

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Stonor Arms Hotel, Henley Road,  
Stonor, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**by Andrew Muddin**

**Site Code: SAO09/83**

**(SU 7367 8853)**

**Stonor Arms Hotel, Henley Road,  
Stonor, Oxfordshire**

**Archaeological Watching Brief**

**For Wild Ash Limited**

by Andrew Munding

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code SAO 09/83

**November 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** Stonor Arms Hotel, Stonor, Oxfordshire

**Grid reference:** SU 7367 8853

**Site activity:** Watching Brief

**Date and duration of project:** 29th September 2009 – 23rd September 2010

**Project manager:** Steve Ford

**Site supervisor:** Tim Dawson, Susan Colley, Andrew Muddin

**Site code:** SAO 09/83

**Area of site:** 588 sq m

**Summary of results:** Extensive remodelling of the site and building was carried out during development of the Stonor Arms Hotel and grounds. The main core of the hotel is of 18th century date and is a Grade II listed building. Observations of machine levelling of the soil bank to the rear of the site were carried out and some of the footing trenches for the new construction. Observations were also made to the minimal modifications to the 18th/19th century core of the building.

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

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

Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford✓ 01.11.10 Steve Preston✓ 01.11.10
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# **Stonor Arms Hotel, Henley Road, Stonor, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Watching Brief**

by Andrew Muddin

**Report 09/83**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at the Stonor Arms Hotel, Henley Road, Stonor, Oxfordshire (SU 7367 8853) (Fig.1). The work was commissioned by Ms Doina Moss of Barrett Lloyd Davis Associates Limited, 535 Kings Road, London, SW10 0SZ on behalf of Wild Ash Limited, Soundess House, Nettlebed, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 5BH.

Planning consent (P08/E1278) has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for redevelopment of the site, which included extensive remodelling of the grounds and building, demolition of 20th-century extensions and linking in new extensions to the existing 18th- and 19th-century parts of the building, which is Grade II Listed. The consent is subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief during the groundworks.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Richard Oram, Planning Archaeologist for Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, adviser to the District Council on matters pertaining to archaeology, and based on a brief supplied by him (Oram 2009). The site work was carried out by Tim Dawson, Susan Colley and Andrew Muddin between 29th September 2009 and 23rd September 2010. The site code is SAO 09/83.

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

## **Location, topography and geology**

Stonor is located within the Chiltern Hills, at the foot of a very steep valley c. 5km north-west of Henley-on-Thames. The site is located within the village on the eastern side of Henley Road (the B480) (Fig. 1). The current site contains the disused hotel building, with associated parking and gardens (Fig. 2). The garden lies on the bottom of the slope of Almshill Wood at 85m above Ordnance Datum, with the land on either side of the road rising to 150m and higher (Fig. 1). The underlying geology is Middle Chalk (BGS 1980).

## **Archaeological background**

The parish of Pishill with Stonor, was created in the 1920s, and formerly known as Upper Assendon. Stonor is a small hamlet that served the stately home at Stonor Park. This manor house has 12th-century origins, but the classical Elizabethan-style manor is its oldest surviving element. The attached chapel seems to have 12th-century architectural details. There is therefore a potential of medieval deposits being found in the village.

Davis's 18th-century map shows development on both sides of the Henley Road. Many of the existing buildings in the village are listed, as is the original core of the Stonor Arms Hotel. This is of Flemish bonded-brick construction and colourwashed. A row of three cottages 50m to the south of the site date from the 16th century (Oram 2009). Other buildings in the village date from the 16th to 19th centuries.

The county Historic Environment Record notes that no archaeological fieldwork has been carried out within the village itself. It does, though, record the presence of a modest range of prehistoric finds in the area, mostly of Mesolithic and Neolithic struck flints (Briggs et al 1986).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by groundworks. This was to involve examination of areas of slope levelling and ground reduction to the rear of the site, and if called for observation of new footing trenches.

## **Results**

Two main components were carried out during this phase of archaeological works. As well as monitoring of ground reduction to the rear of the site, a basic condition assessment was made of the existing remains of the standing hotel, after demolition of the 20th-century additions.

### *Site ground reduction and footings*

The ground was observed during and after machine excavation to the rear of the Hotel grounds (Fig. 3). A common stratigraphy was noted across most of these works. Undisturbed deposits of topsoil overlying chalk natural geology were seen through all sections, and the topsoil and subsoil at its deepest seem to be only c. 0.6m thick. After topsoil and subsoil removal, up to 4m of the chalk natural geology was removed to level the site to that where the retained building stands. Some 19th-century dumping of rubbish was noted in a large feature on

this southern boundary. This might have been associated with other contemporary sub-surface landscaping of ground which was also seen here to a depth of 0.84m.

