



INDEX DATA	RPS INFORMATION
Scheme Title A47 - A147 Straight	Details Evaluation Report
Road Number A47	Date December 1993
Contractor Norfolk Archaeological Unit	
County Norfolk	
OS Reference TG 41	
Single sided ✓ Double sided A3 0 Colour 0	

**NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

**A47 - Acle Straight**

**by**

**Sarah Bates**

**December 1993**

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Location: A47 - Acle to Great Yarmouth

Grid References: TG 4020 1060 - TG 5180 0850

Date of Assessment: December 1993

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Norfolk Archaeological Unit (N.A.U) was contracted to carry out a desk top survey and archaeological evaluation of the A47 'Acle Straight' between Acle and Great Yarmouth (Fig. 1). The work was funded by Engineering Services of Norfolk County Council and formed a Stage 2 Assessment as described in Volume II section 3, Cultural Heritage, of the Draft Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, 23rd March 1993. A fieldwalking survey was specifically excluded from the commissioned work.

1.2 The survey covered an area of 50m to either side of the A47 road for a length of approximately 11km between the roundabout at Acle to the Vauxhall Caravan Park to the west side of Great Yarmouth.

1.3 The work was commissioned and funded by Engineering Services, the Highways Consultancy of Norfolk County Council.

## 2.0 Methodology

2.1 The County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was searched for information on sites of archaeological value within the area of the survey. All the secondary files were consulted and bibliographies referred to.

2.2 The Aerial Photographic record for Norfolk was studied. Photographs, of relevant areas, from the 1946 RAF survey, the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey coverage and oblique photographs were examined.

2.3 A number of maps including Enclosure Maps and Road Order Maps for some of the parishes in the area were studied.

## 3.0 Background

3.1 For most of its route the present A47 road from Acle to Great Yarmouth crosses unimproved pasture, drained by dikes into the River Bure to the north and Breydon Water and the River Yare to the south. Salt working sites and mills in the area both indicate the marshy or flooded landscape which existed previously.

