

**T H A M E S      V A L L E Y**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

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

**Supermarket and Hotel Site, Aylesbury Waterside,  
Exchange Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire**

**An archaeological evaluation**

**by Andrew Weale**

**Site Code AWB10/15**

**(SP 8225 1365)**

# **Supermarket and Hotel Site, Aylesbury Waterside, Exchange Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Aylesbury Vale District Council**

by Andrew Weale  
Thames Valley Archaeological Services  
Ltd

Site Code AWB10/15

**September 2010**

## Summary

**Site name:** Supermarket and Hotel Site, Aylesbury Waterside, Exchange Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire

**Grid reference:** SP 8225 1365

**Site activity:** Evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 31st August to 10th September 2010

**Project manager:** Andrew Weale

**Site supervisor:** Andrew Weale

**Site code:** AWB 10/15

**Area of site:** c. 1.6ha

**Summary of results:** No pre-modern archaeological features were encountered during the archaeological evaluation. Building foundations of late 19th or 20th century date were discovered, which appear on various editions of the Ordnance Survey maps of the site. Underlying deep alluvial deposits appeared to represent overbank flooding deposits with no evidence of extensive organic preservation nor evidence of palaeochannels nor water management features encountered. On the basis of these results the site does not have any archaeological potential.

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

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Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 23.09.10
	Steve Preston ✓ 20.09.10

# Supermarket and Hotel Site Aylesbury Waterside, Exchange Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andrew Weale

**Report 10/15b**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on the Supermarket and Hotel Site, Aylesbury Waterside, Exchange Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (SP 8225 1365) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Chris Richards of CB Richard Ellis Ltd, Kingsley House, 1a Wimpole Street, London, W1G 0RE on behalf of Aylesbury Vale District Council.

Planning permission is to be sought for the development of the Waterside area for leisure and commercial use, including a food retail premises and a hotel. The results of the archaeological evaluation are to be submitted as part of the planning application.

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement, *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5 2010), and the District Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Sandy Kidd, Senior Archaeological Officer of Buckingham County Archaeological Services and based on a brief supplied by Buckingham County Archaeological Services (Radford 2007). The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Weale and Kyle Beaverstock between 31st August and 10th September 2010, and the site code is AWB 10/15. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at Buckinghamshire County Museum in due course.

A previous desk-top study for the site (Hopkins 2010) can be summarized as follows.

The cartographic and historic evidence demonstrates that the majority of the site has been developed and redeveloped during recent history, finally with recent demolition of structures. The location of an electricity depot and the requirements of such an establishment in the way of groundworks and cabling, mean that the ground, and any underlying archaeologically relevant levels, will almost certainly have been disturbed, perhaps significantly so in some areas. However, the location of the site in close proximity to watercourses and the absence of development on at least parts of the site mean that it is likely that archaeologically relevant levels will have survived and that if deposits of archaeological interest are present, then these may be waterlogged and potentially provide a wealth of palaeo-ecological and economic data. The proximity of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and medieval settlement sites suggest that this area may be rich in activity of any or all of those



periods. The Aylesbury branch of the Grand Union Canal and the canal basin are the most prominent features in the post-medieval landscape. The canal edge forms the boundary of the proposal site with no surviving above-ground heritage assets on the site itself.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located to the south of the historic centre of Aylesbury and to the north-west of Walton. The site occupies an irregular parcel of land and covers an area of *c.* 1.6ha (Fig. 1). It includes areas to either side of a small brook (Bear Brook) linked by two bridges across it. The site is bounded (Fig. 2) to the north by Exchange Street, to the east by residential housing and an electricity depot, to the south by a canal and canal basin and to the west by a new theatre complex and contractor's compound for the construction of the theatre complex. Former structures on the site have now been demolished, apart from one small building currently used as a bat roost, and much of the site covered by Tarmac for use as a car-park. The banks of the Bear Brook are a mixture of trees and scrub as is the eastern part of the canal side. The site is mainly located on recent and Holocene/Pleistocene alluvium, which overlies Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay (including Hartwell Clay) (BGS 1990). Flat lying alluvial deposits overlying gravel were observed within all the excavated trenches. The site is at a height of approximately 80m above Ordnance Datum.

## **Archaeological background**

Aylesbury, in general, has a rich and varied archaeological sequence spanning periods from the Mesolithic to the later post-medieval and this has recently been comprehensively synthesized (BCC 2009). The town's origins are thought to lie in the Saxon period which is corroborated by its mention in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. However earlier activity is well represented. An Iron Age hillfort had been identified in the town which was later reused, enclosing the Minster church (Blair 1994). The proposal site is also located close to Walton, now a suburb of the town. Extensive fieldwork in this area has revealed evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of Mesolithic struck flints through to Bronze Age activity in the form of refuse pits, structures and cremations (Farley 2010, fig. 4.16).

Roman activity is less well recorded for the town with the majority of entries in the county Historic Environment Record relating to stray find spots, such as for coins, from various locations. The projected route of the Akeman Street Roman road, which connected St Albans to Alchester, is thought to pass to the north-west of

the site. Again, fieldwork in the Walton area has identified Roman activity in the form of boundary ditches or field systems (Farley 1994).

