

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Charnham Lane,
Hungerford, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford

Site Code: CLH10/51

(SU 3365 6905)

Land at Charnham Lane, Hungerford, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Evaluation

for CgMs Consulting

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services

Ltd

Site Code CLH10/51

July 2010

Summary

Site name: Land at Charnham Lane, Hungerford, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 3365 6905

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 28th–30th June 2010

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: CLH10/51

Area of site: *c.* 0.5 hectares

Summary of results: Archaeological deposits have been recorded on the southern part of the site comprising shallow pits, and postholes, possibly forming a small palisaded structure. These features are not closely dated but are most likely to be of prehistoric (Neolithic/Bronze Age) date.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum.

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Preston ✓ 08.07.10
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Land at Charnham Lane, Hungerford, West Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Steve Ford

Report 10/51

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on land at Charnham Lane, Hungerford, West Berkshire (SU 3365 6905) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Paul Chadwick of CgMs Consulting, Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct, London, EC1A 2AT.

Planning permission (10/00845) is being sought from West Berkshire Council for the construction of a new hotel on the site. The application is to be supported by the results of field evaluation by trial trenching to determine the archaeological potential of the site, from which a mitigation strategy could be devised as appropriate. This is in accordance with *Planning for the Historic Environment*, (PPS5, 2010) and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford and Daniel Bray on 28th–29th June 2010 and the site code is CLH01/51. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the north side of Charnham Street (A4) on the west side of Hungerford. The site forms an irregular area of derelict land with one area of dumped made ground. It is thought that the site was used as a contractor's compound during construction of the nearby industrial estate. The ground is level and lies at a height of c. 97m above Ordnance Datum. The main road (Charnham Street) to the south is raised by up to 0.5m relative to the site. The site is bounded by Charnham Street to the south, office and industrial units with carparks to the west and north but is undefined on its eastern side towards Charnham Lane (Fig. 2).

The site lies close to the confluence of the River Dun where it meets the River Kennet, with the Dun 100m or so to the south-west. The underlying geology is depicted on the geology map of the area as terrace gravel with alluvium to the north-east, east and south and with chalk to the west (BGS 1947). The geology encountered was mostly a clayey gravel but the southernmost trench (1) revealed a complex fluvial geology with gravel overlying alluvium over more gravel. The geology observed probably reflects the complex pattern resulting from the confluence of the two rivers.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the area stems from its location on the fringes of Hungerford, or to be more precise, the Charnham suburb of Saxon and medieval Hungerford (Astill 1978). This location in the Kennet Valley is also considered to be rich in Mesolithic occupation sites and stray finds (Froom 1971). Areas to the north-west of the site were subject to extensive excavation in 1989 (Ford 2002) following earlier evaluation (Ford 1988; Walters 1987) when a wide range of deposits of prehistoric through to post-medieval times were examined. Immediately to the north-west lay the site of post-medieval Undy's Farm but, perhaps, with its medieval precursor further to the north-west discovered by excavation. The proposal site was partially evaluated in 1987 and 1988 when a number of medieval ditches were revealed at the northern end of the site (Ford 1988, fig. 2; Ford 2002, fig. 3). However, a watching brief just to the east did not reveal any deposits of archaeological interest (Anthony 2004).

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.

Specific aims of the project were:

- to determine if archaeologically relevant levels have survived on this site;
- to determine the presence and character of any Mesolithic deposits present;
- to determine whether any evidence exists on the site for further medieval settlement associated with Undy's Farm; and
- to determine whether any evidence exists on the site for deposits relating to post-medieval settlement associated with Undy's Farm.

A total of 6 trenches were to be dug, measuring 18-20m in length and 1.6m wide. The trenches were located randomly across the site. These would all be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision. All spoilheaps were to be monitored for finds.

Results

Seven trenches were eventually dug, The trenches all measured 1.60m wide and were between 10m and 21.5m in length (Fig. 3). A proposed trench at the northern end of the site had to be removed due to the presence of an existing car park (which would be included without alteration in the development proposal), and a second trench towards the northern end had to be re-positioned towards the south to avoid live services. Two extra

trenches were dug to clarify the nature of the findings in Trench 2. A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

This trench measured 18.7m in length and was dug to a depth of 1.4m at the west end and 0.9m at the eastern end, with a shallow zone (0.5m deep) in between. The stratigraphy revealed was complex, but may have examined late Pleistocene deposits at the base of the trench. The top of the natural geology, the archaeologically relevant level in terms of post-glacial archaeology, probably lay at a depth of *c.* 0.5m or slightly above and was represented by a dense gravel lens that sloped upwards to the east and also petered out just below the base of the subsoil. It is possible that the slope is due to the presence of a solution hollow in the underlying chalk, although the alluvium was bedded horizontally. To the west the gravel petered out to reveal silty clay alluvium. This alluvium comprised several distinct layers lying above gravel and a clay with small chalk lumps. It is likely that this alluvium continues east beneath the sloping gravel lens. No deposits of archaeological interest were present.