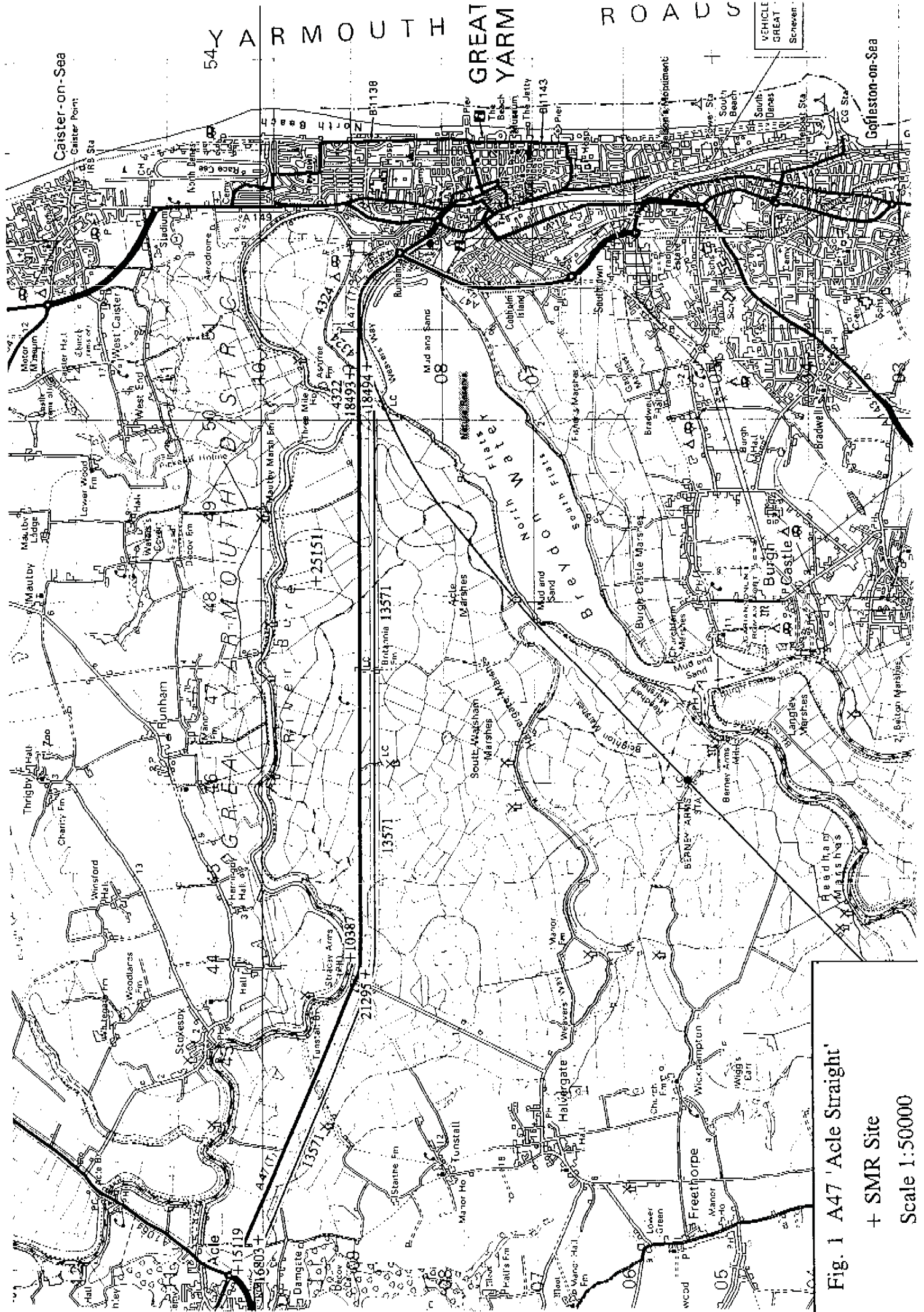


Fig. 1 A47 'Acle Straight'  
+ SMR Site  
Scale 1:50000

3.2 Salt working was an important industry in Norfolk at the time of the Domesday Survey (1086), although it was confined to two areas (Fig. 2). Salt was a valuable commodity and, as rocksalt was unknown at the time, its production depended either on inland brine springs or coastal pans. Salt pans consisted of trenches which would fill with salt water during high tides and then dry out leaving the salt as the water evaporated. Mounds resulting from the digging of these pans and from the residue of silt left from the salt-making process show the former extent of salt water.

3.3 Drainage mills, or wind pumps, were used to pump water from the marshes and dikes into the river.

#### 4.0 SMR Sites (Fig. 1)

4.1 No finds of prehistoric or Roman date exist on the SMR for the area alongside the A47 road. This is unsurprising since the area probably consisted of marsh or open water during these periods.

##### 4.2 Site 4322 - Ashtree Farm (TG 5050 0900)

A mound, approximately 60m x 40m and 1-2m high, orientated north-east-to-south-west just to the north of the road and south-east of Ashtree Farm. Slag, charcoal and pottery dating to the 11th - 13th centuries was found in a layer beneath the mound. The mound is thought to be related to salt working and the dateable finds suggest that the marshes became dry land during the early medieval period or were dry during a part of this time. The Ashtree Farm mound is the only substantial mound now surviving. It can be seen clearly on both the 1946 RAF and the oblique aerial photographs. On top of it is a First World War (para. 4.10).

##### 4.3 Site 25151 (TG 4820 0940)

A possible salt-working mound or mill mound, although there is no record of a mill on the site. It is 30m across and 1-2m in height and can be seen on the 1946 aerial photographs but there are no later photographs of the area.

##### 4.4 Site 21295 (TG 4392 0893)

Described in the SMR as a 'low mound in the north-east corner of the field', possibly related to salt working.