Various investigations and chance observations have taken place on Walton Street and within Walton itself revealing, most importantly, a notable range of deposits of Saxon date, but with both earlier and later periods also represented. Fieldwork carried out some distance to the south of the site on Walton Street revealed a range of occupation deposits including pits, ditches and postholes. Many of these were individually poorly dated but others were clearly of Saxon, medieval and post-medieval date (AS 2005). Extensive excavations at The Orchard in Walton examined at least ten buildings of mid-Saxon date (Ford and Howell 2004) to go with a further six sunken floored buildings to the south discovered previously (Farley 1994). An archaeological evaluation (AS 2006) on the site of the new theatre complex adjacent to the site revealed a deep sequence of alluvial deposits including a possible meander of the Bear Brook. A small amount of medieval pottery close to the Bear Brook were recorded as were post medieval features.

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/ absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological or palaeoenvironmental deposits within the area of development. This work was to be carried out in a manner which will not compromise the integrity of archaeological features or deposits which might warrant preservation *in-situ*, or might better be excavated under conditions pertaining to full excavation.

The specific research aims of this project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if any late Prehistoric occupation is present on the site;
- to determine if any Saxon occupation is present on the site; and
- to determine if there are any water management features present on the site and if so what is their date and nature.

It was proposed to excavate nine trenches, four 15m long and five 20m long and all 2m wide.

Tarmac and overburden/made ground was removed by a 360<sup>0</sup> machine fitted with a ditching bucket, under continuous archaeological supervision, to expose archaeologically sensitive levels. Where archaeological features are certainly or probably present, the stripped areas were cleaned using appropriate hand tools.

Sufficient of the archaeological features and deposits exposed was excavated or sampled by hand to satisfy the aims of the brief.

## **Results**

Only seven trenches were excavated and only four trenches (3, 4, 8 and 9) were dug as intended (Fig. 3). Trench 1 was to have been located in an area that has now been landscaped for the box office entrance of the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre and was not available at the time of the evaluation. Trench 2 was to have been in part of the active Exchange Street Car Park but safe access to this location was not possible and the trench was not excavated. The canal side and canal basin side of the Canal Side Car Park was blocked off due to the present on site of sheet piers. Trench 5 was moved northwards and changed from 15m to 20m long. Trench 6 was moved north-east and rotated through 90°, and Trench 7 was moved north east and changed from 20m to 15m. All the changes to the proposed trench layout were undertaken with the agreement of Mr Kidd, Senior Archaeological Officer with Buckinghamshire Archaeological Service. The excavated trenches varied from 15m to 20.1m long and in depth from 1.4m to 2.6m deep. All were 2.0m wide.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1; the excavated trenches retain the proposed numbering, with Trenches 1 and 2 omitted.

### Trench 3 (Plate 1)

Trench 3 was 20.1m long and aligned SE–NW, although a central 4m section was occupied by a large reinforced concrete base. The stratigraphy within Trench 3 comprised 0.2m Tarmac, beneath which was 0.35m of hoggin. Beneath the hoggin was 0.15m of made ground (152), a mid brown red silty sand with gravel which included modern brick. Beneath 152 was 0.1m of light white yellow gravelly sand (153) with no artefacts. Beneath 153 was 0.55m of mixed blue green clay (154) with ash, coal and brick stamped LBC. Beneath this was dark black blue clay (155) with metal, modern frogged brick, peg tile, and hydrocarbon contamination. Beneath was 156, 0.6m depth of clean blue grey alluvial clay with no artefacts. Blue clay 156 overlay 0.3m of yellow brown alluvial clay (157) with no artefacts. Beneath (157) were clean gravel natural geology and the water table. No pre-modern artefacts were recovered from Trench 3.

### Trench 4 (Plate 2)

Trench 4 was 15m long and aligned SE–NW. The stratigraphy within Trench 4 comprised 0.20m of reinforced concrete beneath which was 0.3m of brick rubble made ground, above 0.33m thick of blackish grey clay (74) with bricks marked LBC, unmarked square sectioned frogged bricks, nails and ceramic insulators. Beneath 74

was a layer 0.19m thick of black silty sand (75) which contained telegraph pole tensioning wire. Beneath (75) was layer 76, which was 0.56m thick of greenish grey clay with modern glass bottle, metal, modern brick and sections of telegraph poles. This overlay 0.7m of grey blue alluvial clay (77), similar to 156 in Trench 3, and which contained no artefacts. Beneath 77 was 0.3m thick yellow brown alluvial clay (78) which was similar to 157 in Trench 3. Trench 4 contained no pre-modern artefacts or features.

#### Trench 5

Trench 5 was 20.1m long and aligned west to east. Trench 5 was subdivided into three parts.

