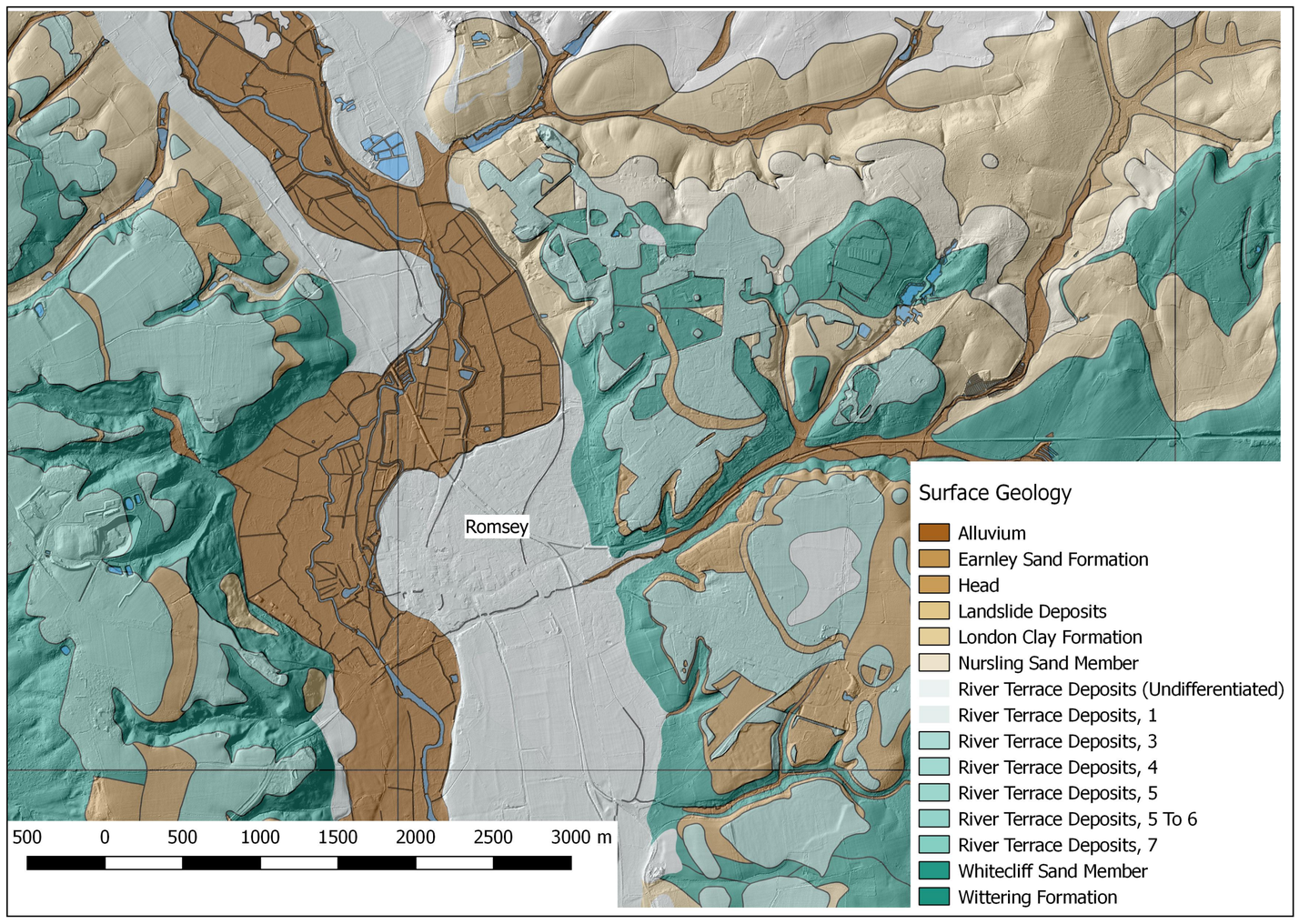
Two River Valley Towns

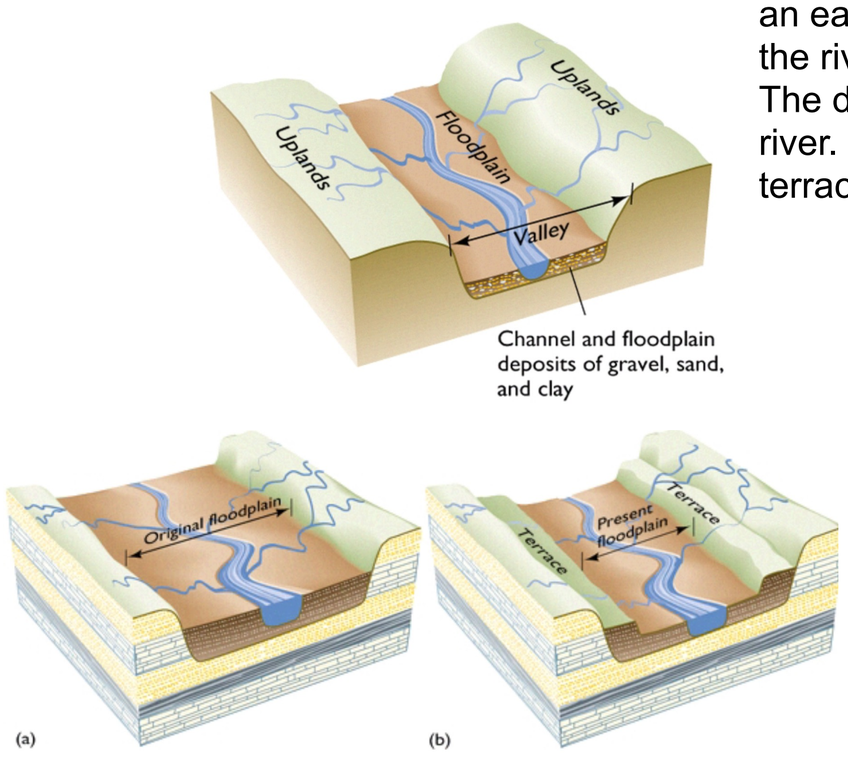
Romsey: A Town on a River Terrace



This map shows the surface geology of the Romsey area draped over the LiDAR. It gives a 3-D representation of landforms, showing how they relate to the geological formations. The broad, brown band of alluvium, a waterborne deposit, marks the floodplain of the Test. Smaller watercourses appear as narrow, branching, brown ribbons. The shaded relief highlights the effects of water erosion, dissecting the plateau and exposing the underlying geology. The valley of the Test is bounded by steep escarpments, particularly noticeable west of floodplain.

The town of Romsey is situated on a river terrace to the east of the Test. Shown here in light grey, it is a broad, flat area raised above the floodplain. North of Romsey the river has eroded the river terrace deposits from the east side of the valley. The narrow embankment of the railway shows up clearly on the LiDAR as it heads north across the floodplain and continues along a river terrace west of the Test.