##### 4.5 Site 4324 (TG 5170 0800)

Part of the line of a road predating the building of the Acle New Road (A47). It preserves the former shoreline of Breydon Water and led from a ferry near the site of the present railway station.

##### 4.6 Site 10387 - Stracey Arms (TG 4415 0896)

A Grade II listed tower mill dating to 1883. It was built on wooden piles on the south bank of the River Bure on the site of a previous mill (Faden 1797) (Fig. 3). It has also been known as Arnups Mill. It was operated by wind until the Second World War when it was used as a gun emplacement. There is also a pill box on the site. The mill was restored to its present condition in 1961.

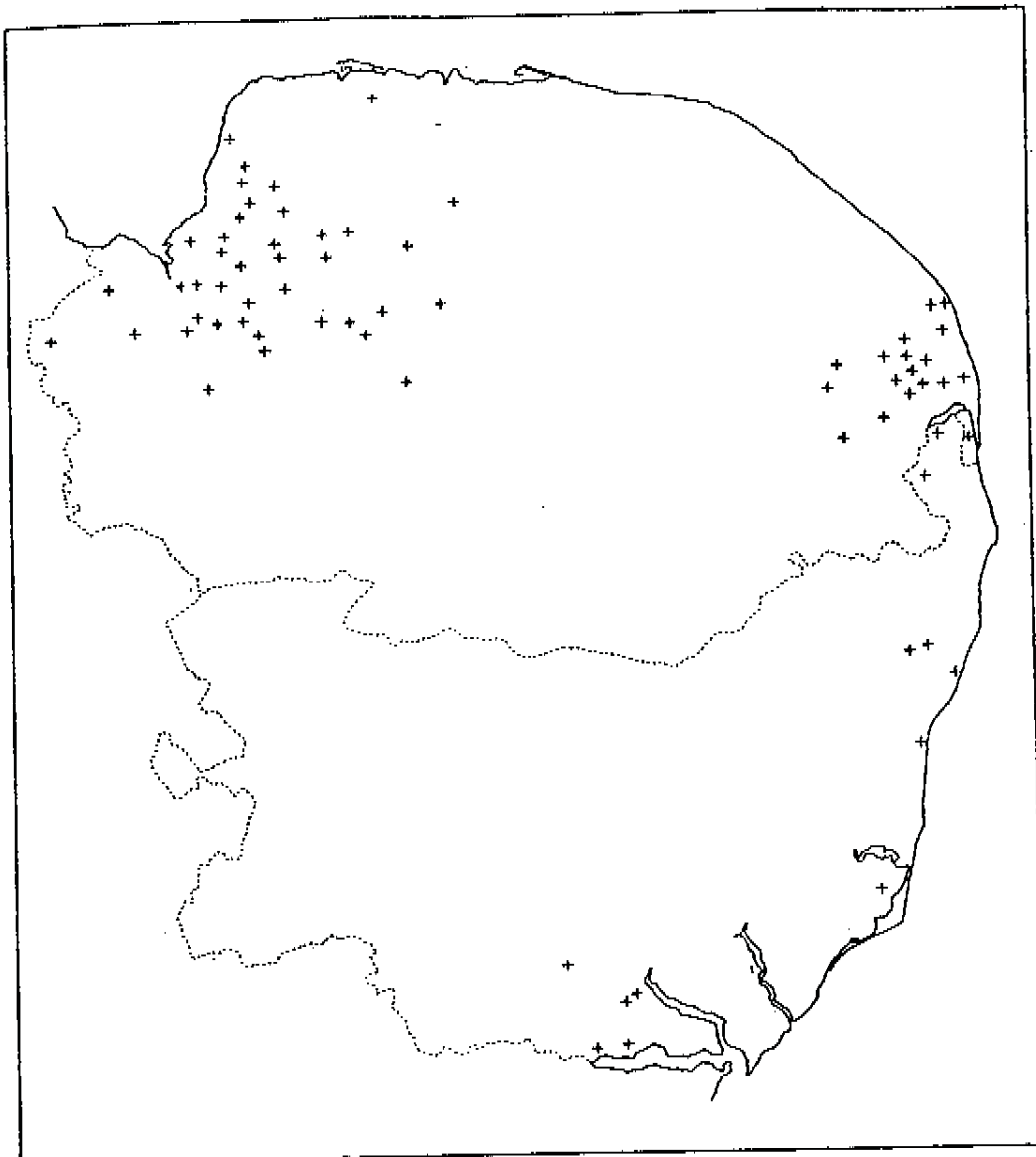


Fig. 2 Domesday Saltpans (Darby)

#### 4.7 Site 15119 (TG 4058 1030)

This is the former site of Palmers Mill, a hollow post drainage mill, built in 1900 and known to be the second mill on the site. It was removed to a site at Upton (County Site 15992, TG 4020 1293) in 1976 and is now fully restored and working.

#### 4.8 Site 13571

Norwich to Great Yarmouth railway, opened in 1845.

#### 4.9 Site 18493

Hexagonal concrete First World War pillbox with steel door situated on top of the mound (Site 4322, para. 4.2) at Ashtree Farm.

#### 4.10 Site 18494 (TG 5051 0890)

Hexagonal concrete First World War pillbox with steel door, the only pillbox known in Norfolk to have part of its camouflage mound surviving on top.

#### 4.11 Site 16803 (TG 4090 1002)

Second World War pillbox.

### 5.0 Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs from the 1946 RAF coverage, and from more recent 1:2500 Ordnance Survey coverage and oblique photographs of the area were studied (paras. 4.2, 4.3). No further useful information was found from them.

### 6.0 Cartographic Evidence

6.1 Faden's map from 1797 (Fig.3) shows almost the entire length of the modern road as marsh with a number of drainage mills along the Bure, including one on the site of the present Stracey Arms (para. 4.6). It also shows Breydon Water as open water during this period.

6.2 On a map showing the main roads in Norfolk C1800 (Fig. 4) it can be seen that the turnpike road from Norwich ran only as far as Acle and did not continue across the Bure marshes to Great Yarmouth.

6.3 A map from 1828 shows the route of a proposed new turnpike road from Acle to Great Yarmouth but that route crossed the Bure and ran north of the river through Stokesby and Runham. The road does not seem to have been completed.

6.4 The Acle to Great Yarmouth road was the last turnpike road to be authorised in Norfolk, dating from 1830. It forms the present A47 and can be seen on the 1838 Tithe Map for Acle.