The stratigraphy within the eastern 5m comprised 0.03m of Tarmac beneath which was 0.15m of concrete above a modern brick wall, aligned SE–NW which consisted of 2 courses of brick with a yellow sandy mortar. The bricks were modern square-sectioned frogged bricks. Beneath the brick wall was 0.2m of concrete footings. Beneath the footings was which was 0.5m thick of greenish grey clay (88) with modern wire and telegraph pole tensioning wire, similar to deposit 76 in Trench 4. Beneath (88) was (89) which was 0.4m thick of dark blue clay (89) with small fragments of ceramic building material and glass. This overlay 0.4m thick blue grey alluvial clay (90) which was similar to 156 in Trench 3 and again contained no artefacts. Beneath (90) was layer 91 which was 0.5m thick of yellow brown alluvial clay, similar to 157 in Trench 3 and which contained no artefacts.

From 5m to 9.5m from the eastern end of the trench beneath the Tarmac was a large concrete chamber of unknown depth.

From 9.5m to the western end of the trench beneath the Tarmac was brick rubble with water to a depth of 1.8m. At the top of the rubble beneath the Tarmac was a series of large iron girders riveted together in a grid pattern: two of these girders were removed by the machine and a section of the rubble was removed. The rubble contained modern late 20th century insulated wire, plastic, lagged pipes and brick marked LBC. Beneath the rubble a concrete surface was encountered and this part of the trench was written off on the advice of Mr Kidd. It appeared that the western end of the trench consisted of a cellar roofed with iron girders and back-filled with rubble. Only modern artefacts or features were encountered within Trench 5.

#### Trench 6

Trench 6 was 18.2m long and aligned SE–NW. An electricity service ran across the trench and this area was not excavated. The stratigraphy within Trench 6 comprised 0.04m of gravel, beneath which in the south-eastern 3m of the trench was a modern soakaway with an active drain within it. Beneath the gravel along the rest of the trench was a series of large concrete bases and footings. A small section (2m wide by 3.5m long) of this was broken out by concrete breaker. The concrete bases were 0.6m thick beneath which was a clean blue grey

alluvial clay (84) with no artefacts up to 0.1m thick which was similar to deposit 156 in Trench 3. Due to the tapering nature of the concrete base within Trench 6 it proved impossible to excavate beneath the top of layer 84.

#### Trench 7 (Fig. 4 and Plate 3)

Trench 7 was 15.4m long and aligned SE–NW. The stratigraphy within Trench 7 comprised concrete reinforced with telegraph pole tensioning wire up to 0.12m thick above 0.7m of brick and concrete rubble, beneath which was a brick-built structure that formed the south and eastern edge of the trench and was 10.1m long with a centre division of a brick wall 0.40m wide, a concrete base 1.30m wide and a second brick wall 0.40m thick. The north wall to the structure was also 0.4m thick. The walls survived to a depth of 0.6m and consisted of five courses of modern frogged bricks in a stretcher pattern with a yellow sandy mortar. Between the walls was a brick floor heavily stained with oil. The southern part of the structure was broken out. The floor was found to consist of only one course of brick 0.11m thick. Beneath the floor was a concrete foundation up to 0.2m thick. Beneath the concrete was up to 0.6m thick of dark blue clay (97) with metal, modern frogged brick and hydrocarbon contamination. Beneath this was up to 0.4m depth of grey blue alluvial clay (98) similar to 156 in Trench 3, which contained no artefacts. Beneath 98 was clean gravel natural.

The northern 5.1m of the trench consisted of a modern service trench and a further brick wall which was left in place. No pre-modern artefacts or features were encountered within Trench 7.

#### Trench 8 (Plate 4)

Trench 8 was 15.4m long and aligned SW–NE. The stratigraphy within Trench 8 comprised 0.02m of Tarmac beneath which was 0.25m of hoggin, above up to 0.35m thick of blackish grey clay (54) with modern brick, tile and metal. Beneath (54) was up to 0.11m thick of brown red silty gravel (55). Beneath this was deposit 56, up to 0.1m thick of soft black silty sand with coal waste. Beneath 56 was 0.27m of greenish grey clay (57) that contained metal cable, modern brick, and a screw-topped modern brown glass bottle. This overlay up to 0.2m thick of black grey clay (58) that contained modern transfer-printed pottery. Beneath layer 58 was 0.5m blue grey alluvial clay (59) with no artefacts, again similar to 156 in Trench 3, and again this overlay yellow brown alluvial clay (60), which was 0.6m thick with no artefacts, as 157 in Trench 3. Beneath 60 was natural gravel geology and the water table. No pre-modern artefacts or features were encountered within Trench 9.

#### Trench 9 (Fig. 5)

Trench 9 was 20m long and aligned SE–NW. The stratigraphy within Trench 9 comprised 0.02m of Tarmac, above 0.25m of hoggin, over up to 0.10m depth of blackish grey clay (62) with modern brick, tile and metal. Beneath 64 for the northern 17m of the trench lay up to 0.6m thick of brown red silty gravel (63) similar to (55) in Trench 8. Beneath (63) in the southern 3m of the trench was up to 0.55m thick of white yellow gravelly clay (64). Beneath 63 in the southern 3m of the trench was a thin band up to 0.05m thick of soft black silty sand (65)

with coal waste similar to (56) in Trench 8. Beneath (65) in the northern 5m of the trench was a large truncation that was filled with a dark brown grey clay that contained a dump of peg tile and telegraph poles. Beneath the truncation was a thin band (0.02m) of black grey clay (66), that contained modern brick and was similar to (58) in Trench 8. Beneath (66) was up to 0.4m thick greenish grey clay (67) that contained metal cable and modern brick. This overlay up to 0.5m thick of grey alluvial clay (68) with no artefacts which was similar to 156 in Trench 3. Beneath (68) was 0.4m thick of yellow brown alluvial clay (69) with no artefacts which was similar to 157 in Trench 3. Beneath 69 were natural gravel geology and the water table. No pre-modern artefacts or features were encountered within Trench 9.