Trench 2 (Figs 3–6 and Pl. 1)

This trench measured 21.5m in length and was 0.25m deep at the north end and 0.45m deep at the south end.. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.10m of rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil overlying the natural geology which was a silty clay with gravel. A test pit was dug down to 0.7m to examine the geological strata. Several archaeological features were encountered.

Two shallow pits were recorded (Figs 3-6). Pit 1 was 0.6m in diameter and 0.1m deep with a shallow bowl-shaped profile. It was filled with a dark grey silty clay with some gravel and with flecks of charcoal, small chips of burnt flint and some fired clay (52). Dating evidence comprised a single struck flint in a fresh condition. Pit 2 was also 0.6m in diameter and 0.09m deep with a shallow bowl-shaped profile. It was filled with a brown/grey silty clay with some gravel, iron/manganese pan, a few rare flecks of charcoal and small flecks of burnt flint (52). No dating evidence was recovered from this feature.

Traversing the trench SW–NE was a feature initially considered to be a ditch or gully. However, on further investigation by a box section, the feature was shown to comprise a double row of individual postholes, with natural geology in between, forming a length of double palisade. At the level of initial discovery the upper fills of the postholes appear to have wide shallow weathering cones which merge with each other such that in plan their individual shapes cannot be easily discerned but may be spaced at intervals of *c.* 0.2m. However, where sectioned, the individual postholes are well defined with vertical sides and, for those examined here (5, 6, 7),

charcoal-rich fills. The postholes are 0.25–0.35m in diameter and 0.32m deep. A minute fleck of black fired clay (which may be very degraded pottery) from posthole 5 was the only artefact recovered and does not provide any dating evidence. Other fired clay, possibly accidentally fired, was observed in the section of the lower fill of posthole 6. An unstratified struck flint came from the northern end of the trench.

Elements of these 'linear' features appear to continue into the adjacent Trenches 6 (west) and 7 (east) discussed below (Fig. 5).

Trench 3

This trench measured 21.4m in length and was 0.1m deep at the east end and 0.23m deep at the west end. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil overlying the natural geology which was an orange brown silty clay with gravel, becoming gravelly at the east end. No deposits of archaeological interest were present but two very thin stripes filled with grey silty clayey were observed at either end of the trench. The origin of these stripes is uncertain but they are probably of modern origin and relate to the recent use of the site as a contractors compound.

Trench 4

This trench measured 18.6m in length and was 0.15m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil overlying the natural geology which was an orange brown silty clay with gravel. No deposits of archaeological interest were present but a single struck flint came from the base of the trench.

Trench 5

This trench measured 11.9m in length and was 0.9m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.8m of made ground above 0.1m of brown silty clay with gravel subsoil above orange clay and gravel natural geology. A single small pit (3) was observed (Fig. 4). The feature was 0.4m in diameter and 0.12m deep with a bowl-shaped profile (Fig. 6). It contained a single fill (54) of a brown/grey silty clay with some gravel. Dating evidence is provided by a single fragment of brick/tile of medieval, or more likely, post-medieval date. A single sherd of undated pottery was recovered from the base of the trench.

Trench 6

This trench measured 11.5m in length and was 0.32m deep. The trench was positioned to the west of Trench 2 to determine if additional archaeological features were present in this area. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil overlying 0.27m of brown silty clay with gravel subsoil above the

natural geology which was a grey mottled silt becoming gravelly to the north. The trench was initially machined to a depth of 0.15m at which level a small shallow pit was recorded (4). This feature was found to contain tile fragments and clinker and is therefore of late post-medieval date.

The brown subsoil was subsequently removed to expose the natural geology, which also revealed a continuation of the projected line of the linear features from Trench 2. Both projected lines were represented as vague circular marks or as a linear mark (Figs 4 and 5). The northern line appeared only to be represented by a single circular feature. None of these features were excavated. Three unstratified struck flints came from this trench.

Trench 7 (Pl. 2)

This trench originally measured 7.8m in length and was between 0.15m (south) and 0.05m (north) in depth. The trench was positioned to the east of Trench 2 to determine if additional archaeological features were present in this area. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.05m of rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil overlying the natural geology which was an orange brown silty clay with gravel. At the original northern end of the trench a linear feature was observed in plan aligned SW–NE corresponding with the projected line of the palisade features in Trench 2. The northern end of the trench was subsequently extended to 10m to determine if both projected palisade lines were present. However, only the original single line was observed. It was not excavated.

FINDS

Struck flint by Steve Ford

A small collection 7 struck flints was recovered during the evaluation. Six of these were flakes and one was a large core, with relatively few removals. All of the pieces were fresh. Just one flake came from a stratified context (pit 1). None of the pieces are closely dated but are likely to be of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>
2	1	52	Flake
2	-	(18m)	Flake
4	-	(2m)	Flake
6	-	(3m)	Flake
6	-	(6m)	Core and two flakes

Pottery

One sherd (5g) of pottery was recovered from the base of trench 5. It was tempered with fine dense white sand and had a black core and interior and red/brown exterior. It is not closely datable.

