

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

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Manor Farm, Fidler's Lane,
East Ilsley, West Berkshire**

Archaeological Watching Brief

by Cecilia Galleano and Andrew Munding

Site Code: MFEI17/110

(SU 4925 8125)

Manor Farm, Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Maxted Farm Partnership

by Cecilia Galleano and Andrew Muddin

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code MFEI 17/110

July 2020

Summary

Site name: Manor Farm, Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 4925 8125

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 8th January 2018 to 10th January 2019

Project coordinator: Danielle Milbank

Site supervisor: Cecilia Galleano, Maisie Foster, Andrew Munding, Joshua Hargreaves

Site code: MFEI 17/110

Summary of results: The watching brief observed the stripping of relatively large areas of overburden to expose the top of the natural geology. To the north west, this work found two ditches, both dated by pottery to the early medieval period (11-12th Century). The other areas contained no archaeological deposits but later medieval pottery was recovered. A single sherd of Neolithic pottery was also recovered

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

*This report may be copied for bona fide research or planning purposes without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. All TVAS unpublished fieldwork reports are available on our website:
www.tvas.co.uk/reports/reports.asp.*

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford ✓ 23.07.20
	Steve Preston ✓ 23.07.20

Manor Farm, Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

by Cecilia Galleano and Andrew Mundin

Report 17/110

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Manor Farm, Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire, RG20 7LG (SU 4925 8125) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mrs Sez Maxted, of the above address.

Planning permission (app 16/02452/FULD) has been gained from West Berkshire Council for the construction of new structures, a mix of residential and business use to the north-west of Manor Farm (known as the Orchard). The Listed stables (Grade II) will be converted to offices. This would also include the creation of improved access, parking and landscaping from the north. Due to a potential of buried archaeological remains being located on the site, a condition (14) was attached to the permission has stating that archaeological watching brief was to be maintained during groundworks.

These works were undertaken 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, former Archaeological Officer for West Berkshire Council, who created the briefing note. Latterly, fieldwork was monitored by Ms Sarah Orr, Senior Archaeologist at West Berkshire Council. The fieldwork was supervised by Cecilia Galleano during works to the north, regarding the new access, and later by Maisie Foster and Andrew Mundin observed works in the south, with assistance from Ashley Kruger and Josh Hargreaves. The watching brief was carried out between the 8th January 2019 and 8th January 2019 and the site code is MFEI 17/110.

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

Location, topography and geology

The site is located north of Fidler's Lane, adjacent to Manor Farm, with several Listing Buildings associated with the core of the property to the south. Manor Farm is set back from the main north junction into the village, placed to the north-west of this, with the 'Sheepdown' housing estate fronting the Abingdon Road to the east (Fig.2). The underling geology is mapped as head deposits (sand, silt and flint gravel) over Lower Chalk (BGS

1971), which forms a dry river-valley bottom that eventually feeds through to the Pang Valley to the south east. The site lies at height of c.114m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

Manor Farm House (Grade II) is immediately south east of the development and is one of the oldest extant houses in the village, with mid-16th century origin, and the home of the Hildesley family in the 18th century, but were associated with the manor known as *Northbury* from the 14th century (VCH 1924).

Nearby, archaeological observation has been carried out on several areas, immediately adjacent to Manor Farm. To the west (Smith and Ford 1997; Pollinger 1997) and north-east (Saunders and Fry 1998). More recently, geophysical investigation and evaluation has sampled land to the south of Fidler's Lane at Norborough Farm (Taylor 2015). All these works have identified low levels occupation deposits; ditches containing Early Medieval pottery (13th century 'Newbury' ware). Additionally, a modest quantity of Roman pottery, including 1st century 'samian', were found in one feature to the south (Taylor 2015).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits of finds affected by the new construction works. In general, the watching brief would involve below ground excavation, though some was expected to be in the vicinity of a Listed Building. Much of this would involve ground reduction, and the digging of foundation trenches and service runs for new buildings. All the works were stripped of overburden by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket and supervised by an archaeologist at points where sensitive excavation was necessary. If deposits were uncovered, a sample was hand excavated by the archaeologist to understand the character, form, date and potential of uncovering environmental remains within the deposits.