## **Conclusion**

No pre-modern artefacts were encountered within any of the trenches. The site appears to have been in-filled in the recent past with dumps of made ground overlying the natural alluvial clays. The made ground contains modern brick that can be dated to the latter part of the 19th century or early 20th century. The inclusion of telegraph poles within the made ground suggests, unsurprisingly, that this infilling was associated with the electricity substation that was depicted on the Third Edition Ordnance Survey map onwards.

These layers of made ground have been overlaid or cut through by foundations and concrete bases associated with the buildings that appear on the 20th-century Ordnance Survey maps of the site. The brick-built structure in Trench 7 is in a similar position and orientation to a building shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1899, the cellared building in Trench 5 is in the same position as a series of buildings shown on the Ordnance Survey maps from 1925 to 1996.

The layers of made ground directly overlie alluvial clay deposits that exist across the site. The majority of the site shows two distinct alluvial clays with blue grey clay overlying yellow brown clay except in the area of Trench 7 where the yellow brown clay is absent. These layers could not be dated as they contained no artefacts. The underlying gravel beneath the alluvium appeared to be lying flat with no evidence of palaeochannels. No deposits of rich organic preservation (such as peat) were identified suggesting that the deposits have been deposited by overbank flooding rather than from the presence of an open body of standing water such as a lake. No evidence of the palaeochannel observed to the north-west of the site on the theatre site was seen (AS 2006). It is considered that the potential of these deposits for palaeoenvironmental reconstruction is at best, modest and of broadly the same character to the deposits examined in detail during evaluation just to the north west of the proposal site (AS 2009). The results of the evaluation would suggest that the site has, at best, very low archaeological potential.