Brick/tile

A fragment (22g) of brick or tile, probably of post-medieval date was recovered from pit 3 (54) in Trench 5.

Fired clay

Five fragments (11g) of fired clay were recovered from pit 1 (52) and two small refitting fragments (<1g) of black fired clay came from posthole 5 (55) and might be pottery/

Charred plant remains

Three soil samples of 6 litres each were taken from Pit1 and postholes 5 and 6 to assess the deposits for charred plant remains. All three samples were floated and wet sieved over a 0.25mm mesh. A modest volume of wood charcoal was recovered from all three samples, but without any other taxa such as cereal grain, hazel nut shell, weed or fruit seeds.

Conclusion

The evaluation has revealed the presence of archaeological deposits on the site along with a few stray artefacts of flint and pottery. It was clear that the original topsoil had been stripped prior to the use of the site as a contractor's compound, with any areas of hard standing also removed, subjecting the upper subsoil to some shallow rutting by plant. However, the southern portion of the site appears to have been less affected by the rutting due to the presence of thicker subsoil perhaps occupying an originally hollow area.

Despite the expectation that the trenches might reveal medieval or early post-medieval deposits associated with the nearby (now demolished) Undy's Farm, no such finds or deposits were revealed in any quantity.

Two shallow features were recorded one of which contained a prehistoric struck flint along with burnt flint. Both of the features are likely to be of prehistoric date. Unexpectedly, a linear feature revealed was shown to be a double palisade consisting of medium-sized, close-set posts. The double row continued in a straight line to the west but apparently only as a single line to the east. These features did not produce any dating evidence, but they are an unusual form of structure, most frequently encountered in prehistoric contexts and the association with the struck flint in these trenches might not be a coincidence. The archaeological literature contains several examples of palisaded structures such as Late Neolithic (Beaker) houses at Gwithian (Megaw and Simpson 1988, fig 5.5), both mortuary enclosures and facades associated with long barrows (Ashbee 1984, fig. 27) and timber circle monuments such as Spring Road, Abingdon (Allen and Kamash 2008, fig. 10) or Roundhouse Farm, Marston Meysey, Wiltshire (Lewis and Cass 2010, structure 6005) Most immediately relevant, however,

are the double-palisaded enclosures at Avebury, less than 30km upstream (Whittle 1997; Thomas 1999, 217), which are dated to the second half of the 3rd millennium BC (late Neolithic).

On the basis of these results, the site is considered to contain a hitherto unrecorded heritage asset (ie features that have archaeological potential).

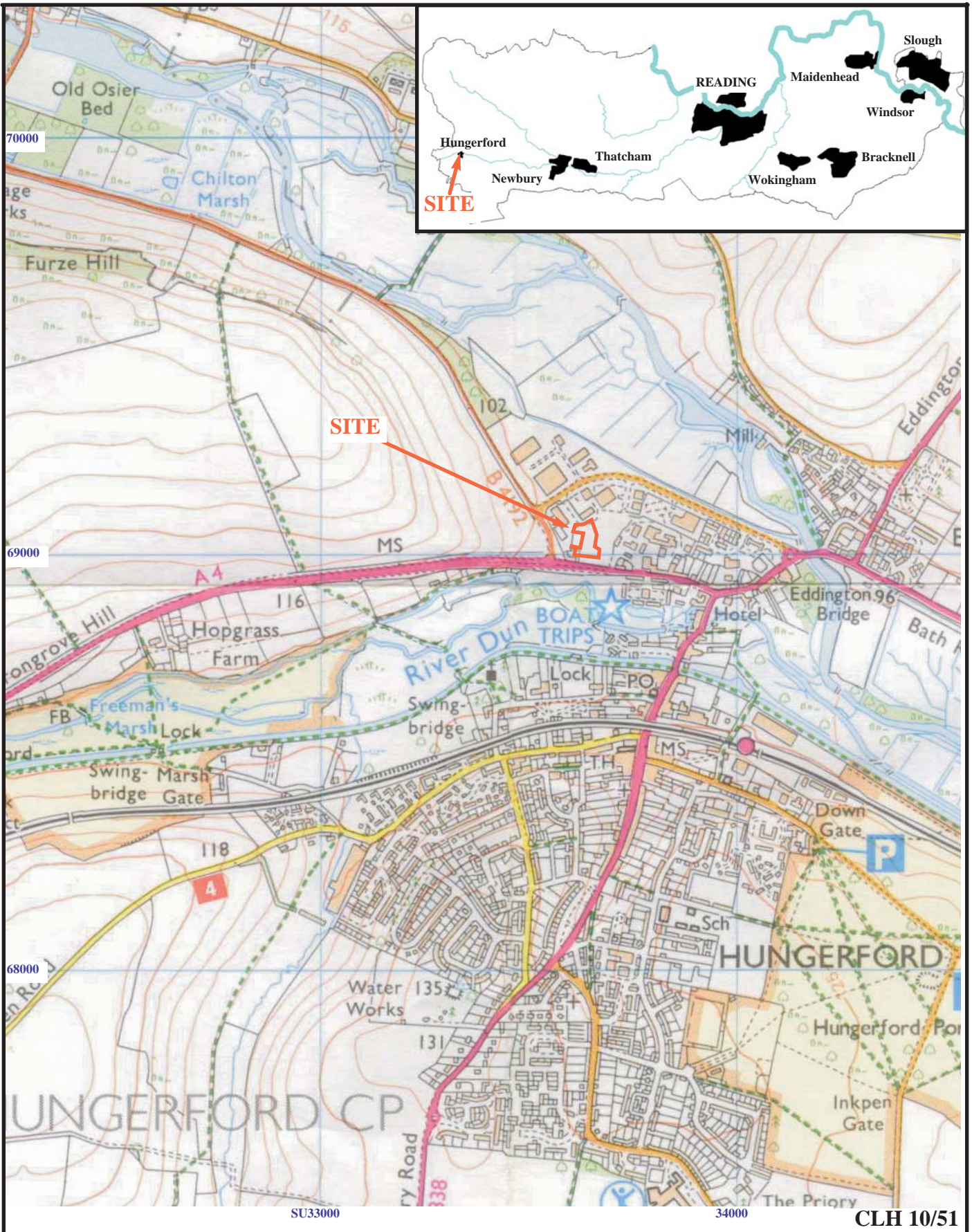
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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