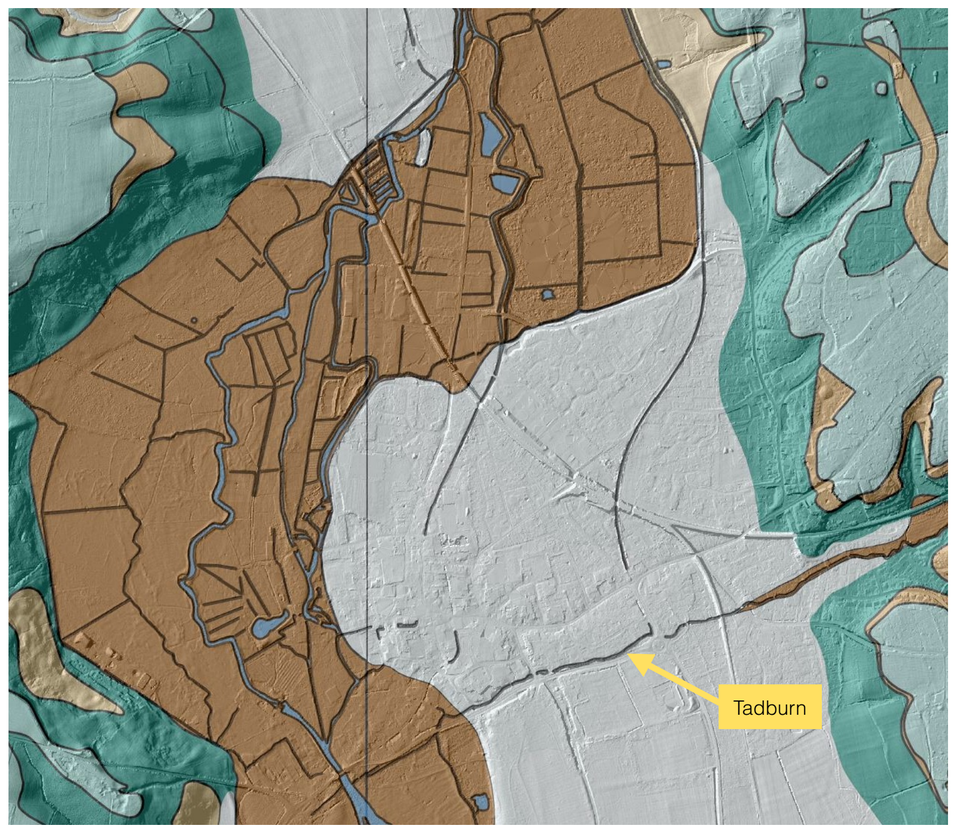
River Terrace Formation



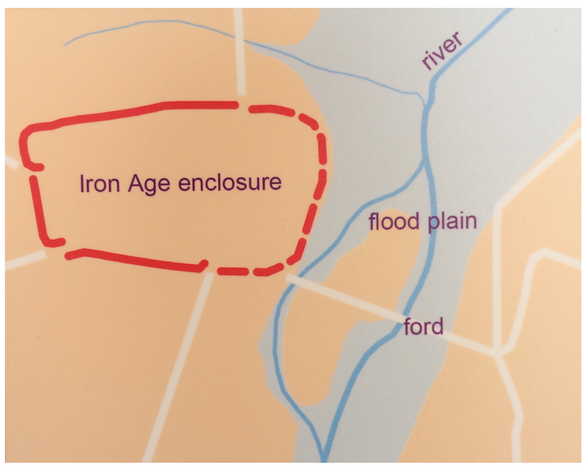
A river terrace is a remnant of the floodplain of an earlier river. Following a drop in sea level, the river cuts a new channel at a lower level. The diagram shows terraces either side of the river. Broad bends in the Test have eroded the terrace from one or the other side.

The Tadburn Stream runs across the terrace south of Romsey. It is fed by many small tributaries collecting the rainfall over a wide area, as well as by several chalk springs. It did not have a sufficient flow to power a mill until the barge canal was built.

There are no natural watercourses on the river terrace north of the Tadburn.

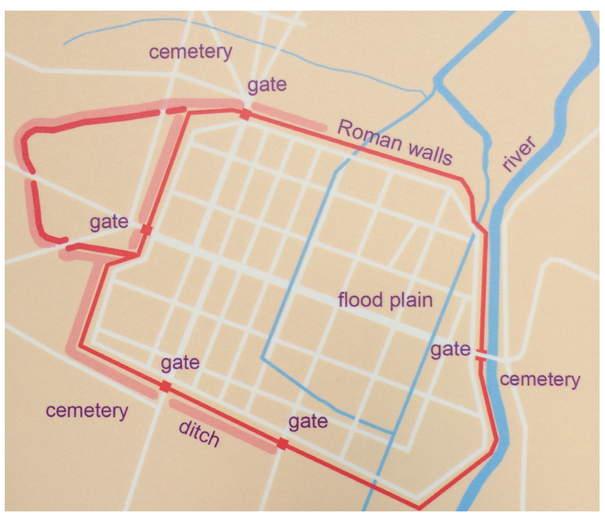


Winchester: A Town on a Floodplain



The Roman town of Winchester was built, in part, on the floodplain of the Itchen. The Romans drained the town and moved the main channel of the river to the east of the town walls.

After a period of abandonment, the Anglo-Saxons re-occupied the town. King Alfred is said to have provided the town with watercourses to encourage people to live there. This was accomplished by diverting water from the river north of the town. The new channels powered mills, supplied drinking water and carried away waste products.



St Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester from 962-984 during the reign of King Edgar, was credited with providing a water supply to the New Minster. Wolfstan the Cantor, a monk who knew him, wrote:

"He brought here sweet streams of fishful water, and an overflow of the stream passed through the inner part of the monastic buildings, cleansing the whole monastery with its murmur."

Middle Brook Street c900 with its water channel.