## References

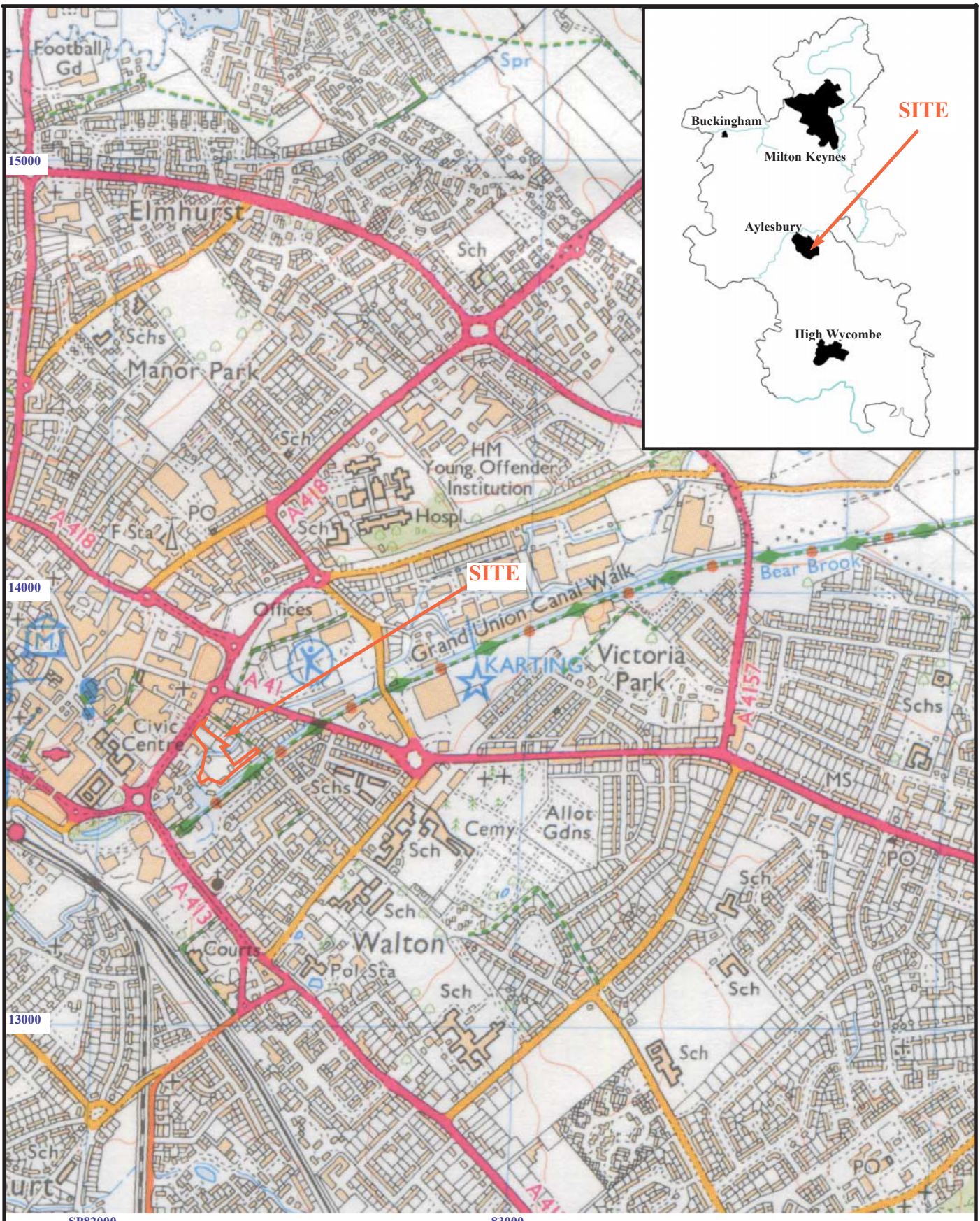
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## APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at South or West end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	0	0	0	Not excavated
2	0	0	0	Not excavated
3	20.1	2.0	2.6	Tarmac 0–0.02m, hoggin 0.02–0.37m, brown red made ground 0.37–0.52m, white yellow made ground 0.52–0.62m, blue made ground 0.62–1.17m, dark black blue made ground 1.17–1.67m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.67–2.27m, yellow brown alluvial clay 2.27–2.57m, natural gravel 2.57m+ <b>[Pl. 1]</b>
4	15	2.0	2.53	Concrete slab, 0–0.02m, brick rubble made ground 0.20–0.50m, black grey made ground 0.50–0.83m, dark grey made ground 0.83–1.02m, dark blue grey made ground 1.02–1.52m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.52–2.22m, yellow brown alluvial clay 2.22–2.52m, natural gravel 2.52m+ <b>[Pl. 2]</b>
5	20.1	2.0	2.35	Tarmac 0–0.03, concrete 0.03–0.18m, brick wall 0.18–0.52m, concrete footings 0.52–0.62m, green grey made ground 0.52–1.02m, dark blue made ground 1.02–1.44m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.44–1.84m, yellow brown alluvial clay 1.84–2.34m, natural gravel 2.34m+ rubble filled cellar, concrete chamber.
6	18.2	2.0	1.4	Gravel 0–0.03m, concrete slab 0.03–0.08m, concrete base 0.08–0.48m, concrete footings 0.48–1.08m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.08m+
7	15.4	2.0	2.14	Concrete 0–0.12m, rubble made ground 0.12–0.82m, brick floor 0.82–0.92m concrete footings 0.92–1.12m, dark blue made ground 1.12–1.72m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.72–2.12m, natural gravel 2.12m+ <b>[Pl. 3]</b>
8	15.4	2.0	2.3	Tarmac 0–0.02m, hoggin 0.02–0.17m, black grey made ground 0.17–0.52m, brown red made ground 0.52–0.62m, black sandy made ground 0.62–0.72m, green grey made ground 0.72–0.99m, black clay made ground 0.99–1.19m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.19m–1.69m, yellow brown alluvial clay 1.69–2.29m, Natural gravel 2.29m+ <b>[Pl. 4]</b>
9	20	2.0	2.45	Tarmac 0–0.02m, hoggin 0.02–0.27m, black grey made ground 0.27–0.37m, yellow made ground 0.37–0.92m, brown red made ground 0.92–1.07m, black sand made ground 1.07–1.12m, black silt made ground 1.12–1.14m, dark blue made ground 1.14–1.54m, blue grey alluvial clay 1.54–2.04m, yellow brown alluvial clay 2.04–2.44m, natural gravel 2.44m+





