

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Land at Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire**

Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Site Code: FLEI15/106

(SU 4910 8114)

Land at Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire

**An Archaeological Evaluation
for Manor Oak Homes**

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code FLEI 15/106

November 2015

Summary

Site name: Land at Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4910 8114

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 28th October-4th November 2015

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: FLEI 15/106

Area of site: 1.91 ha

Summary of results: A Roman gully, and a medieval pit and posthole were identified during the evaluation.

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

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Report edited/checked by: Steve Ford ✓ 12.11.15 Steve Preston ✓ 11.11.15

Land at Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Report 15/106b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out on Land at Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire (SU 4910 8114) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Oscar Briggs of Manor Oak Homes, White Lodge Farm, Walgrave, Northampton, NN6 9PY.

Planning consent is to be sought from West Berkshire Council for the development of a 1.91 hectare parcel of land for housing. As it is possible that the development area may contain archaeological deposits and in order to provide sufficient information on the archaeological potential of the site so as to mitigate the effects of the development, a field evaluation has been requested. Two components of work were proposed; geophysical survey and field evaluation by means of machine trenching. Depending on the results of these phases of investigation, a further phase of fieldwork may be required if significant archaeological deposits are revealed. The geophysical survey has been reported previously (Bray and Constable 2015)

This is in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government's *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Alex Godden, Archaeological Officer with West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Benedikt Tebbitt between the 29th October and 4th November 2015 and the site code is FLEI 15/106. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on three fields on the western side of the village of East Ilsley, West Berkshire, 15.5km to the north of Newbury (Fig. 2). The irregular parcel of land is bordered by residential buildings to the south and east,

Fidler's Lane to the north and the A34 to the west. The site boundary consists of wooden fences and the fields are subdivided by wooden post and rail fencing. The site sloped gently uphill from north to south with slight undulations. The underlying geology is recorded as Upper Chalk across the majority of the fields with bands of Lower Chalk and Coombe deposits present in the north eastern corner of the site (BGS 1971), which was observed across the site. The site lies at a height of *c.* 122m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the archaeologically rich Berkshire Downs (Richards 1978; Dils and Yates 2013). The site lies on the margins of East Ilsley, which has late Saxon origins and is mentioned in Domesday Book (Williams and Martin 2002). A wide range of sites and finds are recorded in the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record for the general vicinity of the village, many of which were recorded by aerial photography. Evaluation and subsequent watching brief on land to the north of Fidler's Lane revealed a small number of deposits of medieval date (Smith and Ford 1997; Pollinger 1997). Information recorded in the Historic Environment Record notes that the site of a 19th century farm and possible associated earthworks lie on and/or close to the proposal site. In more recent times, documentary sources indicate that the field was used for Ilsley sheep fairs up to the 1930s, with the possibility that traces of animal pens may be encountered.

The geophysical survey revealed several strong magnetic anomalies, concentrated in the eastern end of the northern field, where a modern service run was detected, and in the south-western corner of the southern field. In all cases, it was considered that these anomalies were most likely caused by magnetic ferrous debris and items such as wire fencing along the site boundaries and none were considered to be of archaeological origin (Bray and Constable 2015).

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 the site;
- to determine if archaeological deposits of any period are present;
- to determine if there are any prehistoric deposits or artefact scatters present;
- to determine if there is any late Saxon or medieval settlement deposits relating to the historic village; and
- to confirm the archaeological nature of any geophysical anomalies present.

It was proposed to dig 17 trenches, 21m long and 1.60m wide and a sufficient amount of any identified archaeological deposits would be investigated. These were to be dug using a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

Results

All 17 trenches were dug as close as possible to their intended positions, although the presence of a water pipe resulted in a slight repositioning of trenches 14 and 15 (Fig. 2). The trenches measured between 19.40m and 23m long and between 0.34m and 0.95m deep.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1. The excavated features are summarized in Appendix 2.