Trench	Length (m)	Breadth (m)	Depth (m)	Comment
1	18.70	1.60	1.40 W 0.90 E	West: 0-7m; 0-0.23m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.23-0.90m brown silty clay with rare gravel; 0.90-1.05m blue/grey silty clay; 1.05-1.15m brown silty clay; 1.15m+ grey sandy gravel with brown clay with rounded small chalk lumps. Centre: 0-0.23m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.23-0.85m brown silty clay; 0.85m+ brown clayey gravel. East: 0-2.7m; 0-0.23m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.23-0.5m brown silty clay; 0.5-0.55m clayey gravel (shallowing to east) 0.55-0.75m brown silty clay; 0.75-0.8m light brown silty clay; 0.8-0.9m grey silt 0.9m+ grey sandy gravel with clay patches.
2	21.50	1.60	0.25 N 0.45 S Test pit 0.7m at 3m	0-0.05m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.05-0.25m brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.25m+ orange brown clayey gravel natural geology. Pits 1 and 2, postholes 5-6, possible postholes, Service pipes at 5m. [Plate 1]
3	21.40	1.60	0.23 W 0.10 E	0-0.05m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.05m+ orange brown clay (gravel to east) natural geology. Thin grey stripes (ruts?) at 4m and 20m.
4	18.60	1.60	0.15	0-0.05m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.05m+ orange brown clayey gravel natural geology.
5	11.90	1.60	0.90	0-0.8m made ground; 0.8-0.9m brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.9m+ orange clay and gravel natural geology. Posthole 3. Service pipes at 5m.
6	11.50	1.60	0.32	0-0.05m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.05m-0.32m brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.32m + grey silt, with gravel at north end natural geology. Posthole 4.
7	10.00	1.60	0.15 S 0.05 N	0-0.05m exposed and rutted brown silty clay with gravel subsoil; 0.05m+ orange brown clayey gravel natural geology. (Trench extended from 7.8m to 10m). [Plate 2]