Once the level on this eastern side of the site had been matched to the west, only natural chalk deposits remained across all exposed surfaces but subsequently buried by a mat of crushed rubble to form a stable base for further machining. All footings were dug through previously undisturbed natural chalk deposits. No finds or deposits pre-dating the 19th century were noted during any of the groundworks.

### *The Building (Fig. 4)*

Due to the modification of the existing Grade II listed building, a basic assessment was made during a visit at the end of archaeological works. This is illustrated by Figure 4, but can be summarized that minimal alteration has occurred to the site during the course of demolition. All the 20th-century additions to the building have been removed, leaving the 18th- and 19th-century elements standing. Two parts of walls, one on a 19th-century addition has had its window removed to be changed to French windows.

An interior wall, part of the 18th-century exterior wall, has also been stabilized with a metal reinforced joist and rebuilt as it was seen to be structurally unstable. This opening in the wall will remain open linking this with the new construction.

Archaeological observation occurred on three test pits, two dug against exterior walls of the 19th-century northern addition and a third, which was dug within a room of the 20th-century additions. The first two showed mixed rubble deposits to a depth of 0.5m, which overlay natural chalk. No archaeology was noted in these two test pits. In the third test pit, within the modern extension that used to be the public house portion of the Hotel, the floor level had been reduced by 0.23m and only natural chalk geology was observed. This has occurred in most of the eastern 19th-century addition, which links to the eastern part of the 18th-century structure. Finally in this eastern 19th-century addition, a previously bricked-up doorway was to be reopened.

### **Finds**

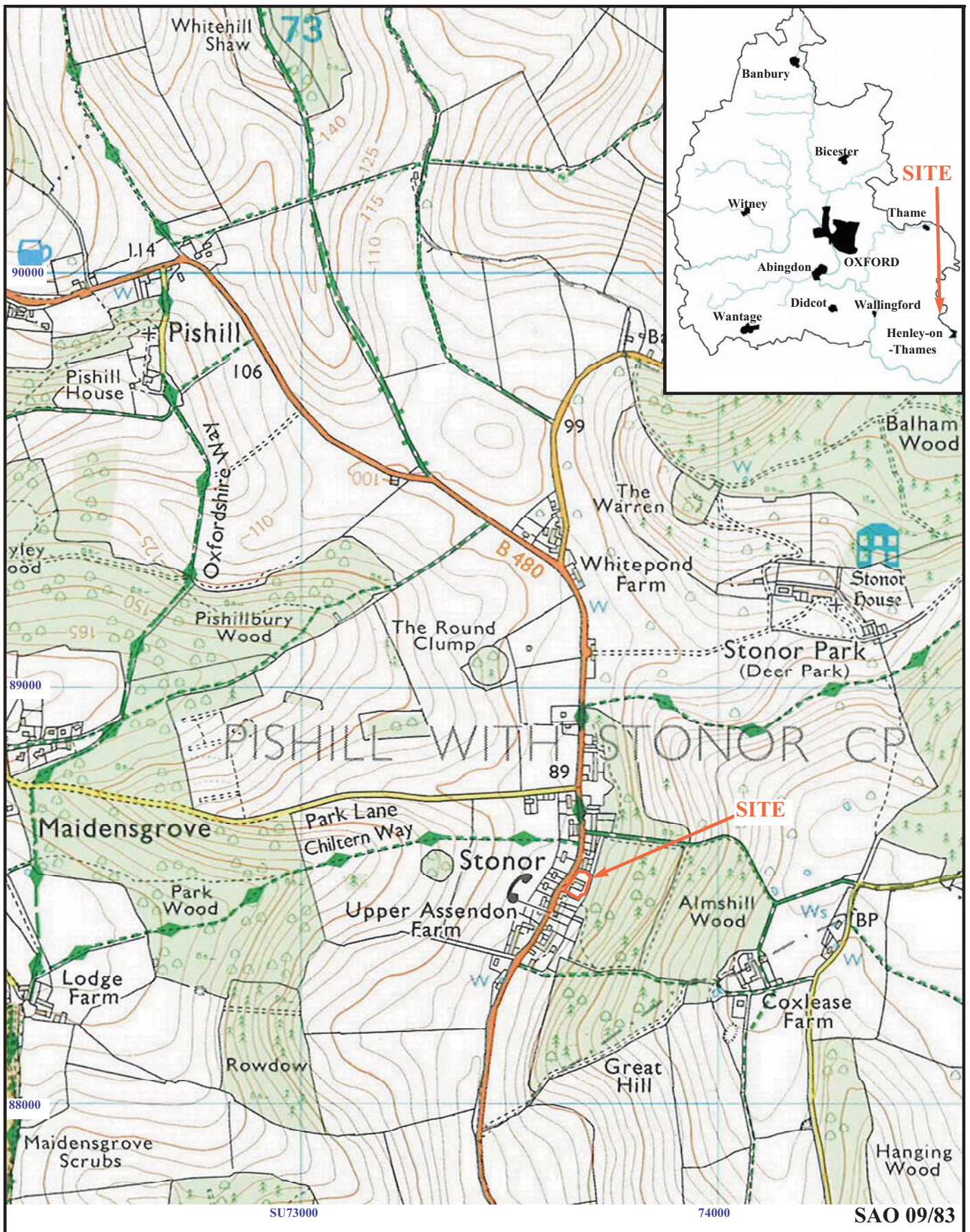
No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from groundworks.