Trench 1

This trench was aligned approximately North West-South East and measured 23m long and 0.40m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil overlying 0.16m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 2 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 1 and 3)

This trench was aligned North-South and measured 21.20m long and, at its southern end 0.95m deep and at its northern end, 0.51m deep. At the southern end the stratigraphy consisted of 0.23m of topsoil overlying 0.68m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology. At the northern end the stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil overlying 0.24m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology. A curving gully was located between 8m and 13m into which a slot (1) was dug that measured 0.67m wide and 0.21m deep. It had two fills (52 and 53) with 53, its secondary fill of mid grey brown sandy silt, producing 87 sherds of Roman pottery, a nail, eight pieces of burnt flint, and 15 fragments of fired clay.

Trench 3

This trench was aligned East-West and measured 23.00m long and, at its western end 0.92m deep and at its eastern end 0.32m deep. The western end consisted of 0.18m of topsoil overlying 0.40m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology. The eastern end consisted of 0.23m of topsoil overlying 0.09m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 4

This trench was aligned approximately North East-South West and measured 21.50m long and 0.34m deep. It consisted of 0.20m of topsoil overlying 0.27m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 5 (Figs 3 and 4)

This trench was aligned North-South and measured 21m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.15m of topsoil overlying 0.34m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology. A ditch was located at the northern end of the trench into which a slot (4) was dug measuring 1.45m wide and 0.20m deep. Its light grey brown silty clay fill (56) produced 10 pieces of 19th-century brick and tile, a piece of glass, a nail and a piece of slag.

Trench 6

This trench was aligned approximately North-South and measured 19.40m long and 0.64m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil overlying 0.46m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 7

This trench was aligned North West-South East and measured 20m long and 0.64m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.16m of topsoil overlying 0.43m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 8

This trench was aligned approximately North East-South West and measured 20.40m long and 0.83m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil overlying 0.65m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 9

This trench was aligned North West-South East and measured 20.50m long and 0.43m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.24m of topsoil overlying 0.16m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 10

This trench was aligned approximately East-West and measured 21m long and 0.62m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil overlying 0.47m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 11 (Figs 3 and 4; Pls 2, 4 and 5)

This trench was aligned approximately North-South and measured 21.20m long and 0.52m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.22m of topsoil overlying 0.27m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology. A posthole (2) and pit (3) were observed between 8m and 9.50m. The posthole measured 0.28m in diameter and 0.20m deep. Its light grey brown silty clay fill (54) produced a sherd of medieval pottery and a piece of undated tile. The pit measured 0.96m wide, 0.08m deep and its light grey brown silty clay fill (55) produced six sherds of medieval pottery and five pieces of animal bone.

Trench 12

This trench was aligned approximately North-South and measured 21.60m long and 0.50m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil overlying 0.30m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 13

This trench was aligned approximately North East-South West and measured 21.80m long and 0.44m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.18m of topsoil overlying 0.13m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 14

This trench was aligned approximately East-West and measured 21.40m long and 0.17m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.17m of topsoil overlying 0.46m of chalk and brick rubble made ground overlying clay with gravel natural geology.

Trench 15

This trench was aligned North West-South East and measured 0.15m of topsoil overlying chalk and brick rubble made ground overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 16

This trench was aligned approximately North East-South West and measured 21m long and 0.46m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil overlying 0.22m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Trench 17

This trench was aligned East-West and measured 21.30m long and 0.45m deep. The stratigraphy consisted of 0.20m of topsoil overlying 0.22m of subsoil overlying chalk and clay natural geology.

Finds

Pottery by Jane Timby

The evaluation at Fidler's Lane resulted in the recovery of a small assemblage of 94 sherds of pottery weighing 1211g dating to the Roman and medieval periods. Pottery was recovered from just three features: a gully, posthole and pit with most of the pottery, 87 sherds, coming from the gully. The condition of the material is quite variable with some larger sherds and some more fragmented, more abraded finds. Several pieces appear to have been burnt. The overall average sherd weight of 12.9g is quite typical of refuse material.

For the purposes of the assessment the pottery assemblage was briefly scanned to assess its likely chronology and quantified by sherd count and weight for each recorded context. The resulting data are summarized in Appendix 3.

Roman

Some 87 sherds of Roman pottery were recorded all from gully 1. The assemblage mainly comprises wares of unknown, but presumed local origin accompanied by six sherds of samian and a small number of probably early Oxfordshire wares.