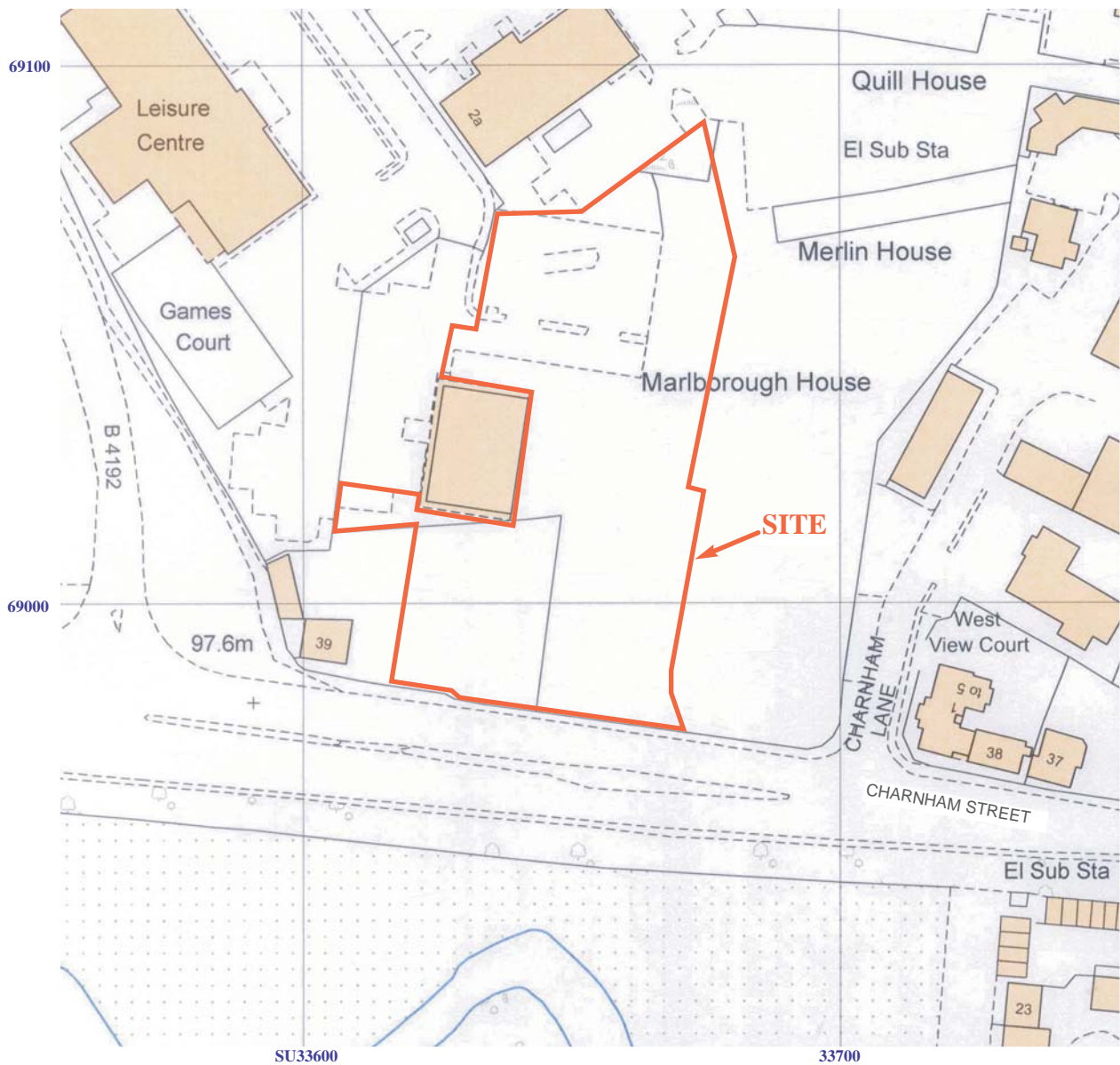


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Figure 1. Location of site within Hungerford and Berkshire.

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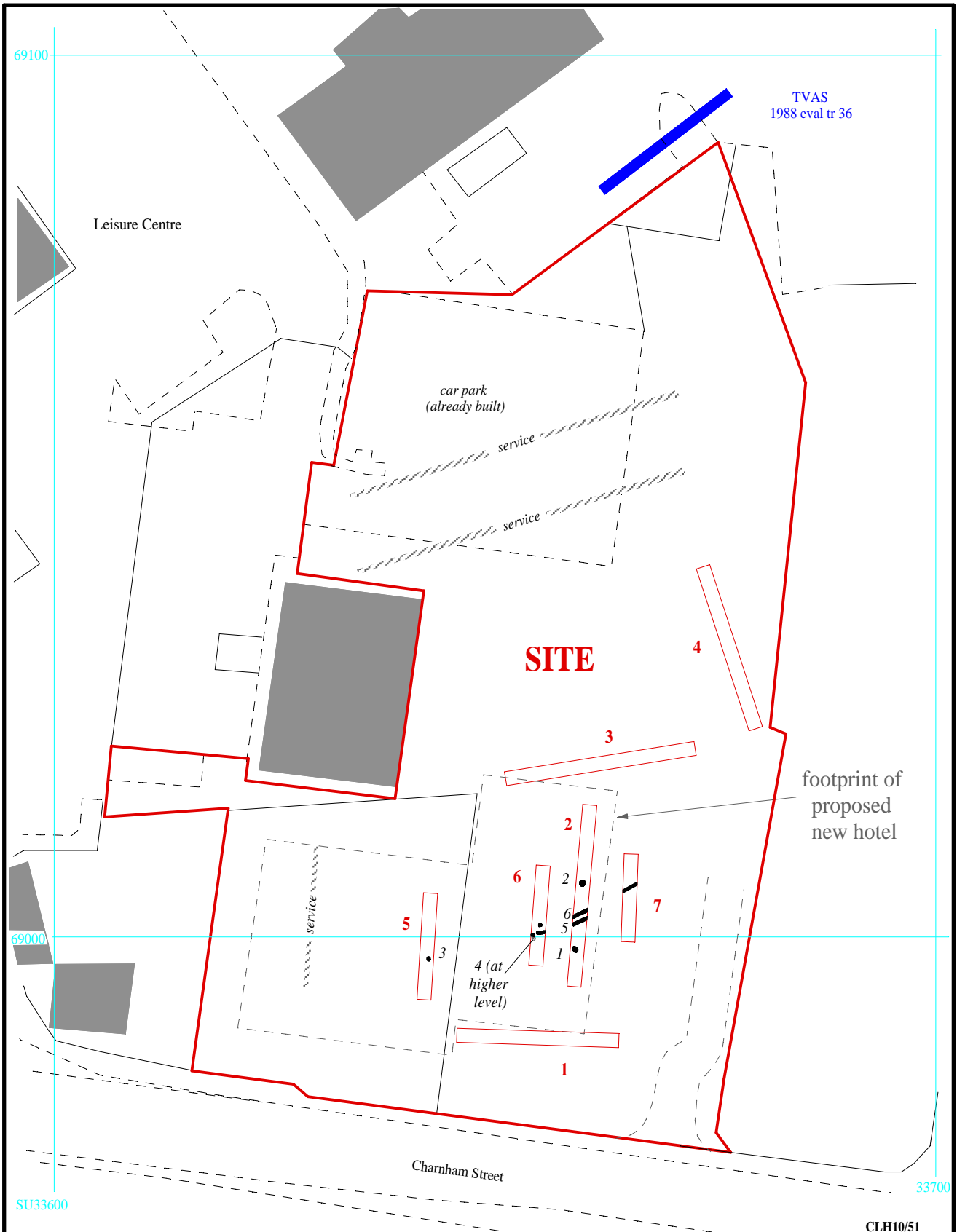
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Figure 2. Detailed location of site.