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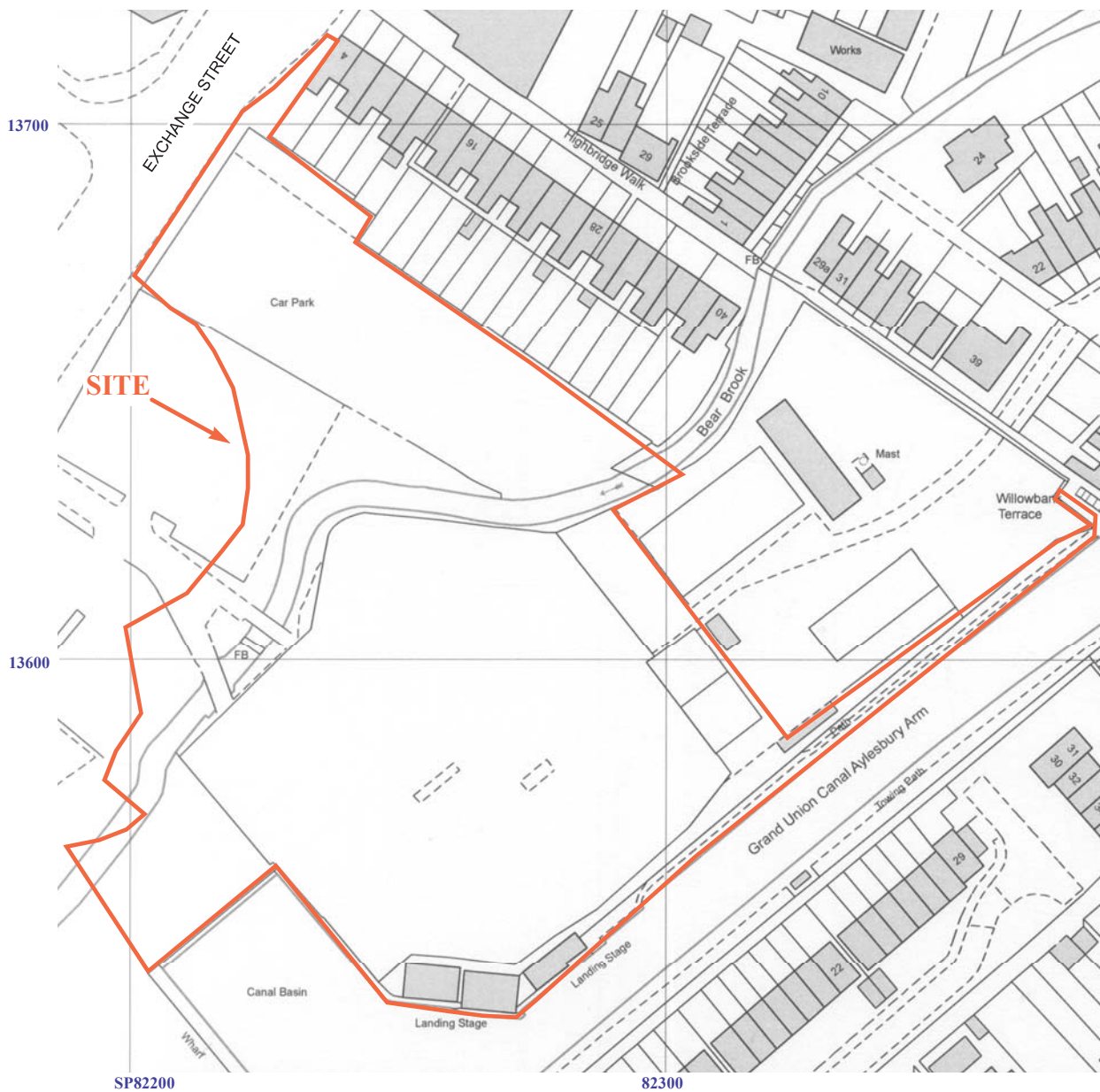
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Archaeological Evaluation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Aylesbury and Buckinghamshire.

