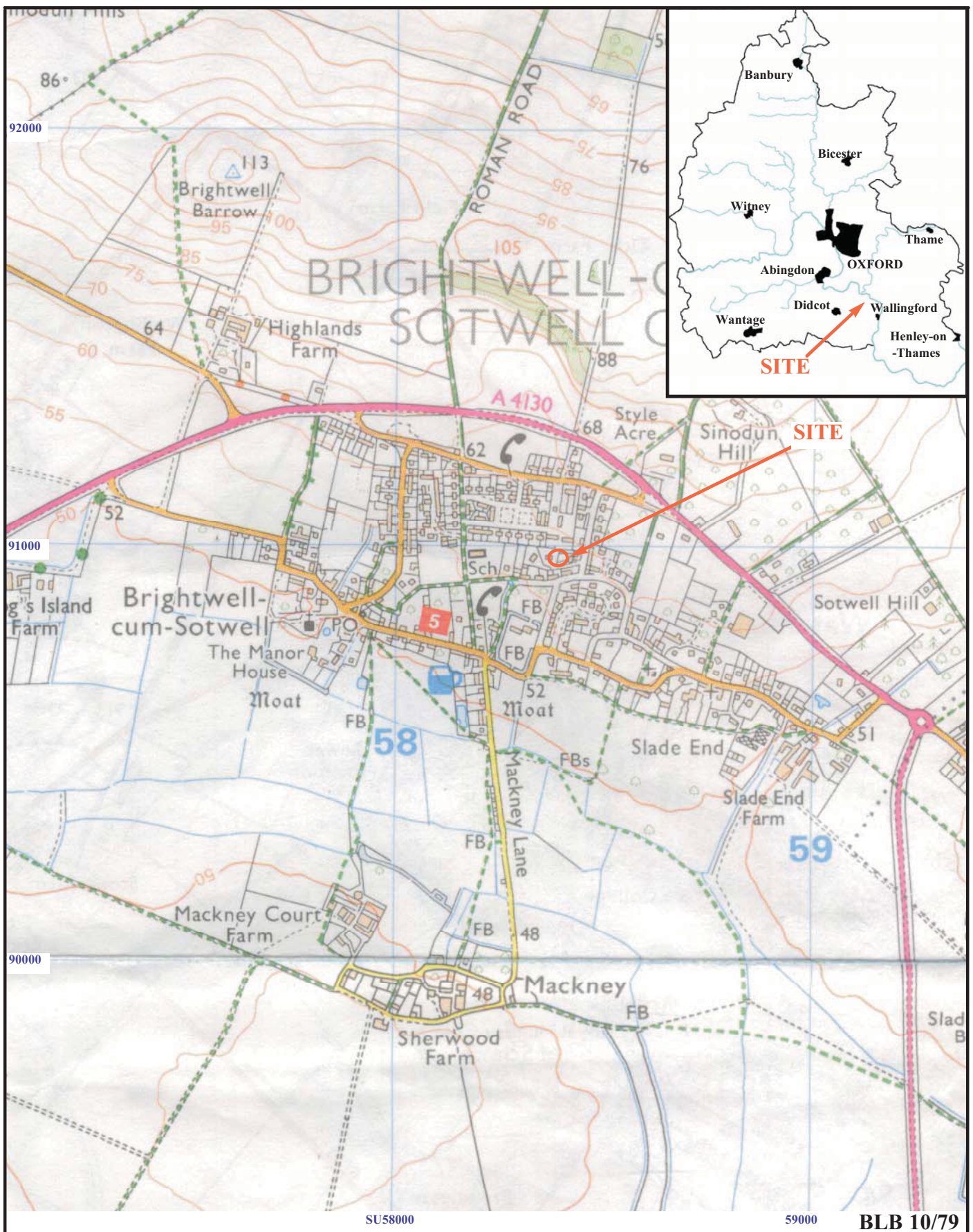
APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at South end