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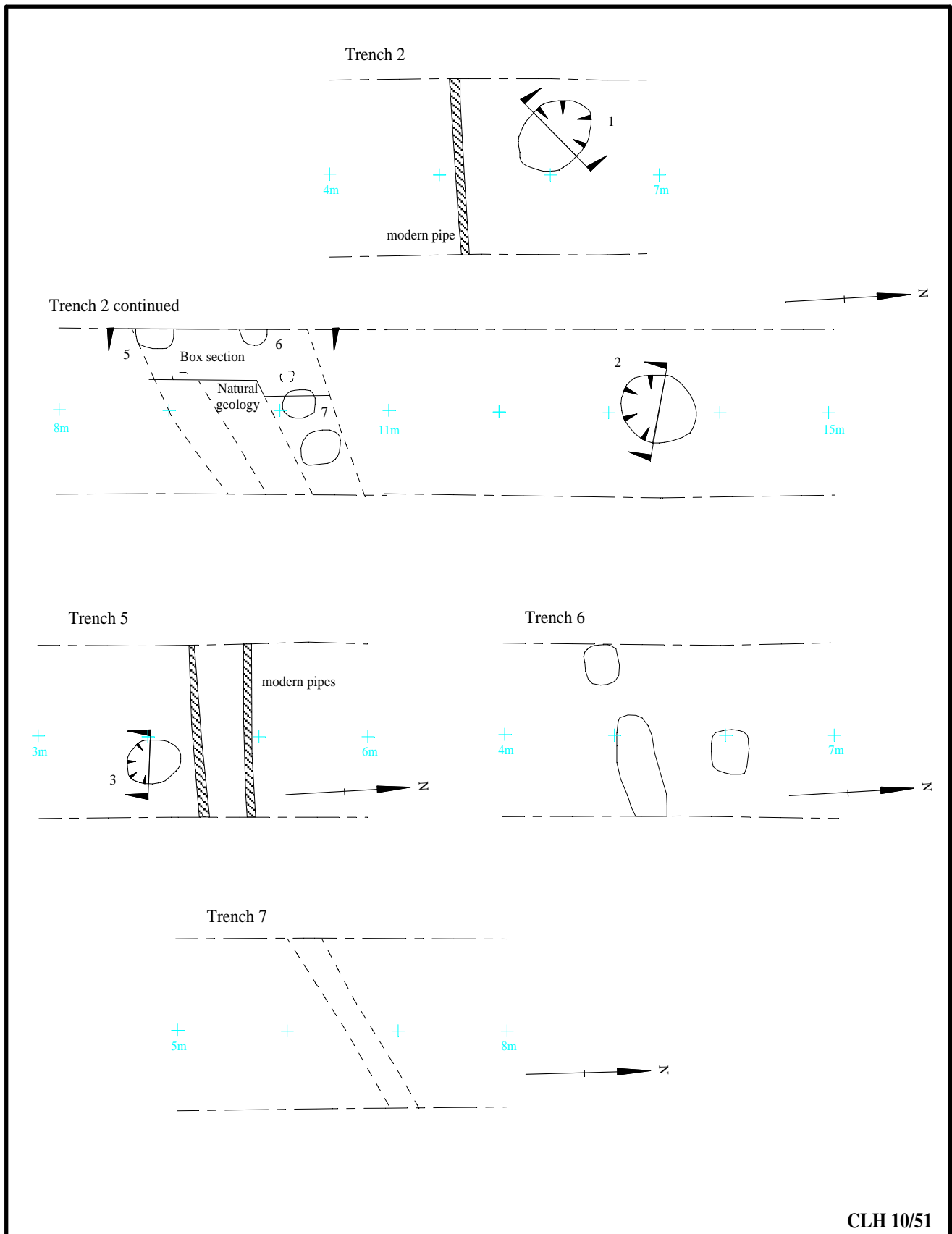


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Figure 3. Location of trenches.