Results

The fieldwork consisted of two main components namely an area strip to widen the northern access road, with ground reduction for the new building plots to the south. In addition the digging of a service run and insertion of a water tank were observed soakaways

Northern Area

Access widening (overflow parking ground reduction)

Observations took place during formation of the access road which required the road to the northern farmyard to be widened to allow for overflow parking additional to the allotted spaces created with the new house plots (Fig.4). The groundworks reduced the ground by *c.*0.6m, removing overburden deposits and cutting into the natural geology to form a level area. The stratigraphy observed consisted of a loose, dark grey silty sand, with brick inclusions and other modern debris, which was 0.35m deep. Underlying this was the natural geology, a firm, brown sandy silt with frequent sub-angular gravel and flint nodules which became a light brown sandy silt with gravel further to the south. The area in total was orientated NE-SW and was *c.* 7.4m wide x 13.5m long (Pl.1).

Two ditches were uncovered in this ground reduction. Ditch A aligned approximately N-S was 1.70m wide and 0.68m deep with a u-shaped profile. Excavation (cuts 1 and 2) suggested a recut an original ditch, of which little remained, only visible on the section to the NE side (Pl. 2). The recut ditch (2) was filled with two fills (52 and 53). The secondary fill of this feature was a firm, yellow brown sandy silt with small, angular flint inclusions and occasional charcoal flecks (53). The basal fill was a firm dark reddish-brown sandy silt with occasional small rounded flint gravel and charcoal flecks. Early medieval pottery was recovered from both fills as was a single sherd of (residual) Neolithic pottery and early medieval date.

Ditch slot 1 was filled with light reddish brown clayey silt with occasional flint gravel and charcoal inclusions (54). No artefacts were recovered.

Ditch A was cut by gully B which traversed the ditch at the north east end. At this point, a relationship slot was excavated (4 and 5). The ditch (4) was cut by the gully (5), with the top of the gully seen in the NE section.

Gully B (slot 3) was 0.90m wide, 0.55m deep and had two fills (55 and 56) which were variations on a grey-brown sandy silt with gravel(Pl. 3). Gully B produced no dating evidence.

Ditch slot 4 contained some animal bone.

Service trench

A service trench connected the new structures with an existing supply from the vicinity of the north access road. It was laid to the side of the stripped area of the widened access road (above) (Figs 2 and 3). To the south the trench was 0.4m wide and 0.55m deep dug through 0.3m of topsoil and 0.25m of subsoil with no exposure of the natural geology. The trench was deeper to the north with up to a 0.45m depth of the natural exposed. However, no finds nor deposits of archaeological interest were observed.

Southern Area

Ground reduction Plot A

An area of 20.6 x 10.5m was stripped of overburden under archaeological supervision initially down to the top of the natural geology (Fig. 3). The ground reduction would eventually be up to 1.3m deep. The stratigraphy comprised 0.3-0.4m of mixed modern made ground directly overlying chalk natural geology. The chalk was crossed by several modern service trenches, a septic tank and a area for a soakaway. At the southern end of the plot, the natural geology had been further truncated to a depth of up to 1.1m and infilled with modern mixed material and construction debris.

Ground reduction Plot B and environs

Further areas of ground reduction were observed to the east and south of plot A including plot B (Fig. 3). The made ground was reduced to expose the natural geology between c.0.80m and 1.30m with the natural geology not reached on the eastern edge of the site and the southern end extensively truncated. Further areas of localised truncation for services and inspection chambers were noted but no deposits of archaeological interest though a few sherds of later medieval pottery were recovered.

An area of 3m x 3m was monitored for the insertion of a water tank (Fig. 3) The stratigraphy comprised 0.37m of topsoil above 0.1m of subsoil above chalk natural geology. No archaeological deposits were recorded.