Five of the six sherds of samian are heavily burnt and probably come from the same vessel, a Central Gaulish (Lezoux) Dragendorff 31 dish. The sixth sherd, also Central Gaulish is unburnt.

Five sherds of fine grey ware including a poppyhead beaker decorated with panels of barbotine dots and an everted jar are both probably products of the Oxfordshire industry (OXF FR) (Tomber and Dore 1998, 173). Similarly a fine white ware and a beaker in fine oxidized ware are probably from the same region.

The remaining assemblage includes 12 sherds from a sandy grog-tempered storage jar, a large number of grey or black sandy wares and a handmade sandy ware with oxidised, brown and grey patchily fired wares. In addition to the samian dish and poppyhead beaker other vessels include beaker, everted rim jars and a lid.

The finer wares in the assemblage suggest a 2nd-century date for the group, probably more towards the second half.

Medieval

The seven sherds recovered from posthole 2 and pit 3 date to the medieval period. These comprise unglazed, quite thin-walled jars. Two fabrics are present equating with Newbury fabrics A and B (Vince 1997); one with sand and flint; the other with sand, flint and limestone inclusions.

Summary

This is a very small group of pottery documenting early-mid Roman and medieval activity at the site. The sherds are moderately well-preserved suggesting *in-situ* deposits.

Animal Bone by Lizzi Lewins

A small assemblage of animal bone (6 pieces), weighing a total of 47g, was recovered from two features (Appendix 4). The bone was classified according to size and where possible by species. The bone, although fragmented, was generally in good condition although a small amount of surface abrasion was noted.

Of the six pieces of bone only two were identifiable. These were hand recovered from Pit 3 (55) and comprised a right, proximal tibia (unfused metaphysis), and a right, distal metatarsal, both from a sheep/goat. No butchery marks or other taphonomic processes were observed.

Ceramic Building Material by Danielle Milbank

Two contexts encountered during the evaluation contained brick and tile fragments. Context 4 (56) contained 10 pieces, weighing 245g (Appendix 5). These were examined under x10 magnification and classified according to Harley (1974) where possible. A brick fragment was recovered which is of a hard, evenly-fired dense clay matrix with very fine sand inclusions, Harley type 5, with a 19th century (or later) date. The remainder were tile fragments which are of a hard, evenly-fired fabric with fine sandy inclusions and a rough base, and although not closely dateable, are also of likely 19th century or later date. A further piece was recovered from posthole 2, which weighed 3g and was too small to date with any certainty.

Other finds by Andy Taylor

One piece of undiagnostic iron working slag weighing 11g came from ditch 4 (Appendix 6). One small piece of clear glass was recovered from ditch 4 weighing 1g. It most likely comes from a bottle or jar (Appendix 7). Eight pieces of burnt flint were recovered from a soil sample taken from gully 1. These weighed a total of 46g (Appendix 8). Fifteen pieces of non-descript fired clay (56g) came from gully 1 (53).

Charred Plant Remains by Joanna Pine

Three environmental samples were processed from the site. The samples were wet sieved to 0.25mm and air dried. The flots were examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x10 and x40.

Charred plant macrofossils were present in sample <2> [2] (54). This contained 3 grains of indeterminate cereal some possibly being wheat. Sample <3> [3] (55) contained 10 grains, again indeterminate but possibly wheat.

A small amount of charcoal was present in all three samples. This material was of moderate size and structure that has potential for species identification.

Conclusion

The evaluation identified a modest amount of archaeological deposits of Roman and (less securely) medieval date. It is unclear if these were isolated, or peripheral features on the edges of settlement activity. The Roman curving gully could potentially be part of a roundhouse, a type of architecture more usually associated with the Iron Age, but which did persist into the early Roman period but the quantity of pottery from this feature probably suggests it is not structural and that it may be a small enclosure. A medieval pit identified across the road to the north (Smith and Ford 1997) may indicate that this features here represent the margin of the medieval settlement rather than the focus.