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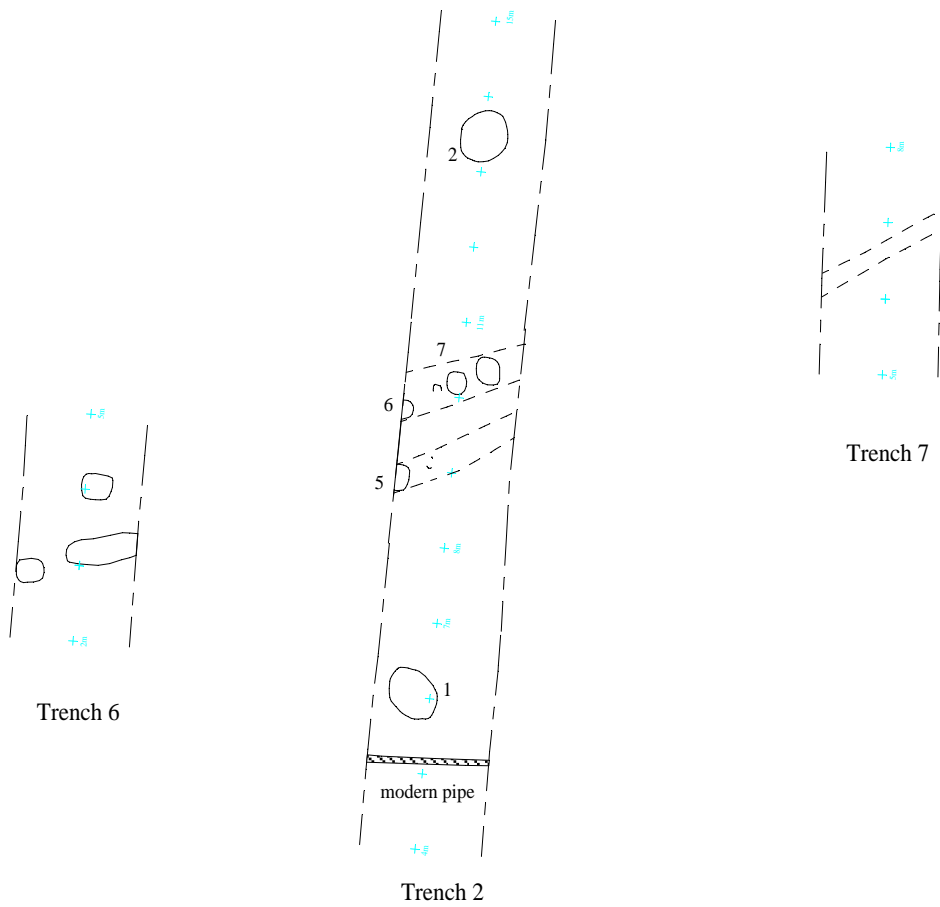


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Figure 4. Detail of trenches.





Trench 6

Trench 2

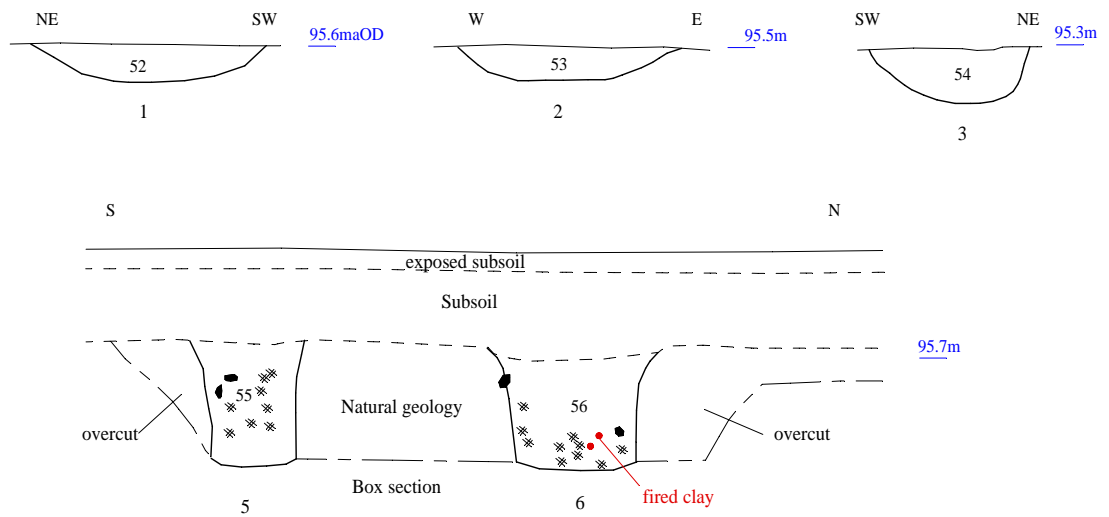
Trench 7

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Figure 5. Detail of trenches, 2, 6 and 7.