Finds

Pottery by Sue Anderson

Six sherds (57g) were collected from three contexts during the watching brief. Quantification was carried out using sherd count, weight, estimated vessel equivalent (eve) and minimum number of vessels (MNV). Fabric codes were assigned from the author's fabric series (unpub.), based on descriptions of pottery from Newbury (Vince 1997) and Oxford (Mellor 1994). Methods follow MPRG recommendations (MPRG 2001) and form terminology follows MPRG (1998). The results were input directly onto an Access database, which forms the archive catalogue.

The six sherds were in a variety of fabrics, all of broadly local and regional origin. From ditch fill (52) there was a handmade body sherd of Kennet Valley A flint- and sand-tempered ware, suggesting an earliest date for this context of ?10th/11th-century, but the ware continued in use into the 14th century. However, ditch fill (53)

from the same feature contained a body sherd of Kennet Valley B flint-, limestone- and sand-tempered fabric, which suggests that the ditch was filled in the late 11th-century or later. Also in this fill were two joining sherds of a later Neolithic vessel, probably a shoulder fragment of a Mortlake-style vessel with vertical impressed cord decoration. The inner surface was lost and the outer surface was abraded.

Two sherds were recovered during overburden removal for the southern area . Both were Brill/Boarstall wares, although one was in Oxford fabric OXAW1 (medieval), and the other was in the late medieval fabric OXBX. The OXAW1 sherd was a fragment of rod handle with a deep groove containing a vertical line of fine stabmarks, and was fully glazed with a copper green glaze. The OXBX sherd was a body fragment with spots of copper green glaze externally.

Animal bone by Ceri Falys

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from three contexts within the investigated area (ditch slots 1 (53) and 4 (57)), as well as the made-ground layer that was encountered during the “reduction over S pit”. Weighing 301g, a total of 27 fragments were present for analysis (Appendix 3). The surface preservation of the skeletal elements was generally good, with few pieces displaying damage or etching of the cortical bone surface. However, the majority pieces were significantly fragmented.

Initial analyses roughly sorted elements based on size, not by species, into one of three general size categories: “large”, “medium”, and “small”. Horse and cow are represented by the large size category, sheep/goat, deer and pigs are represented in the medium size category, and any smaller animal (e.g. dog, cat etc.) are designated to the “small” category. Wherever possible, specific identification to species, element and side of origin were attempted using reference to Hillson (1992). The minimum number of animal individuals both within and between species was assessed based on the duplication of elements and/or the presence of differing states of skeletal development. Non-descript midshaft segments of long bones were the most common fragments present.

Osteological analysis has determined that a minimum of three animal individuals were present within the small assemblage: one “large” animal (a horse), one “medium” animal (a sheep/goat) and one “small-sized” animal (a dog). A horse individual was represented by a single tooth and associated mandibular fragment in ditch 4(57). Evidence of “medium-sized” animals were recovered from both ditch features (1 (53) and 4 (57)). The presence of a minimum of one sheep/goat individual was suggested by the presence of the proximal end of a metatarsal in ditch 1, and a sheep-goat sized tooth in ditch 4. Finally, several elements of at least one “small-

sized” animal was recovered from the made ground. Both the left and right humeri and two thoracic vertebrae of a dog were identified, in addition to several rib shaft fragments.

Pathological changes to bone were observed on elements from each of the three excavated contexts. In ditch 1 (53), a small, oval-shaped, localized area of grey-coloured woven bone, measuring a maximum of 16.5mm in diameter, was present on the visceral surface of a “medium sized” animal’s rib shaft. Diffuse, grey-coloured new bone formation was also present on an unidentified fragment (possibly a portion of cranium – ectocranial surface) from ditch 4 (57). The presence of woven bone indicates the skeletal element was being actively remodelled at the time the animal died, likely in response to an infection or trauma. Lastly, large, superior-inferior projecting osteophytes were observed on the dog thoracic vertebral bodies that were recovered from the made-ground layer. Osteophytes are a sign of degenerative joint disease (e.g. arthritis), which can result from advancing age, or in response to trauma.

In summary, the small assemblage of bone recovered during the course of this archaeological investigation contained the remains of at least three animal individuals: one horse, one sheep/goat, and one dog. No further information could be retrieved from this collection of animal bone.