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APPENDIX 1: Trench details

0m at S or W end

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Length (m)</i>	<i>Breadth (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1	23.00	1.60	0.40	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.36m subsoil; 0.36m-0.40m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
2	21.20	1.60	0.95 (S) 0.51 (N)	S End: 0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23m-0.91m subsoil; 0.91m-0.95m+ chalk and clay. N End: 0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.48m subsoil; 0.48m-0.51m+ chalk and clay. Gully 1. [Pls 1 and 3]
3	23.00	1.60	0.92 (W) 0.32 (E)	W End: 0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.88m topsoil; 0.88m-0.92m+ chalk and clay natural geology. E End: 0-0.23m topsoil; 0.23m-0.29m subsoil; 0.29m-0.32m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
4	21.50	1.60	0.34	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.27m subsoil; 0.27m-0.34m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
5	21.00	1.60	0.52	0-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.49m subsoil; 0.49m-0.52m+ chalk and clay natural geology. Ditch 4
6	19.40	1.60	0.64	0-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.62m subsoil; 0.62m-0.64m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
7	20.00	1.60	0.64	0-0.16m topsoil; 0.16m-0.59m subsoil; 0.59m-0.64m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
8	20.40	1.60	0.83	0-0.17m topsoil; 0.17m-0.82m subsoil; 0.82m-0.83m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
9	20.50	1.60	0.43	0-0.24m topsoil; 0.24m-0.40m subsoil; 0.40m-0.43m chalk and clay natural geology.
10	21.00	1.60	0.62	0-0.17m topsoil; 0.17m-0.58m subsoil; 0.58m-0.62m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
11	21.20	1.60	0.52	0-0.22m topsoil; 0.22m-0.49m subsoil; 0.49m-0.52m+ chalk and clay natural geology. Posthole 2; Pit 3. [Pls 2, 4 and 5]
12	21.60	1.60	0.50	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.48m subsoil; 0.48m-0.50m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
13	21.80	1.60	0.44	0-0.18m topsoil; 0.18m-0.41m subsoil; 0.41m-0.44m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
14	21.40	1.60	0.66	0-0.17m topsoil; 0.17m-0.63m subsoil; 0.63m-0.66m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
15	22.20	1.60	0.40	0-0.15m topsoil; 0.15m-0.37m brick rubble and chalk made ground; 0.37m-0.40m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
16	21.00	1.60	0.46	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.42m subsoil; 0.42m-0.46m+ chalk and clay natural geology.
17	21.30	1.60	0.45	0-0.20m topsoil; 0.20m-0.42m subsoil; 0.42m-0.45m+ chalk and clay natural geology.

APPENDIX 2: Feature details

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill (s)</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
2	1	52, 53	Gully	Roman	Pottery (2nd century AD)
11	2	54	Posthole	Medieval	Pottery
11	3	55	Pit	Medieval	Pottery
5	4	56	Ditch	Post-medieval	Brick, Tile, Glass

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of Pottery

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Grog</i>	<i>Samian</i>	<i>Oxid</i>	<i>Grey</i>	<i>OXF FR</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Med</i>	<i>Tot No</i>	<i>Tot Wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
2	1	53	14	6	13	45	8	1	-	87	1166	2nd century AD
11	2	54	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	8	Medieval
11	3	55	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	37	Medieval
		TOTAL	14	6	13	45	8	1	7	94	1211	

APPENDIX 4: Catalogue of Animal Bone

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No. Frags</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>	<i>Sheep/ Goat</i>	<i>Unid</i>
11	2	54	2	Posthole	1	4	-	1
11	3	55	-	Pit	2	39	2	-
11	3	55	3	Pit	3	4	-	3

APPENDIX 5: Catalogue of Ceramic Building Material and fired clay

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
2	1	53	Gully	Fired clay	15	56
11	2	54	Posthole	Brick or tile	1	3
5	4	56	Pit	Tile, brick	10	245

