

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Isolation Barns, Ilsley Barn Farm, Sunrise Hill,
East Ilsley, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Anne-Michelle Huvig and Pierre-Damien Manisse

**Site Code: IBEI 18/98
(SU 5047 8198)**

Isolation Barns, Ilsley Barn Farm, Sunrise Hill, East Ilsley, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Beeswax-Dyson Farming

by Anne-Michelle Huvig and Pierre-Damien Manisse

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

IBEI 18/98

August 2020

Summary

Site name: Isolation Barns, Ilsley Barn Farm, Sunrise Hill, East Ilsley, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 5047 8198

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 22nd January 2019 to 30th July 2020

Project coordinator: Tim Dawson

Site supervisor: Anne-Michelle Huvig, Pierre Manisse, Jon Tierney, Andrew Munding

Site code: IBEI 18/98

Summary of results: Groundworks carried out to convert four barns into accommodation units were subject to archaeological monitoring. However, no archaeologically relevant deposits nor finds were observed.

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

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Isolation Barns, Ilsley Barn Farm, Sunrise Hill, nr East Ilsley, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 18/98

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out on old isolation barns at Ilsley Barn Farm, Sunrise Hill, nr East Ilsley, West Berkshire RG20 7LY (SU 5052 8200) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Roger Ashman from OWAL Architects, 5b Maltings Place, 169 Tower Bridge Road, London SE1 3JB on behalf of Beeswax Dyson Farming, Estate Offices, Cyclone Way, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN4 2GR.

Planning permission (no. 18/00926/FUL) was gained from West Berkshire Council for the conversion of four cattle isolation units on East Ilsley Down at Sunrise Hill, for short-stay residential use. Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological deposits, a programme of mitigation has been requested. The consent has been subject to a condition (16) relating to archaeology, and a methodology of recording set out by a written scheme of investigation approved by Ms Sarah Orr, Senior Archaeologist (Planning and Advice) for West Berkshire Council, has asked for a watching brief to be undertaken during the groundwork phase of converting the buildings.

This is also in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012 para 141), since surpassed by legislation now from the Ministry of Housing and Local Communities (2018), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The fieldwork was undertaken by Anne-Michelle Huvig, Jon Tierney and Andrew Mundin between 22nd January 2019 and 30th July 2020 and the site code is IBEI 18/98.

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

East Ilsley lies in the North Berkshire Downs, 2.5km north-west of the village of Compton and adjacent to the major arterial route, the A34, which bypasses the village just to the west (Fig. 1). The site is not located in the village of East Ilsley itself, but situated c.0.5km to 1km from Cow Lane to the north east side, adjoining Sunrise

Hill, a driveway leading to the farm (Fig.2). The Ridgeway footpath is located c.0.5km north east of the site. The buildings under development once formed Ilsley Barn Farm, a group of agricultural buildings situated along a concrete road that crosses East Ilsley Down. Four detached units are further north east along the track, than the main focus of the farm to south. The underlying geology is Seaford Formation (Upper Chalk) (BGS 1971) at a height of between 141m and 144m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a consultation document prepared by Ms Sarah Orr of West Berkshire Council. In summary, the potential stems from its location within the Berkshire Downs, close to the Ridgeway, and its rich evidence of prehistoric, Roman and Medieval landscape features, such as plough-out field systems, barrows and an extensive array of stray finds. On occasion when development occurs in this area, new findings can be made, such as a previous unknown Late Bronze Age ring ditch found during archaeological observations on construction of an all-weather gallops at Compton and Several Down near Churn (Howell and Ford 1996). This particular area, c.0.8km north, is well known for prehistoric monuments, such as the Fox Barrow (SAM 1013052) and the Grim's Ditch. Closer to the site, prehistoric and Roman field systems have been plotted in aerial photography, in adjacent areas to the south east (Richards 1978) and the finding of a number of Roman coins and a Bronze Age spearhead re close to the areas under development. Cropmarks also hint at ditched enclosures and a long period agricultural use from Roman times. A pair of Scheduled *tumuli* (both covered by SAM1006986) lie c.0.9km at to the south east edge of East Ilsley Down.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the works. This would involve the monitoring of areas of intrusive groundworks and the excavation of new foundation, excavation of ground reduction or slab removal and excavation of new service trenches. Any other areas of landscaping, if large in scope, would be monitored as necessary.