Conclusion

The watching brief identified two ditches, dated to the early medieval period (c. 11h Century), likely representing parts of field or property boundaries. Some later medieval pottery was also recovered. Although the existing built-heritage is between 16th and 18th century date, the fieldwork has demonstrated that occupation of this area of the village began in Medieval times.

Residual Neolithic pottery was also recovered indicating some form of activity from that period had occurred on or close to the site.

References

- BGS, 1971, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50 000, Sheet 267 (Abingdon), Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Hillson, S, 1992, *Mammal bones and teeth: An introductory guide to methods of identification*. The Institute of Archaeology, London
- 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
- MPRG, 1998, *A Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms*. Medieval Pottery Research Group Occasional Paper 1
- MPRG, 2001, *Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of Post-Roman Ceramics*. Medieval Pottery Research Group Occ. Paper 2.
- Mellor, M., 1994, *Oxfordshire Pottery. A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford region*. Reprint from *Oxoniensia* 59
- Vince, A.G., 1997, ‘Pottery’, in Vince, A.G., Lobb, S.J., Richards, J.C. and Mephams, L., *Excavations in Newbury, Berkshire, 1979–1990*, Wessex Archaeol. Rep. 13, 45–67 (Salisbury)

NPPF 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, Dept Communities and Local Govt, London

Pollinger, I, 1997, 'Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, Berkshire: archaeological watching brief', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl client rep **97/52b**, Reading

Saunders, M.J, and Fry, J, 1998, 'Manor Farm, Abingdon Road, East Ilsley, Berkshire: an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl client rep **98/45**, Reading

Smith, A, and Ford, A, 1997, 'Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, Berkshire: an archaeological desk-based assessment and field evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl client rep **97/52**, Reading

Taylor, A, 2015, 'Land at Fidler's Lane, East Ilsley, West Berkshire: an archaeological evaluation', Thames Valley Archaeological Services unpubl client rep **15/106b**, Reading

VCH, 1924, 'Parishes: East Ilsley'. In W Page and P H Ditchfield, '*A History of the County of Berkshire: Vol 4*, 24-31, British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/berks/vol4/pp24-31> [accessed 24th October 2018]

APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of Excavated Features

Cut	Deposit	Type	Area	Sample no
	50	Topsoil		
	51	Subsoil		
1	52	Ditch slot		
1	53	Ditch slot	TR2	1
2	54	Ditch slot		
3	55	Ditch slot		
3	56	Ditch slot		2
4	57	Ditch slot		
4	58	Ditch slot		
5	59	Ditch slot		