## **Conclusion**

No finds or deposits pre-dating the 19th century were noted during any of the groundworks on the site despite relatively extensive areas of overburden stripping having taken place in parts. Similarly, no deposits pre-dating the 18th/19th century buildings were noted in the small test pits dug and it is possible that truncation of the archaeologically relevant levels had taken place when the different components of the building was constructed.

## **References**

BGS, 1980 , *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 254, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth  
Oram, R, 2009, 'P08/E1278 - Stonor Arms Hotel, Stonor; Design Brief for Archaeological Watching Brief',  
Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service, Oxford  
PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO



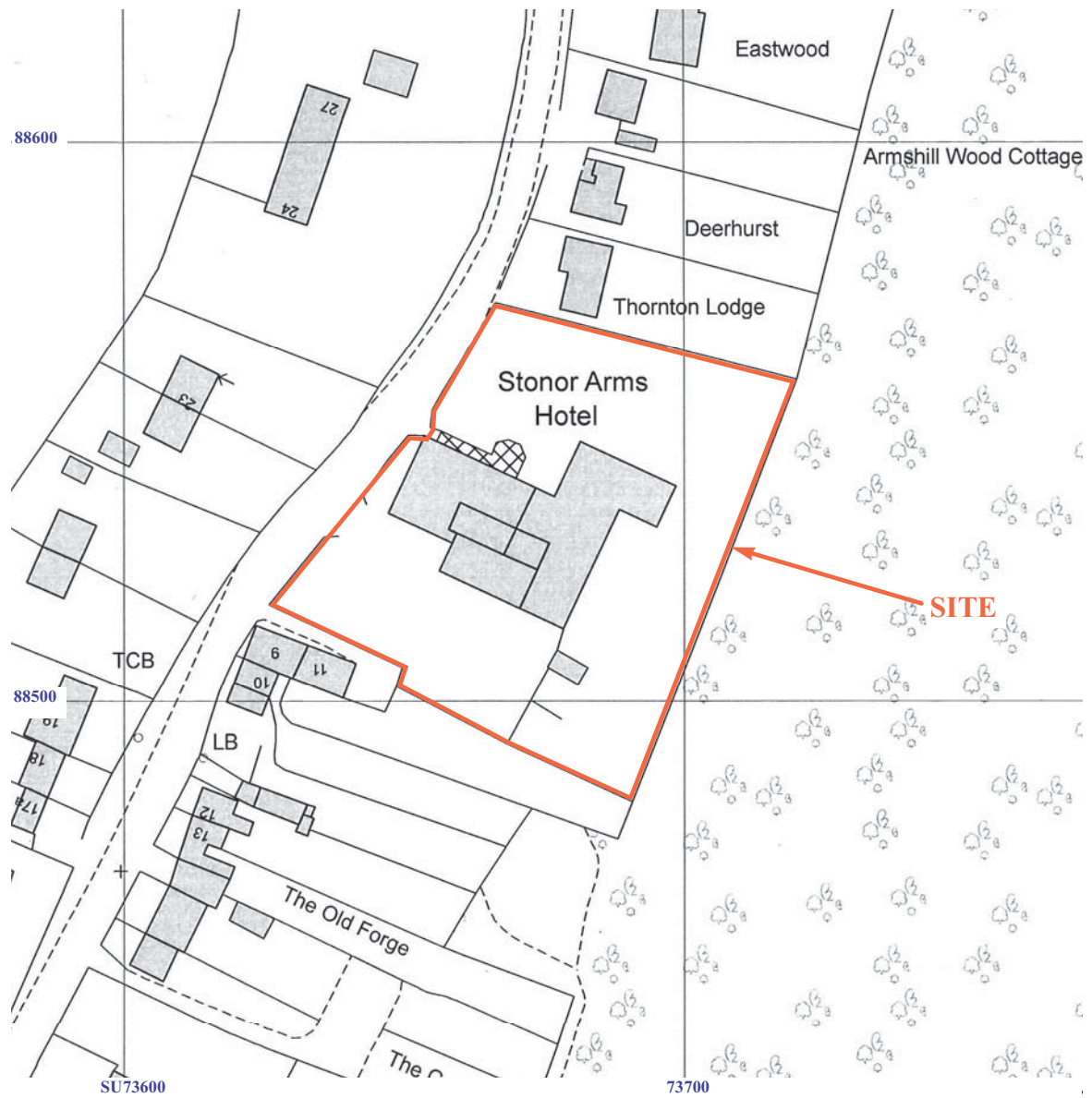
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Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 1. Location of site within Stonor and Oxfordshire.