Results

Four disused cattle observation buildings to the NNE of Ilsley Barn are to be converted into holiday accommodation. Footing trenches, drainage runs, soakaways and septic tank pits were all observed and

recorded. All references to the buildings No. 1-4 are as specified by the client, with Barn 1 being the farthest NE and Barn 4 the closest to the Ilsley Barn Farm (Fig. 2).

Service Trenches South West of Ilsley Barn Farm

A c. 400m long service trench was excavated to the SE of Ilsley Barn Farm, parallel to Sunrise Lane. The trench was 0.4m in width and was dug to a depth of 1-1.4m. Natural geology was observed from a depth of 0.75m underlying 0.4m of topsoil overlying 0.35m of light brown silty subsoil with chalk inclusions. A length of modern ditch part of a drainage chamber was observed.

Barn 1 (Fig. 3).

A footing trench for a new annexe measuring 0.7m wide and 1m deep was excavated to the NW of Barn 1. The natural geology was observed from a depth of 0.5m underlying 0.35m of topsoil and 0.15m of mid brown silty subsoil with occasional flint inclusions.

To the NE of Barn 1, a septic tank and associated drainage trenches which extended around the extent of the previously described annexe were excavated. The septic tank pit measured 3m by 2.3m and was dug to a depth of 2m. The drainage trenches measured between 0.45m and 0.6m in width and were dug to a depth of 1.1-1.3m. Natural chalk geology was observed from 0.51m and was overlain by 0.31m of topsoil and 0.19m of mid brown silty subsoil.

Barn 2 (Fig. 4).

A footing trench was excavated adjacent to Barn 2 in a NW-SE alignment. The trench measured 0.6m in width and was dug to a depth of 0.7m. Natural chalk geology was observed from a depth of 0.47m underlying 0.27m of concrete made ground and 0.2m of a mid brown silt subsoil. In this area drainage pipes were also excavated but only to a depth of 0.37m and were therefore not observed.

To the SE of Barn 2 a septic tank pit and associated drainage trenches, one of which extended east into the adjacent field were excavated. The septic tank pit measured 2.1m by 2.1m and was dug to a depth of 1.5m. The drainage trenches measured 0.45m in width and were dug to a depth of 0.57m. Natural chalk geology was

observed from 0.57m in all features and was overlain by a mixed topsoil/subsoil caused by recent tree clearance and root grubbing in the immediate area of these features.

Barn 3

A c. 44m long soak away was excavated to the southwest of Barn 3 in a NE-SW alignment. The trench was between 0.5m and 1m in width and was dug to a depth of 2.20m. Natural chalk geology was observed from a depth of 0.3m underlying mid reddish brown silty topsoil.

Barn 4

A c.240m long cable trench was excavated from the SW corner of Barn 1, and continued through the areas between Barn 2 and 3 before terminating at Barn 4. The trench was 0.5m wide and was dug to maximum depth of 1.2m. Natural chalk geology was observed from 0.45m underlying 0.1m of topsoil and 0.35m of mid brown silt subsoil. North of Barn 3, a perpendicular modern ditch was observed during trenching.