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Figure 6. Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 2, features 5 and 6 looking south-west, scales: 2m and 1m and 0.4m.



Plate 2. Trench 7, looking north. Scales: 2m and 1m

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Archaeological Evaluation**

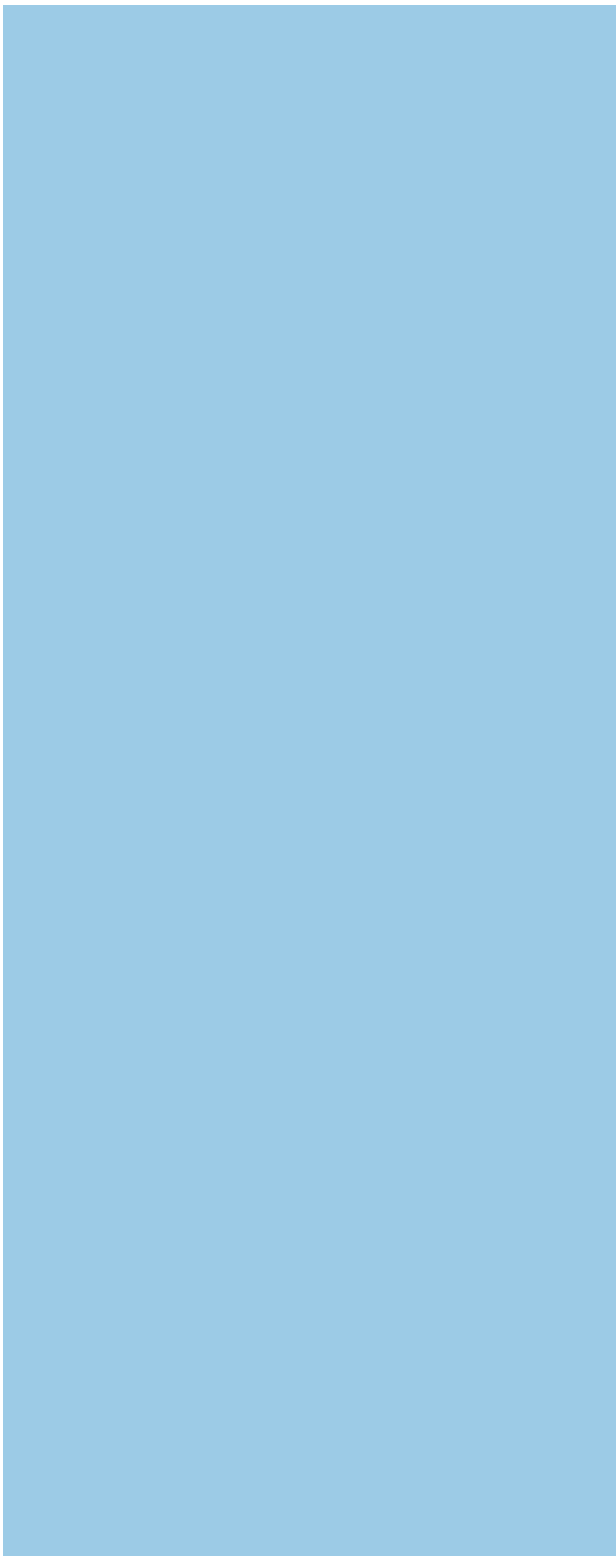
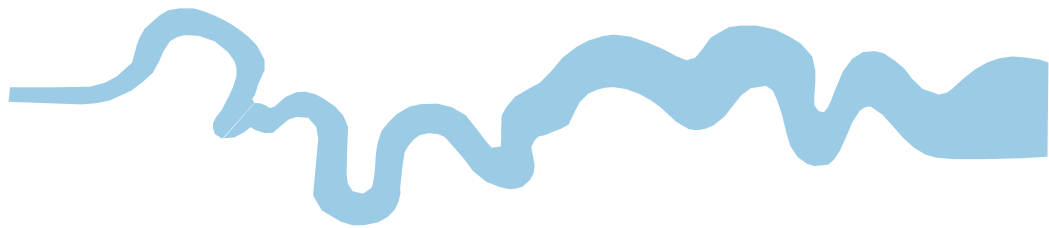
Plates 1 and 2

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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





**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**