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Figure 2. General location of building and layout before modification works.

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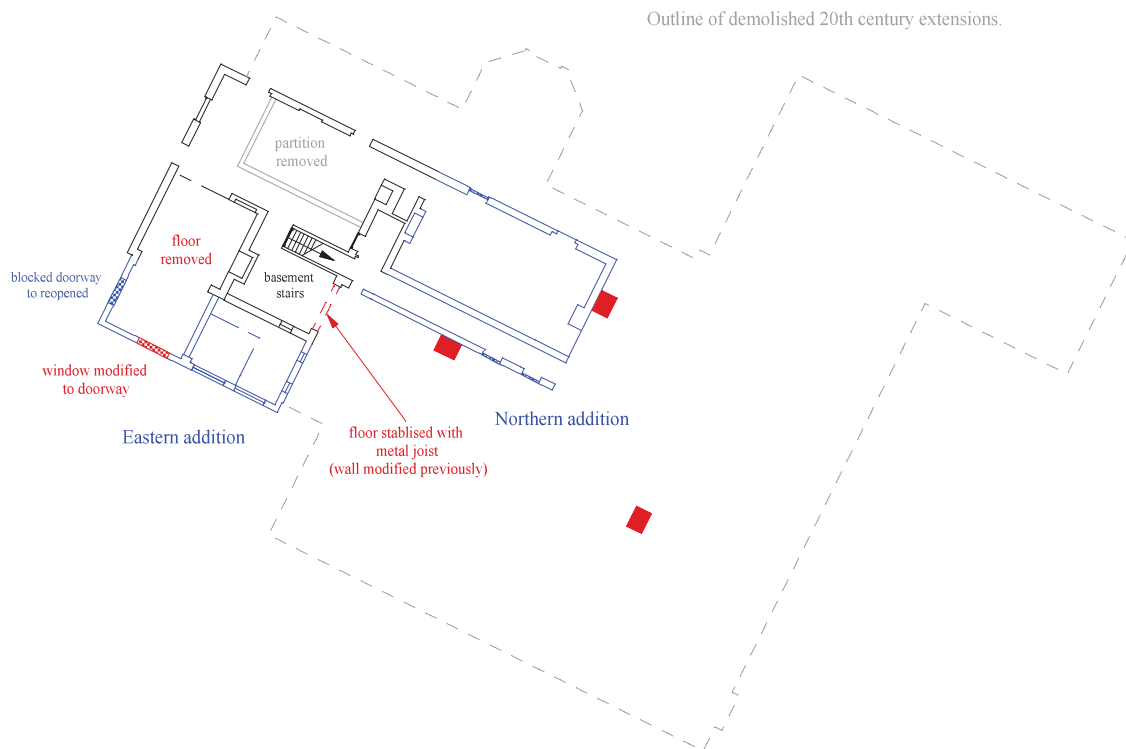


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**Stonor Arms Hotel, Stonor, Oxfordshire, 2009-10  
Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 3. Detail of areas observed for watching brief.





*Key*

- Engineering test pit
- 18th century construction
- 19th century construction

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**Archaeological watching brief**

Figure 4. Detail of modifications to the ground floor of Stonor Arms Hotel.