Finds

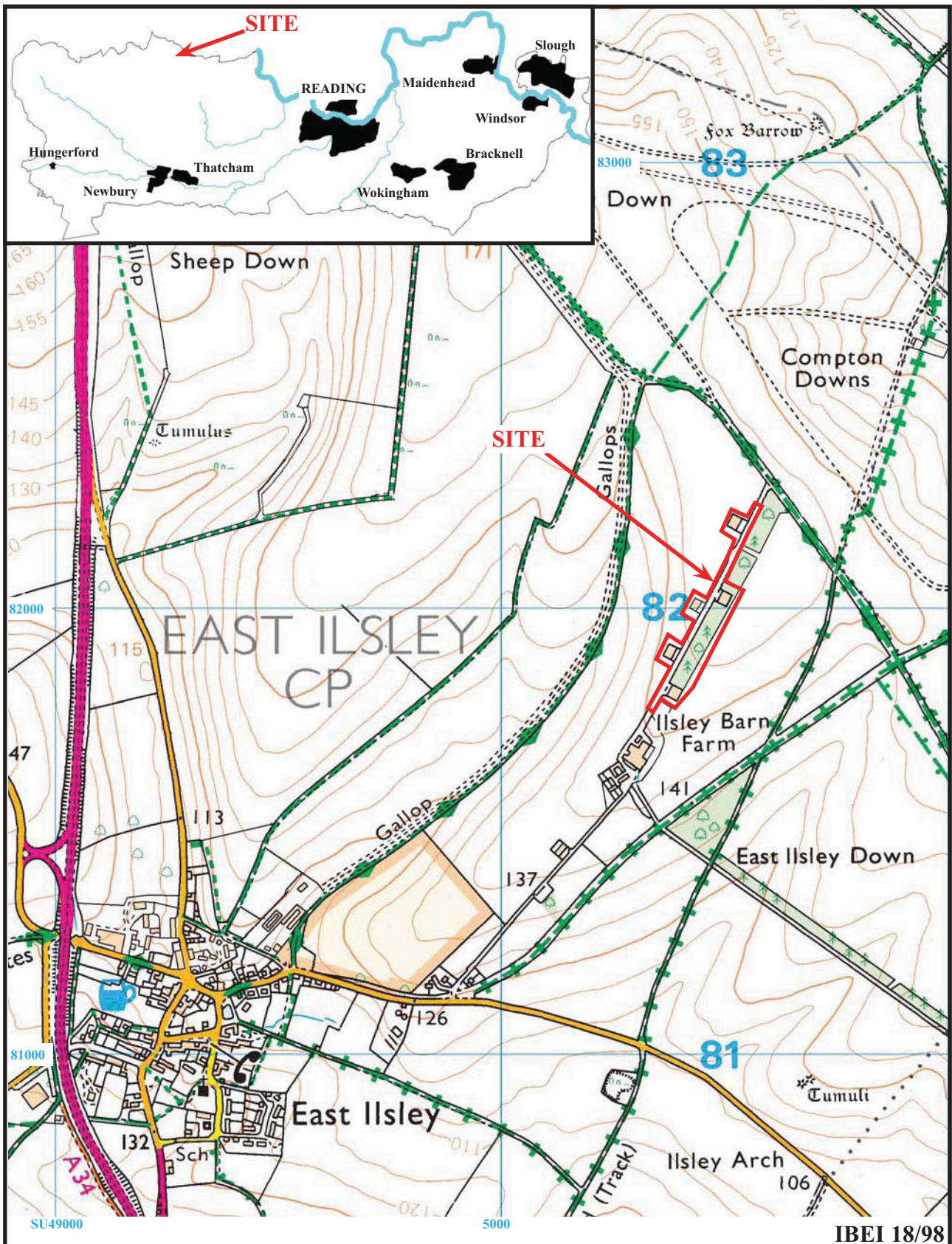
No finds of archaeological significance were recovered.

Conclusion

This watching brief monitored the digging of a number of areas associated with the development of these building. New footings, service trenches, soakaway and septic tank excavations were observed, all within some proximity to the existing buildings and access. No archaeological deposits were exposed or affected by the groundworks and no artefacts of archaeological interest recovered..