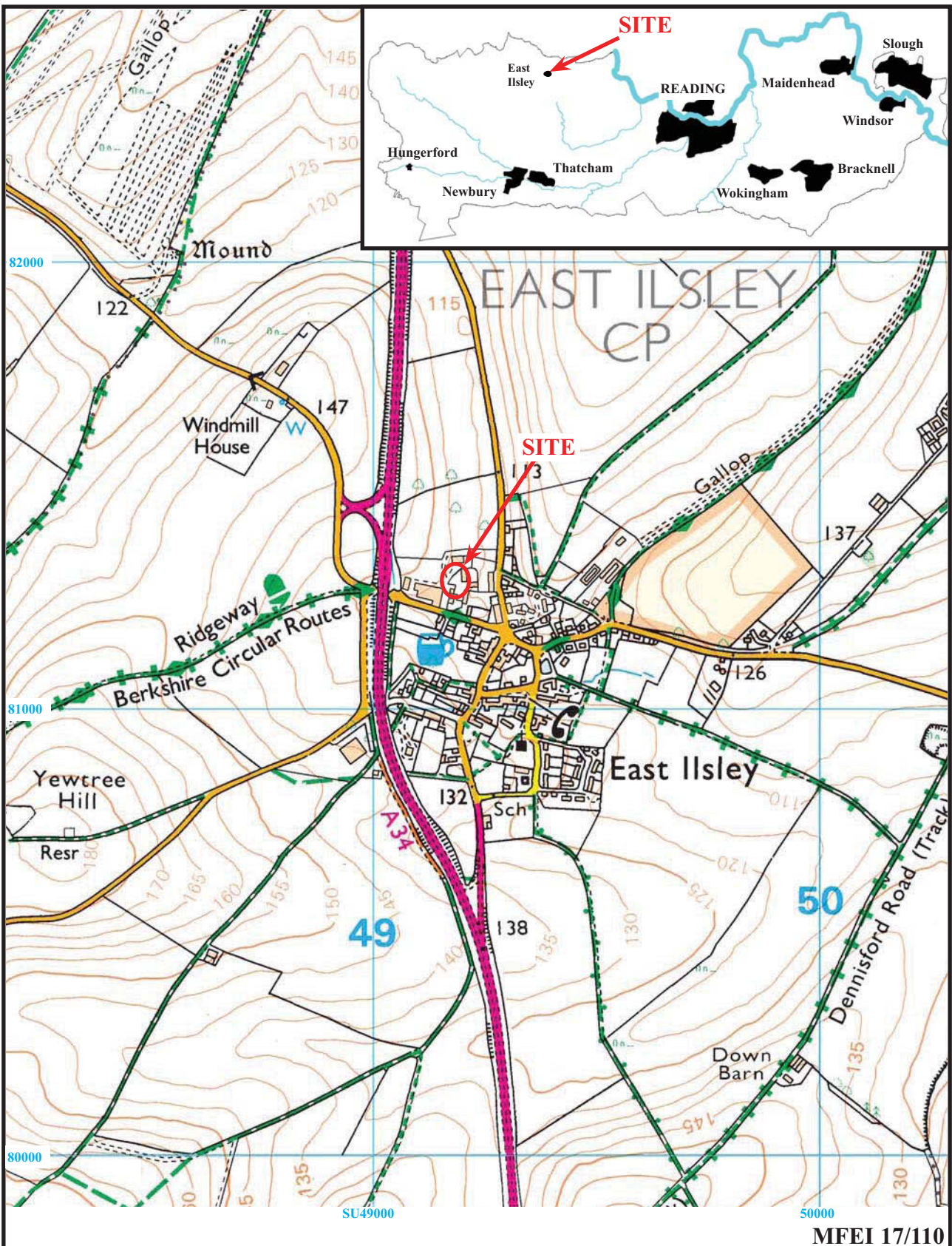
APPENDIX 2: Catalogue of Pottery

Context	Fabric	Type	No		Wt/g	Notes	Spot date
52	KVA	U	1		8	body	10-11?
53	PREH	D	2		5	decorated shoulder, impressed core vertical lines, int surface lost, fine silty fabric with occasional organic inclusions, orange ext, black core.	LNeo
53	KVB	U	1		10	body, sooted	L.11-
over S pit	BRIL (OXBX)	D	1		6	spots copper green glaze ext	14th/15th c.
over S pit	BRIL (OXAW1)	H	1		28	rod-shaped hadle with deep groove and fine stab-marks, copper green glazed	13th-14th c.

Fabrics: PREH - prehistoric; KVA/B – Kennet Valley A/B ware, BRIL – Brill/Boarstall (OXAW1, OXBX – see Mellor 1994). Type: U/D – undecorated/decorated body sherd; H - handle.

APPENDIX 3: Catalogue of Animal Bone
 Key: lbsf = long bone shaft fragment

Context		# of Frag	Weight (g)	Identified fragments – by animal size			Unident.	Comments
Cut	Deposit			Large	Medium	Small		
1	53	7	91	-	7 (sheep/goat)	-	-	Sheep/goat: 1 metatarsal (proximal end). “Medium sized” rib shaft (1) and lbsfs (5). Pathology: grey active new bone formation on visceral surface of the “medium” rib shaft.
4	57	7	92	2 (horse)	2 (sheep/goat)	-	3	Horse: tooth and mandibular fragment. Sheep/goat-sized tooth: tooth. “Medium-sized” vertebra. Pathology: unidentified fragment (cranial?) has grey active woven bone formation.
made ground		13	118	-		13 (dog)	-	Dog: left and right humeri, two thoracic vertebrae, and rib shaft fragments. Pathology: large projecting osteophytes on vertebral bodies
Total/MNI		27	301g	2 fragments (1 horse)	9 fragments (1 sheep/goat)	13 fragments (1 dog)	3 frags	-