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Length (m)</i> | <i>Breadth (m)</i> | <i>Depth (m)</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|--|
| 1 | 12m | 1.6m | 0.7m | 0-0.2 topsoil, 0.2-0.6m subsoil, 0.60- 0.65m dark layer, 0.65m + Upper Green Sand natural geology. |
| 2 | 10m | 1.6m | 0.65m | 0-0.18m topsoil, 0.18-0.5m subsoil, 0.5-0.6m dark layer, 0.6m + Upper Green Sand natural Geology. |

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

| <i>Trench</i> | <i>Cut</i> | <i>Fill (s)</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Dating evidence</i> |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | 50 | Shallow gully | 11th century or later | pottery |
| 1 | 2 | 51 | Shallow gully | (?same) | association |



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Figure 1. Location of site within Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.



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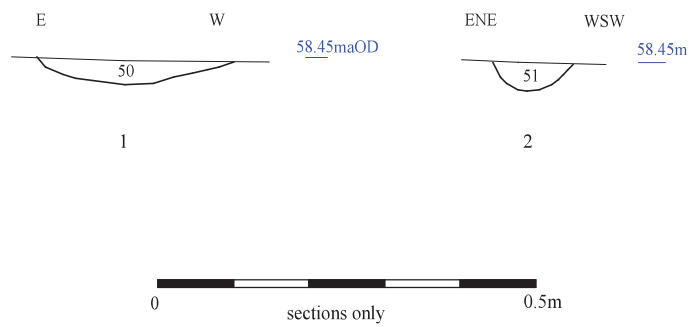
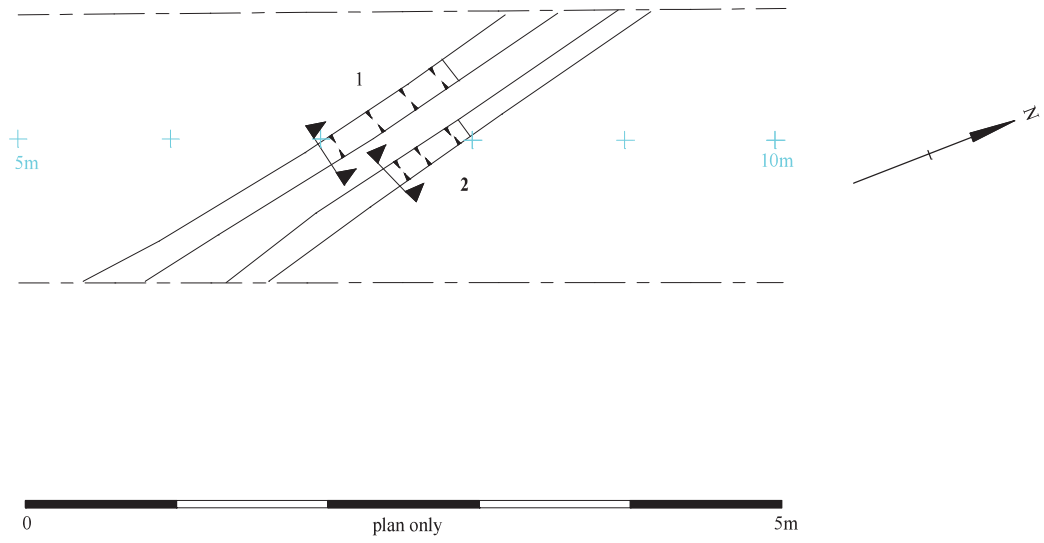
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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Trench 1



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Figure 4. Detail plan and section of Trench 1.

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking north east, scales: 1m and 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 2, looking north, scales: 1m and 2m.

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Plates 1 and 2



Plate 3. Trench 1, shallow gully 1, looking south, scale 0.1m.



Plate 4. Trench 1, shallow gully 2, looking south, scale 0.1m.