References

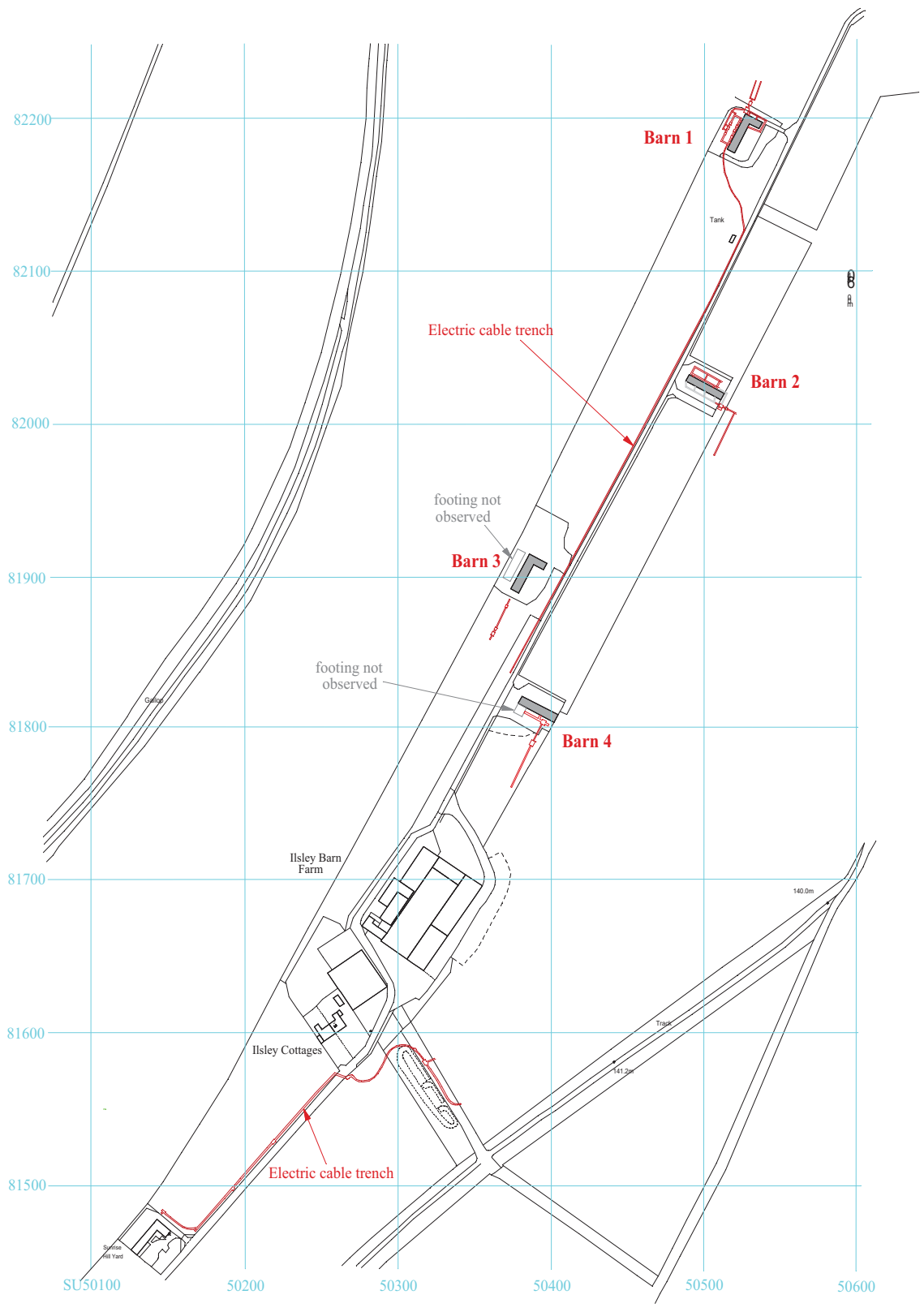
- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:63360/1:50000, Sheet 253, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Howell, L, and Ford, S, 1996, 'A newly discovered ring ditch and two late Bronze Age pits on East Ilsley All Weather Gallop, nr Churn, Berkshire, *Oxoniensia* **52**, 27-34
NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London
Richards, J.C, 1978, '*The archaeology of the Berkshire Downs: an introductory survey*', Berkshire Archaeol Comm Pub No.3, Reading



**Isolation Barns, Ilsley Barn Farm,
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Figure 1. Location of site within East Ilsley and
West Berkshire.