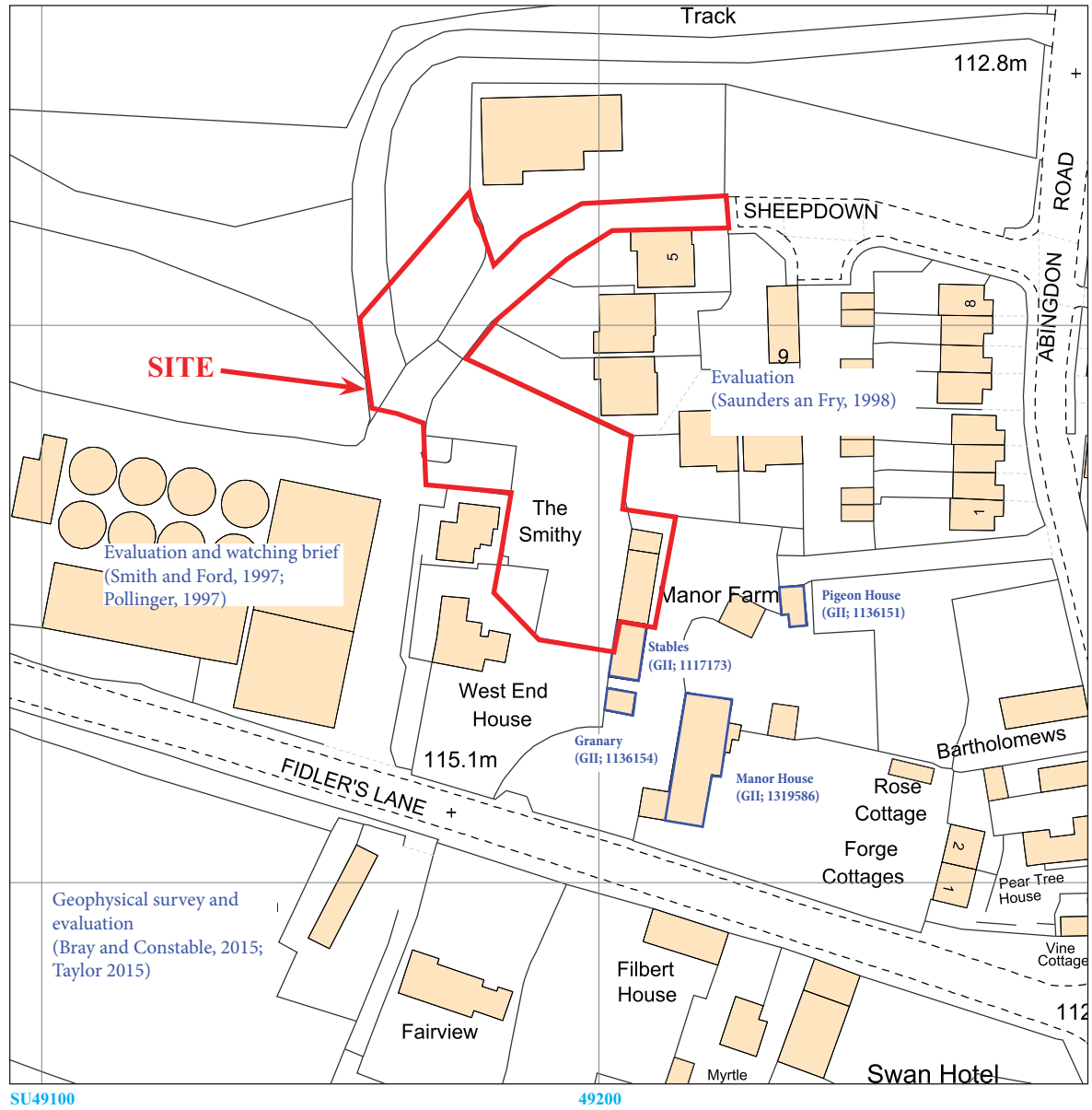
**Land at Manor Farm, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire
Archaeological Evaluation**