APPENDIX 6: Catalogue of Slag

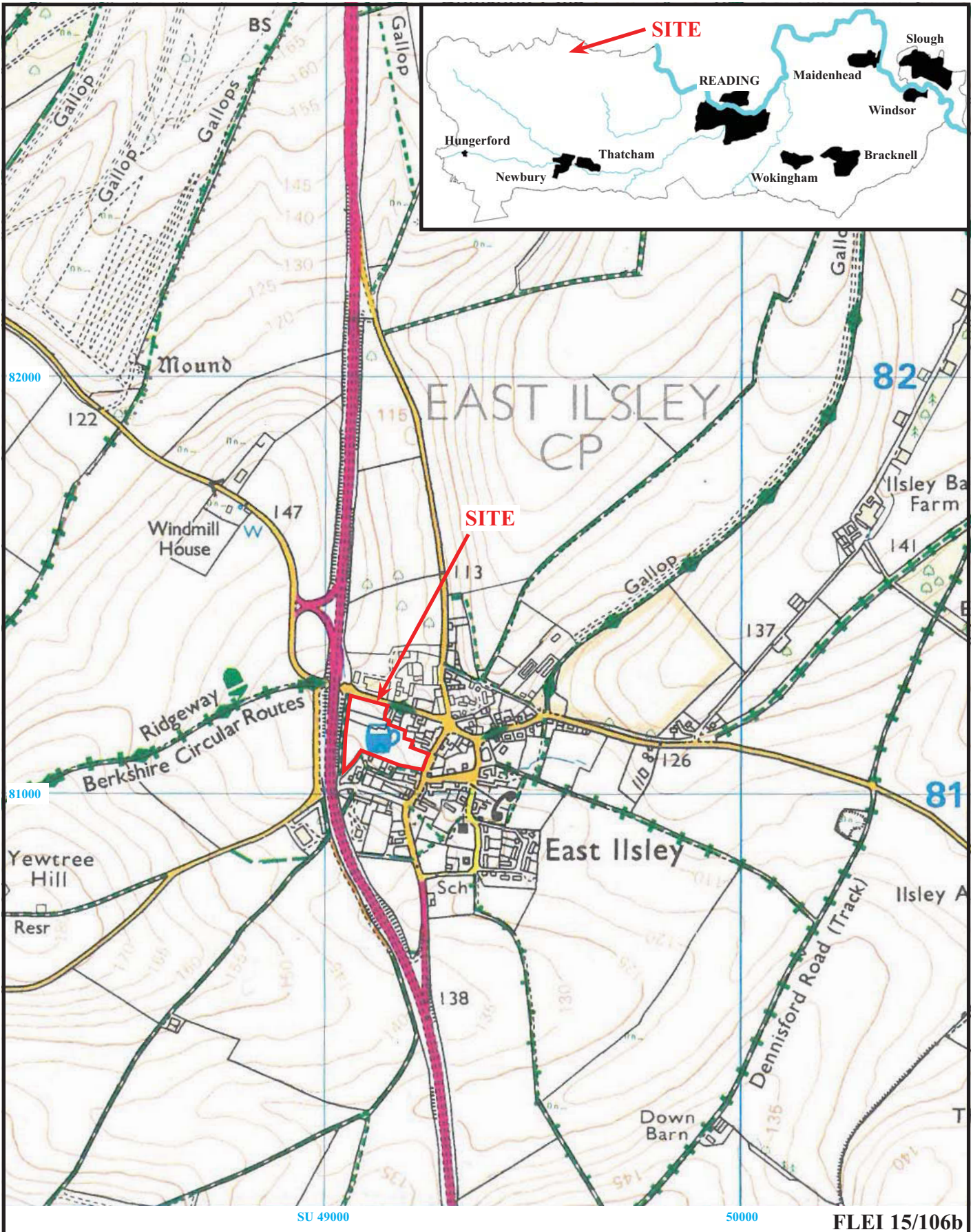
<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
5	4	56	Ditch	1	11

APPENDIX 7: Catalogue of Glass

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Colour</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
5	4	56	Ditch	Clear	1	1