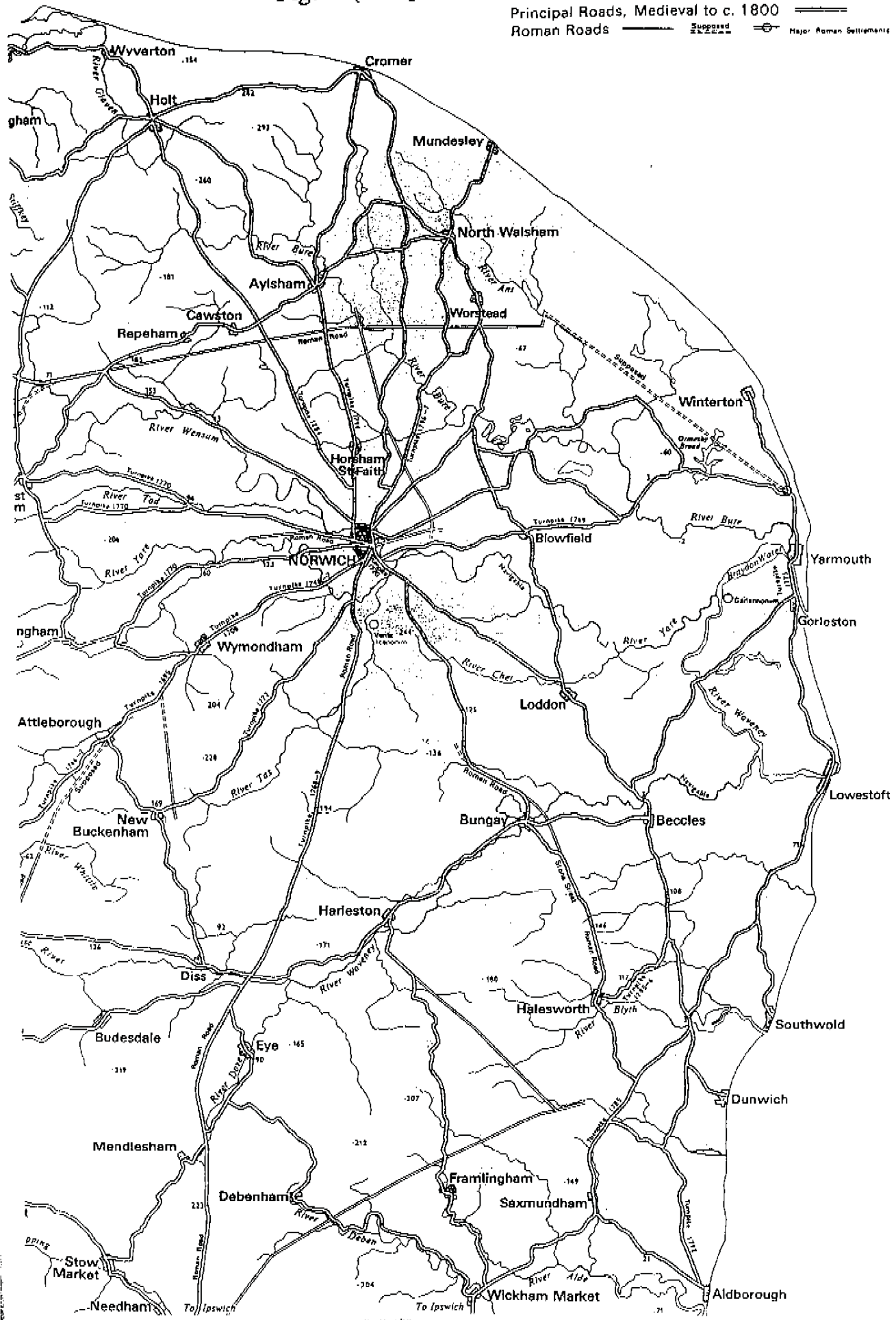
19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

Fig 3. Eaden's Map of Norfolk 1797 (extract)

Fig. 4 (Campbell) THE SITUATION OF NORWICH

Principal Roads, Medieval to c. 1800

Roman Roads    Major Roman Settlements



## 7.0 Conclusion

7.1 Along most of its route the A47 'Acle Straight' crosses an area which only became dry land during the early medieval period. There are no known sites of an earlier date along the route of the proposed road improvement.

7.2 The earliest known sites are the mounds; these probably relate to the salt working that occurred in the area during the early medieval period when salt water reached further west than during the modern period. The mound at Ashtree Farm (para. 4.2), just to the north of the A47 road, is the only substantial mound now surviving.

7.3 The 19th-century Stracey Arms mill (para. 4.6) is a Grade II listed building. It stands on the roadside to the north of the A47.

7.4 The two First World War pillboxes (paras. 4.9 and 4.10) are two of only twelve recorded in Norfolk (Bird 1991). They are typical of others in the county, forming a pair, with one to either side of a main road leading from the coast. They are at present being reviewed for scheduling.

7.5 Any proposed improvement to the A47 should take into account these sites when the route is being considered.

### Acknowledgements

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The help of D. Edwards and E. Rose of The Norfolk Landscape Archaeology Section is gratefully acknowledged.

I would also like to thank B. Ayers, N.A.U, for reading and commenting on this report.

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