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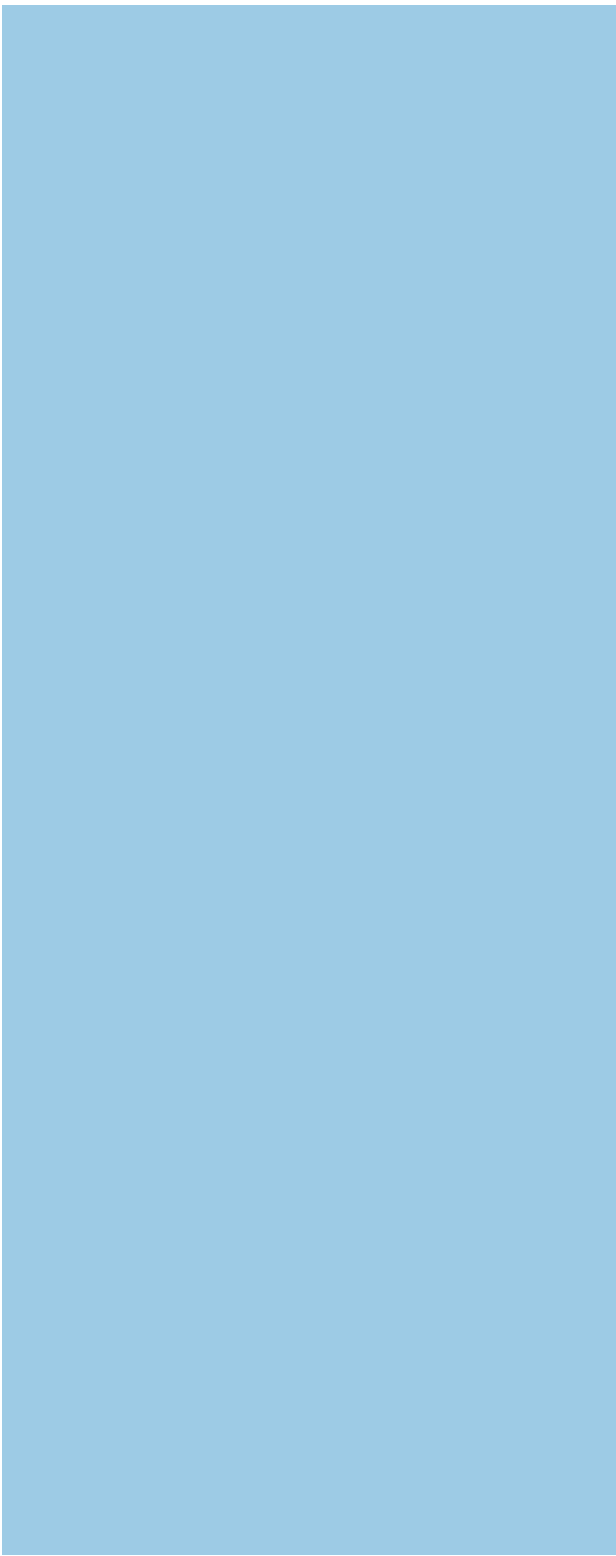
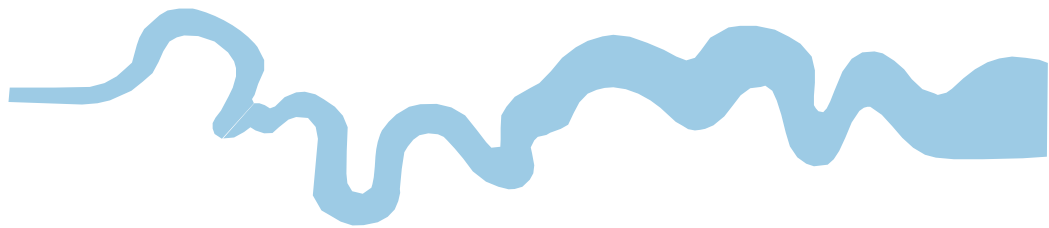
Plates 3 and 4.

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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 |





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

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Fax: 0118 9260553
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**