APPENDIX 8: Catalogue of Burnt Flint

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
2	1	53	Gully	1	8	46



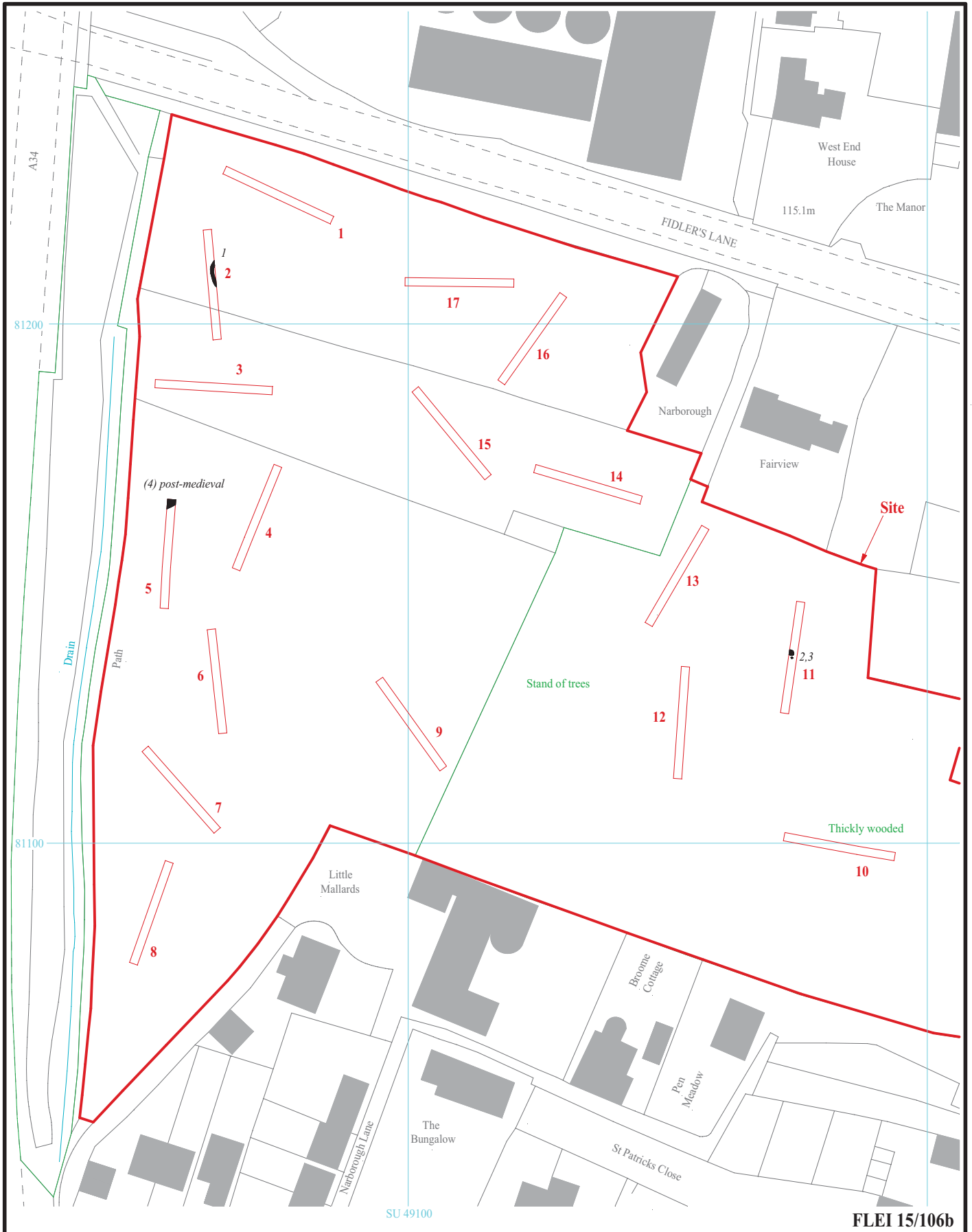
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Figure 1. Location of site within East Ilsley and West Berkshire.

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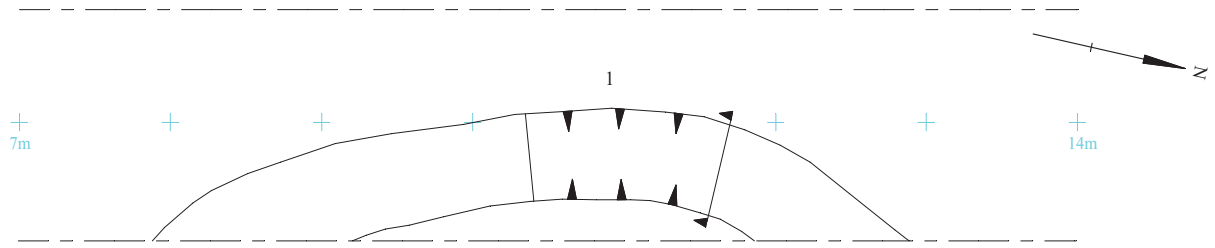
Figure 2. Location of trenches.