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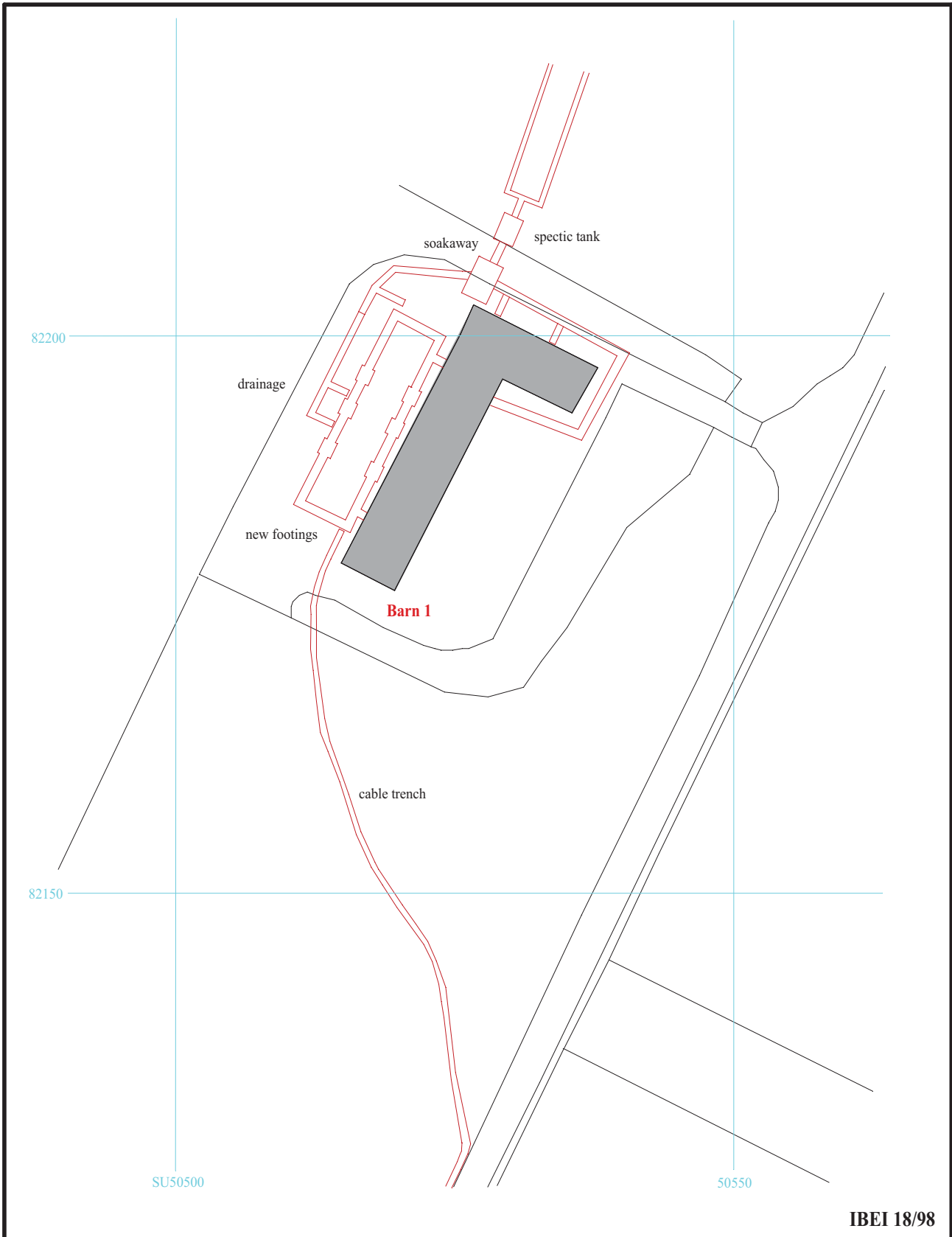
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Figure 2. Location of observed areas.