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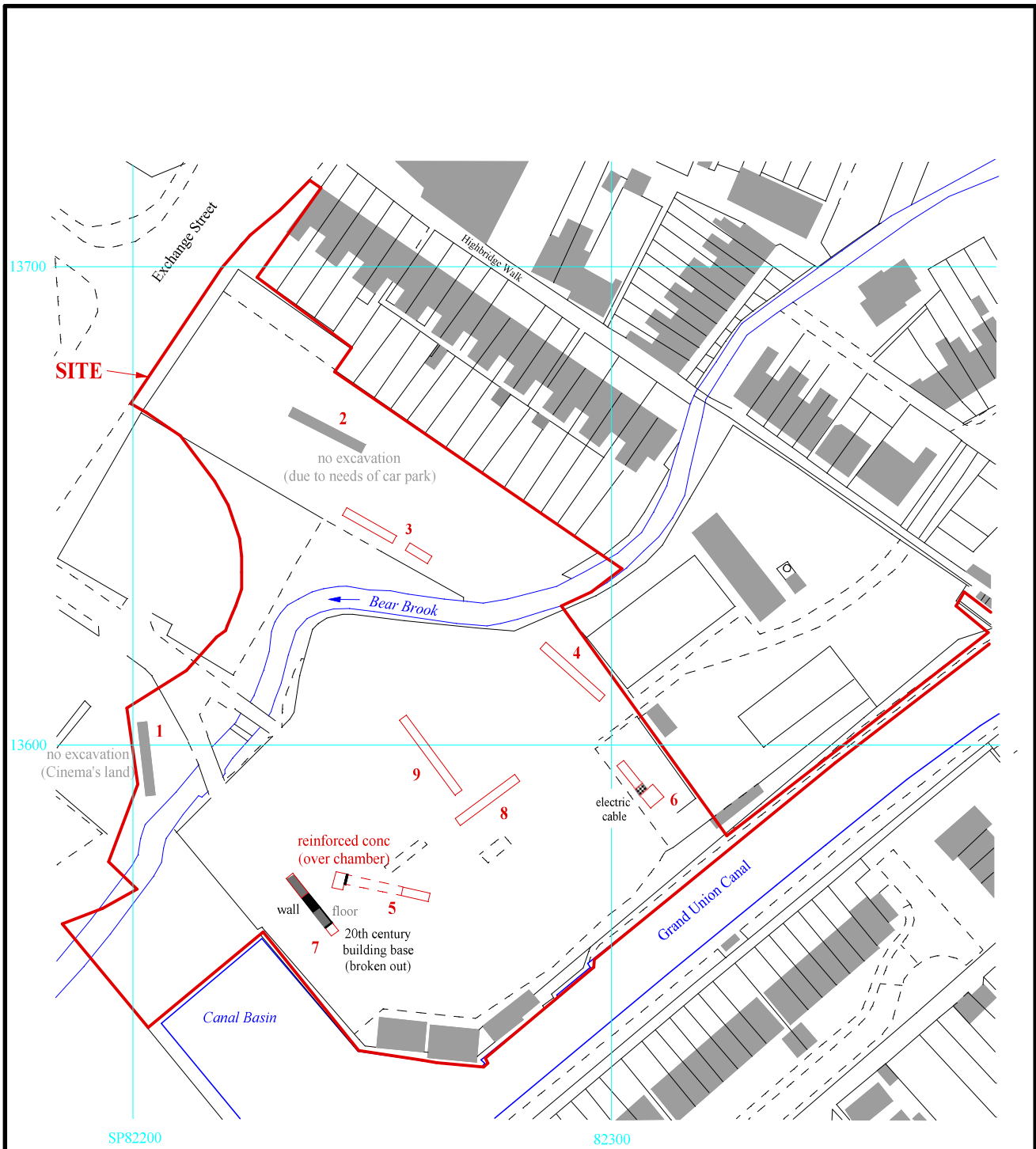
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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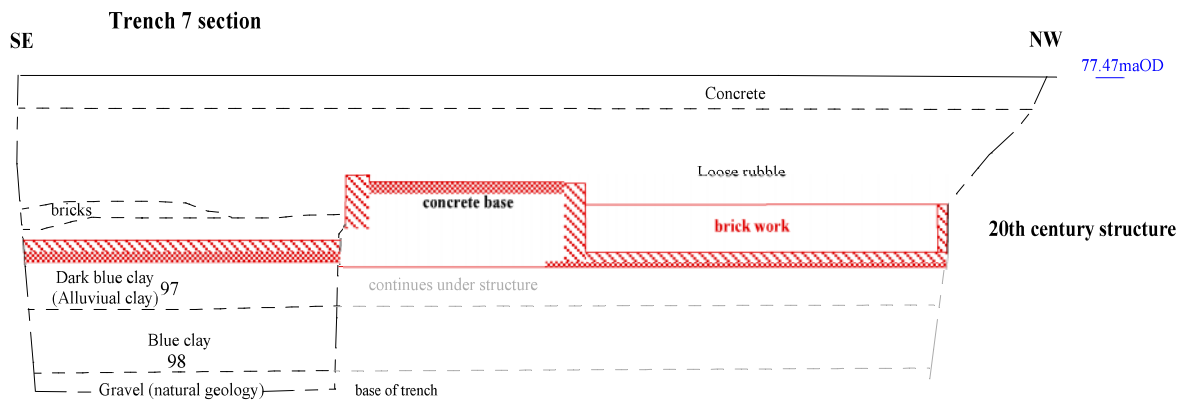
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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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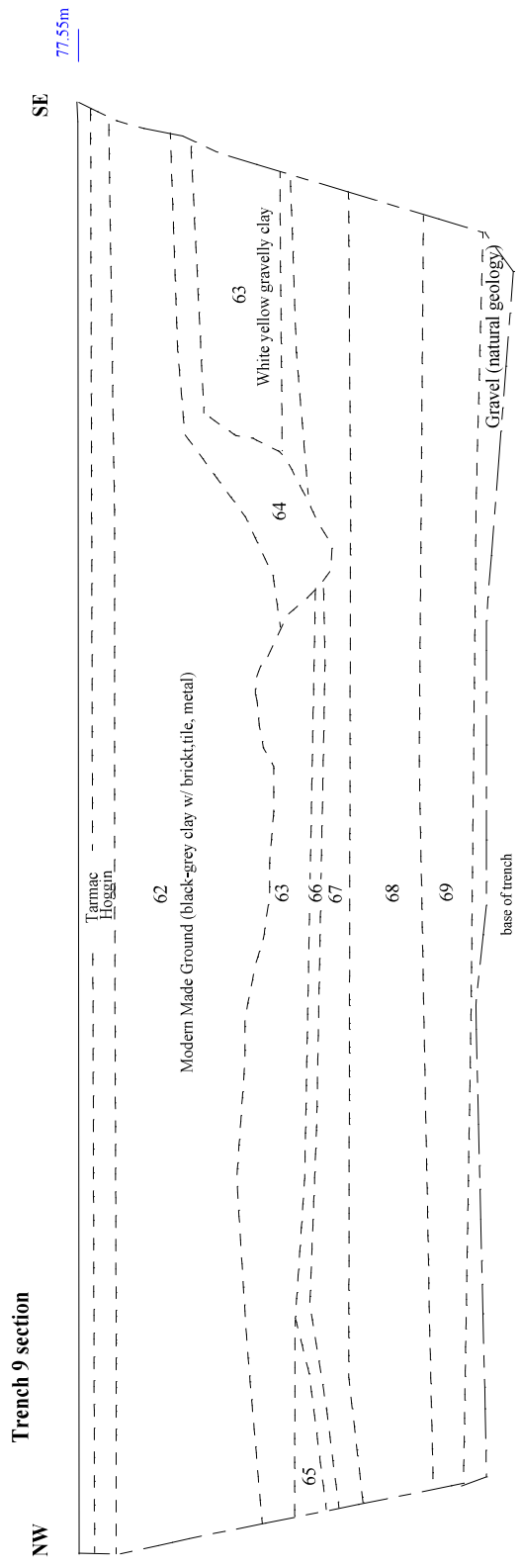


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Figure 4. Section of Trench 7.