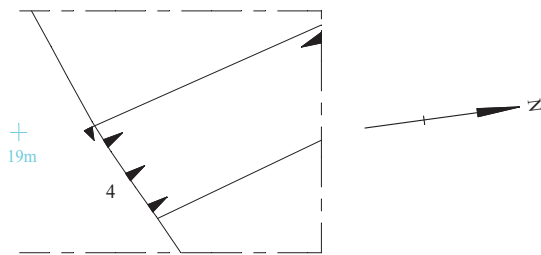
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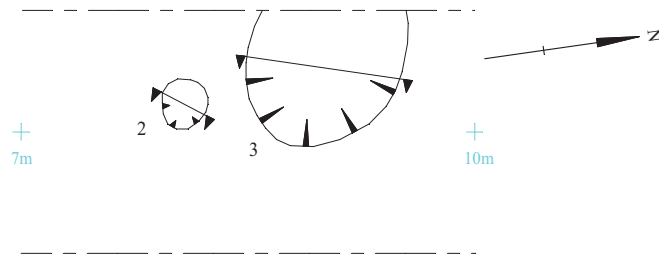
Trench 2



Trench 5



Trench 11

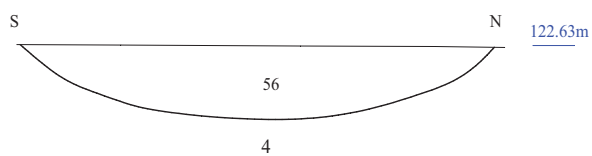
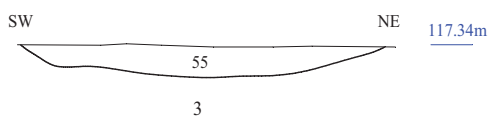
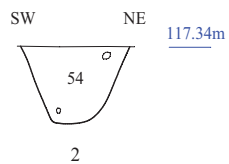
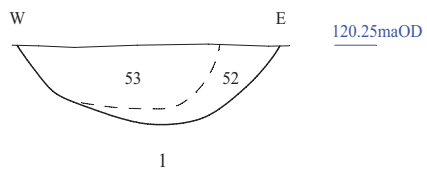


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Figure 3. Detail of trenches.





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Figure 4: Sections.



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Plate 1. Trench 2, looking south, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.3m.



Plate 2. Trench 11, looking south west, Scales: horizontal 2m and 1m, vertical 0.5m.

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**Land at Fidler's Lane, East Illsley,
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Plates 1 - 2.**

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Plate 3. Trench 2, gully 1, looking north, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.



Plate 4. Trench 11, pit 2, looking north west, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.



Plate 5. Trench 11, shallow pit 3, looking north west, Scales: 0.5m and 0.1m.

FLEI 15/106b

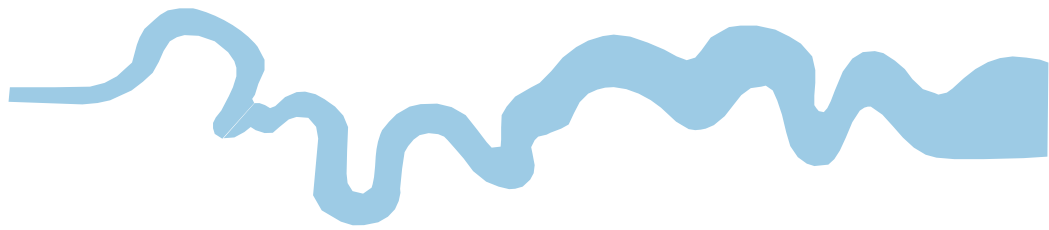
Land at Fidler's Lane, East Illsley,
West Berkshire, 2015
Archaeological Evaluation
Plates 3 - 5.

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

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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