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NNE

SSW



Toposil



Natural geology (Chalk)

machine step



Natural geology (Chalk)

83.5maOD



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Figure 5. Representative section of stratigraphy in south eastern corner of site.



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Plate 1. General view of south eastern margins of the site.



Plate 2. General view over new footings, with 19th century northern addition (rear) visible in the background.

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**Archeological watching brief**

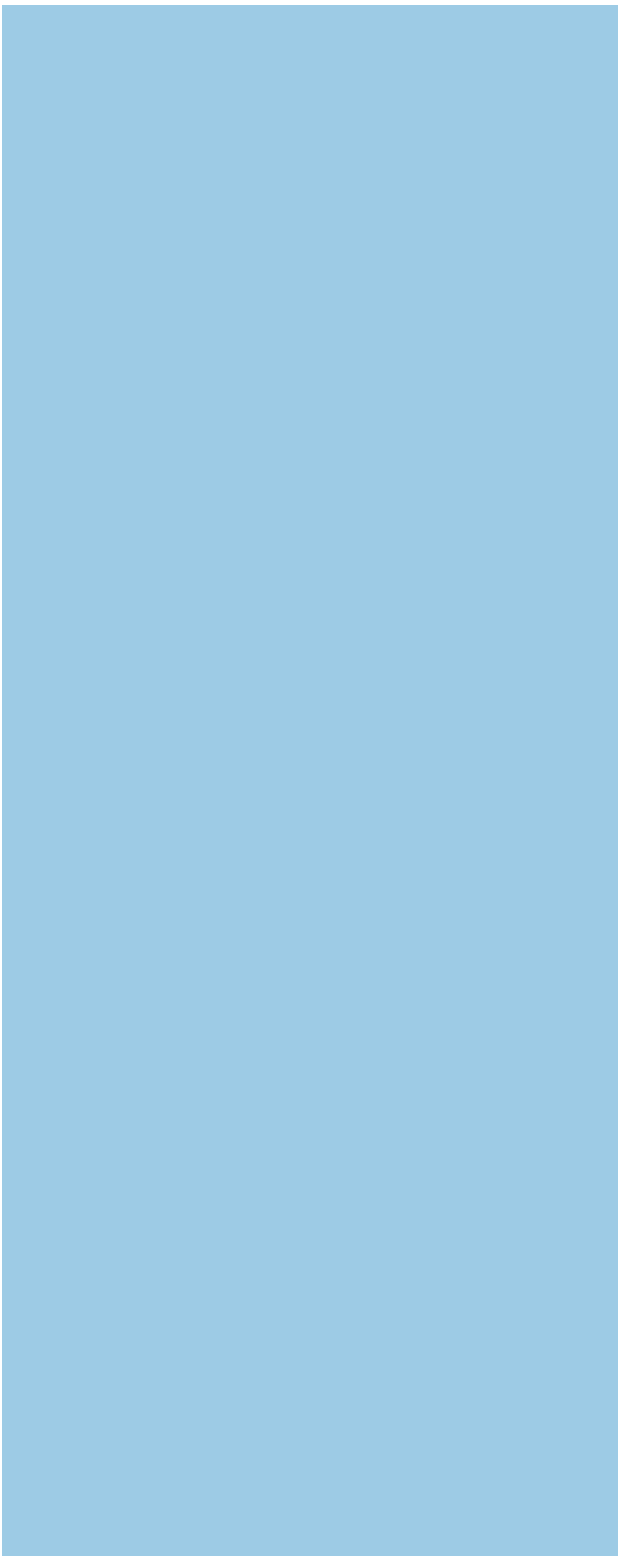
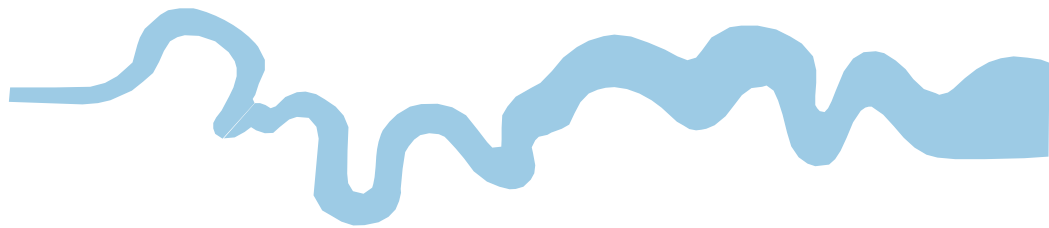
Plates 1 and 2.

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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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