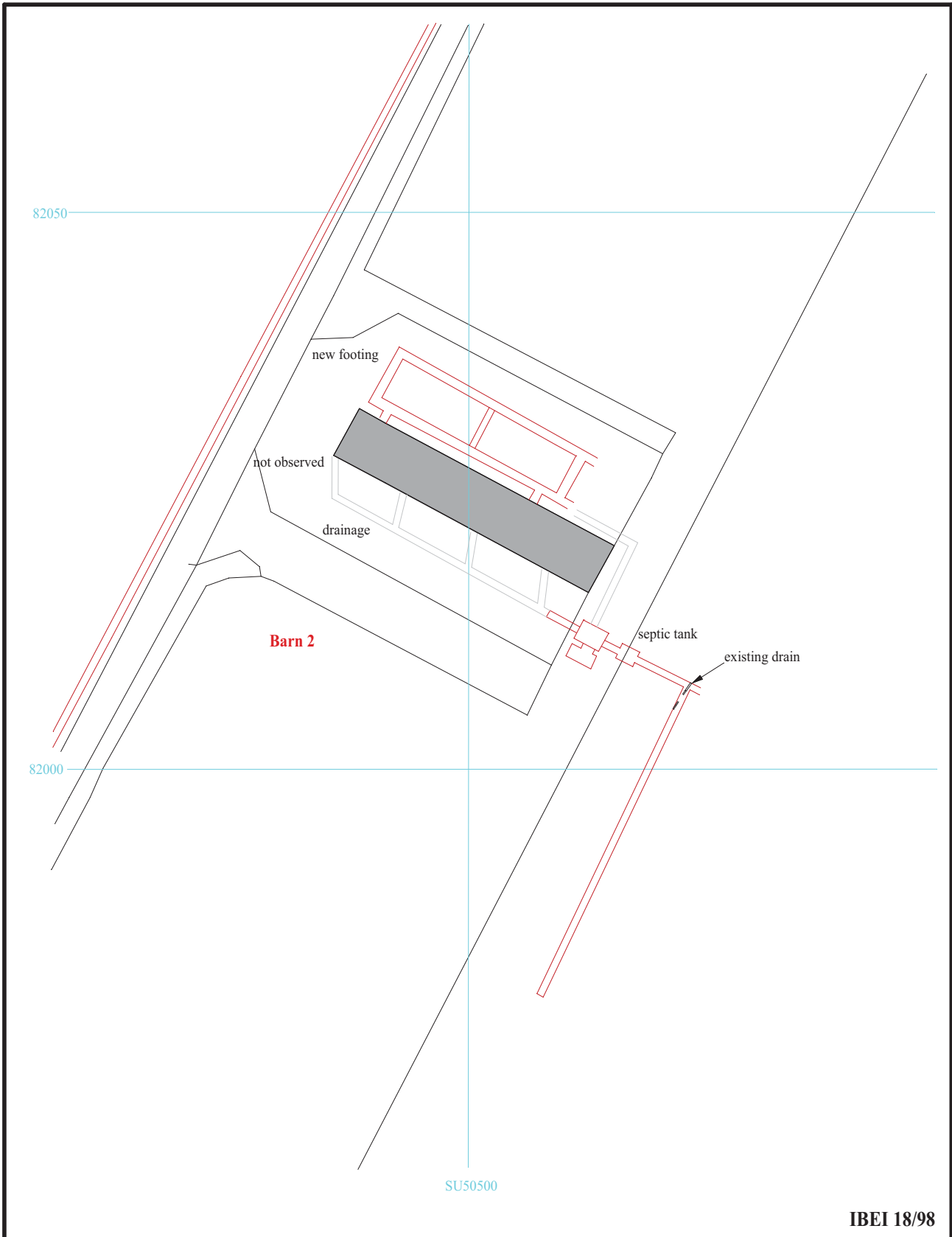
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Figure 3. Detail of observed areas at Barn 1.





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Figure 4. Detail of observed areas for Barn 2.