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

Reproduced under licence from Ordnance Survey Explorer Digital mapping at 1:12500
Crown Copyright reserved

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

MFEI 17/110



MFEI 17/110



**Manor Farm, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire**
Archaeological Watching Brief
Figure 2. Detailed location of site, with listed buildings and
nearby previous archaeological works.
Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Digital Mapping under licence.
Crown copyright reserved. Scale 1:1250

THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES

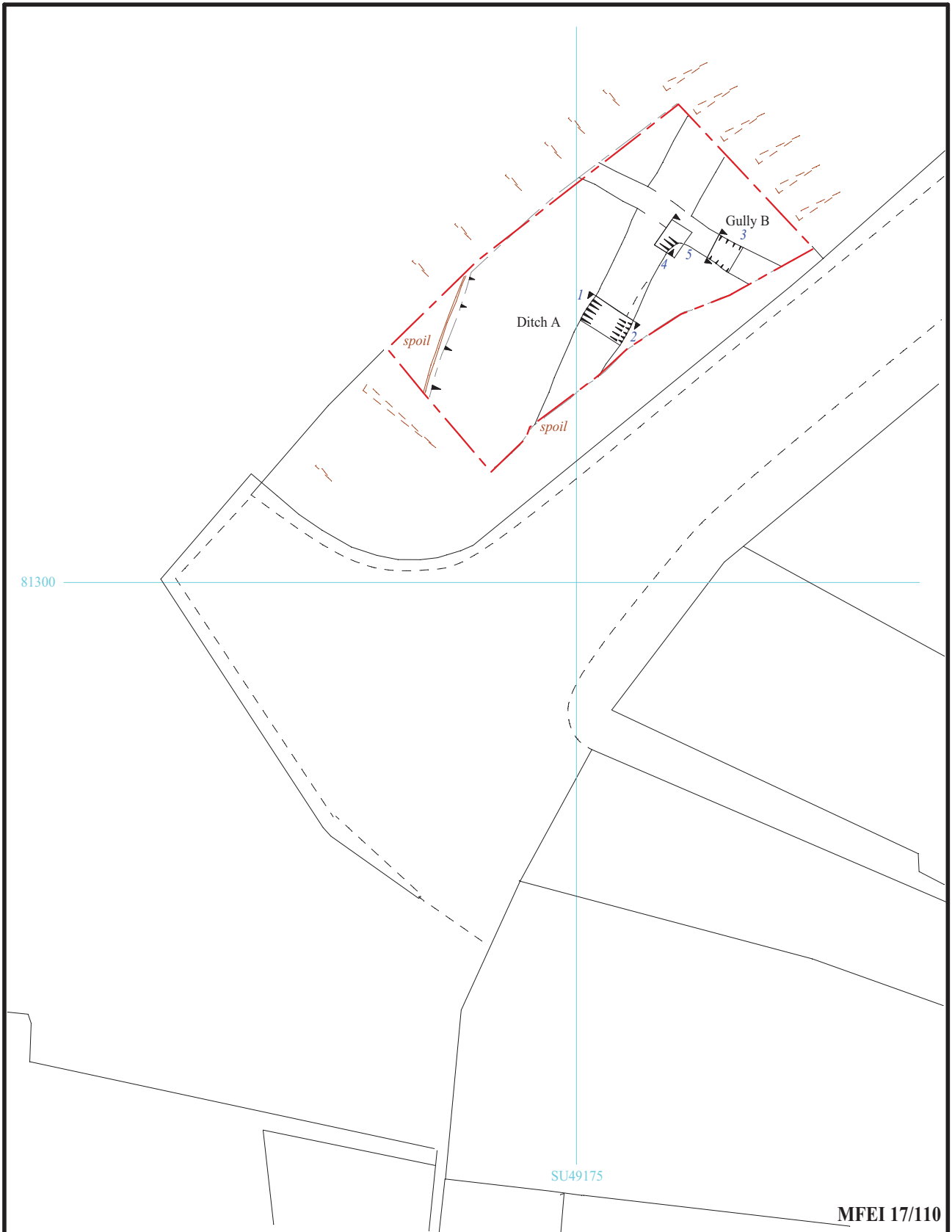


MFEI 17/110



**Manor Farm, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire**
Archaeological Watching Brief
Figure 3. Detail of development and areas monitored.

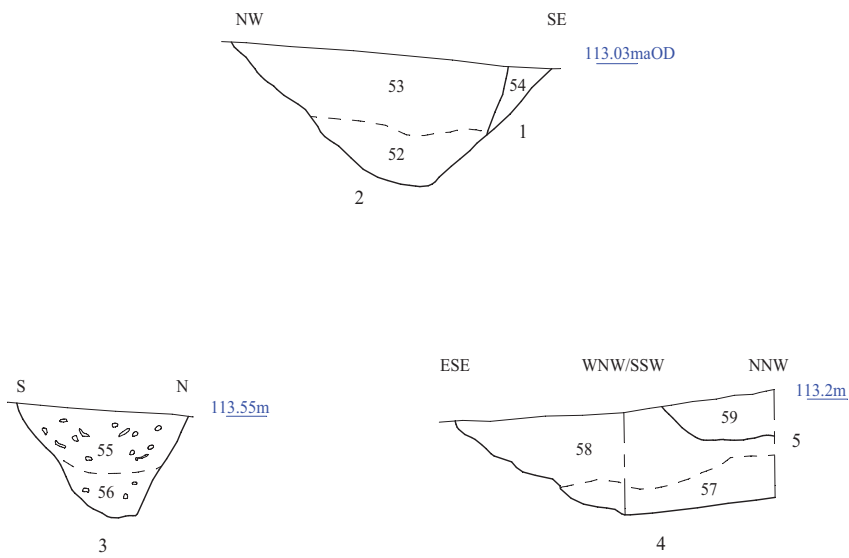
THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



**Manor Farm, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 4. Access widening area,





MFEI 17/110