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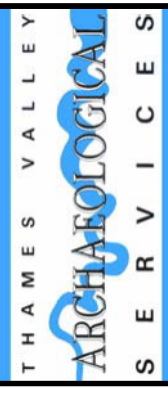


Figure 5. Section of Trench 9.







Plate 1. Trench 3, looking east, near horizontal scale 1m, further 2m, vertical 2m.



Plate 2. Trench 4, looking north-west, near horizontal scale 1m, further 2m, vertical 2m.

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Plates 1 and 2

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Plate 3. Trench 7, looking north-west, vertical and horizontal right scales 2m, horizontal central scale 1m.



Plate 4. Trench 8 looking north-east, near horizontal scale 1m, further 2m, vertical 2m.

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Archaeological Evaluation**

Plates 3 and 4

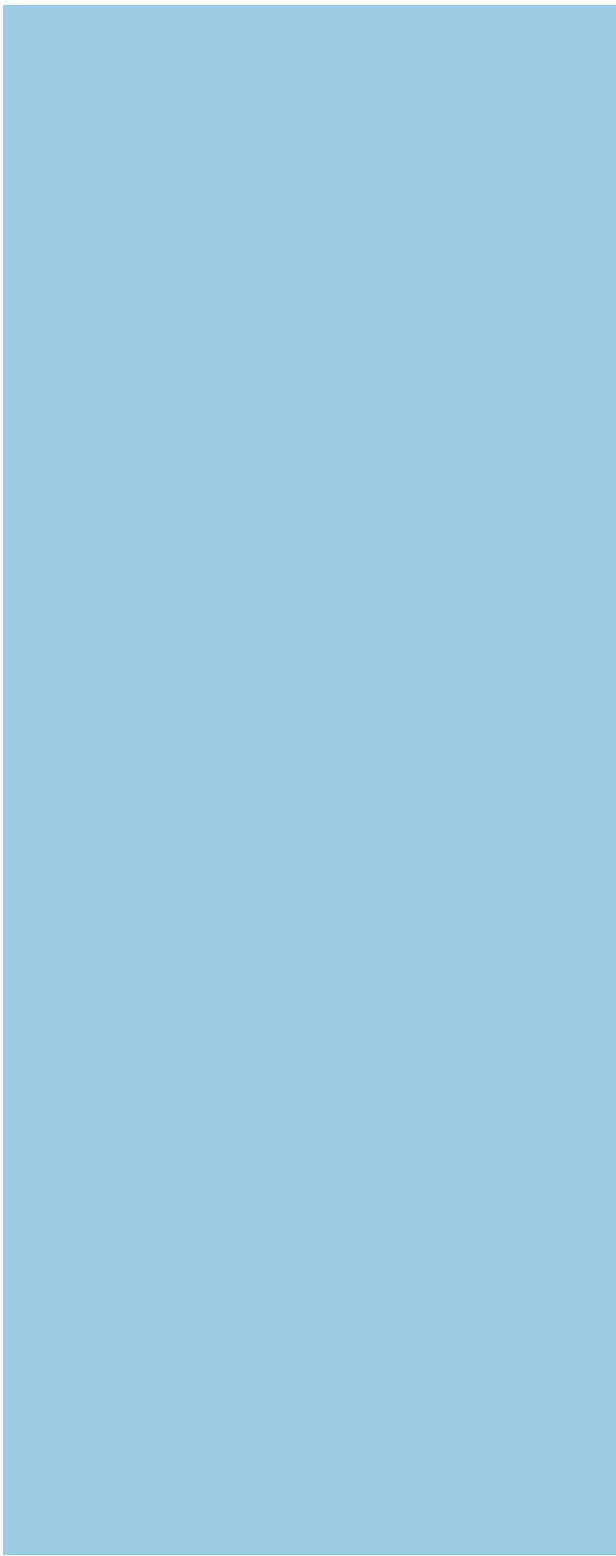
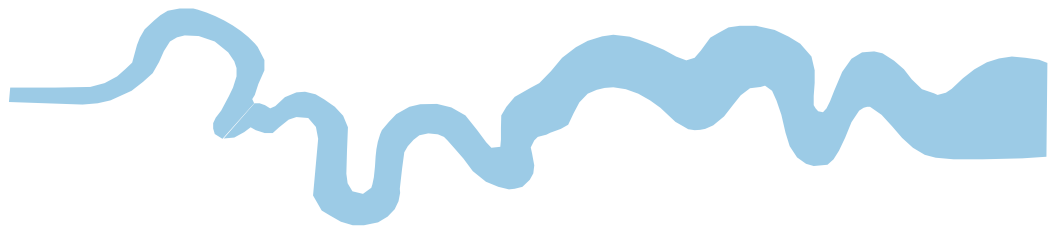
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## TIME CHART

	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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