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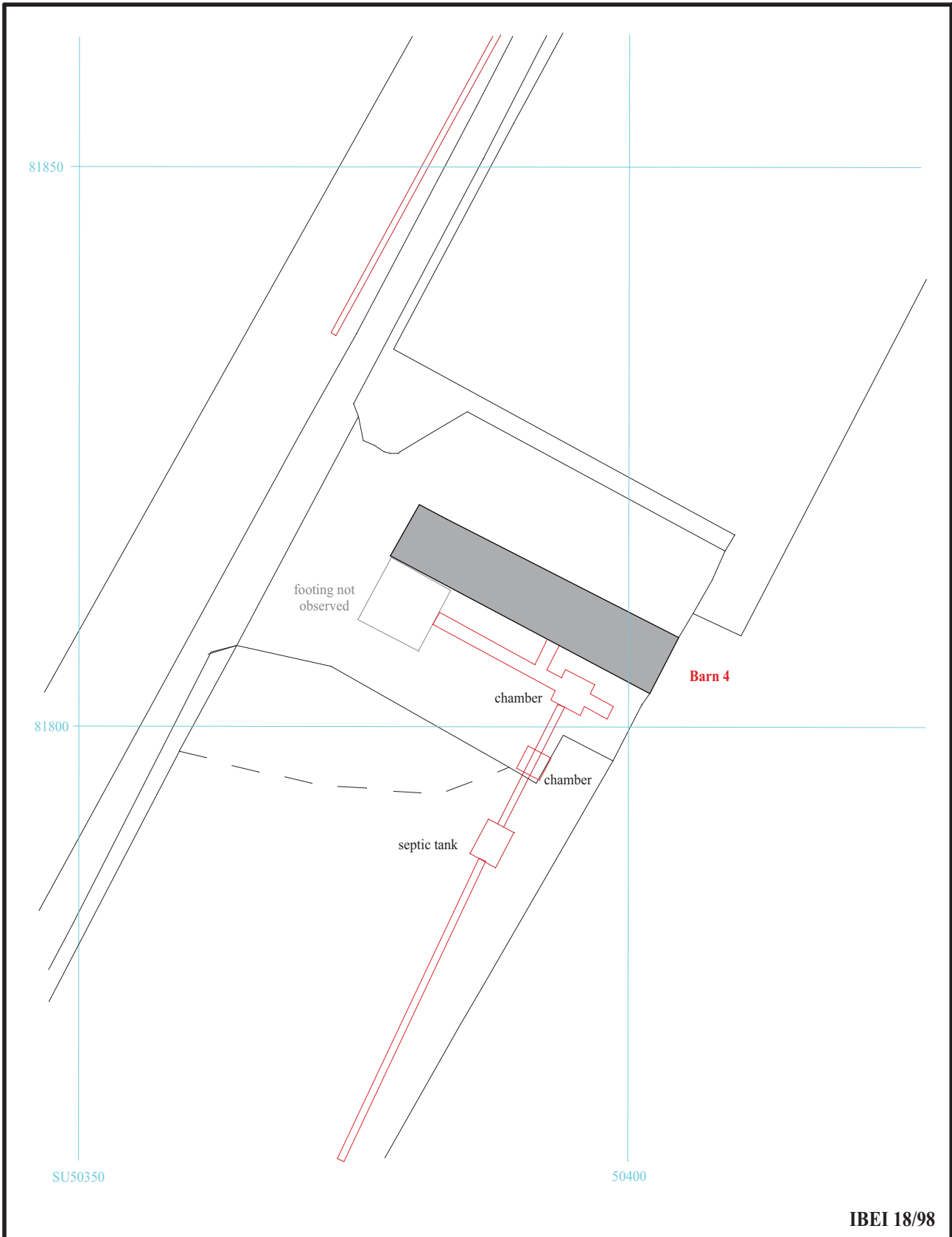


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Figure 5. Detail of observed areas for Barn 3.



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Figure 6. Detail of observed areas for Barn 4.



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Plate 1. Service trench, looking north east towards Ilsley Barn Farm



Plate 2. Service trench - concrete slabs, looking south-west, Scales: horizontal 1m and vertical 1m.

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Plates 1 and 2.**

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Plate 3. Barn 1, annexe footings, looking South East, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 4. Barn 2, annexe reduction and footing, looking North West.

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Plates 3 and 4.**

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Plate 5. Barn 4, looking North East, new extension.



Plate 6. Barn 4, section of septic tank pit, looking South East, Scale: 1m

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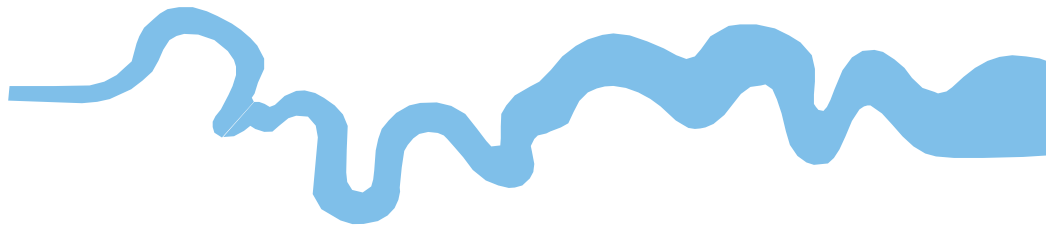
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Plates 5 and 6.**

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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 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	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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