**Manor Farm, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire
Archaeological Watching Brief**

Figure 5. Sections.



THAMES VALLEY
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SERVICES



Plate 1. Reduced area, for north access road looking north, Scales: 2m and 1m.



Plate 2. Ditch 1 and recut 2, looking north east,
Scales: horizontal 1m, vertical 0.5m.



Plate 3. Gully 3, looking west
Scales: horizontal 0.5m, vertical 0.3m.

MFEI 17/110

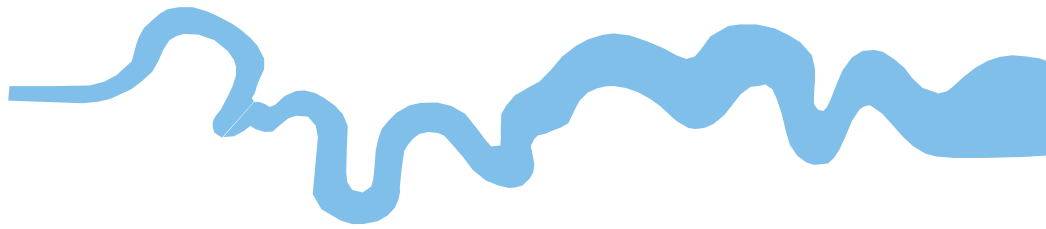
**Manor Farm, East Ilsley,
West Berkshire, 2018
Archaeological Watching Brief
Plates 1 - 3.**

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 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





**Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd,
47-49 De Beauvoir Road,
Reading RG1 5NR**

**Tel: 0118 9260552
Email: tvas@tvas.co.uk
Web: www.tvas.co.uk**

***Offices in:
Brighton, Taunton, Stoke-on-Trent, Wellingborough
and Ennis (Ireland)***