



**River Wensum Restoration  
Upper Wensum Phase 1**

**Monitoring of Works under Archaeological  
Supervision and Control**

**ENF 127262**

**Heather Wallis  
January 2016**

**HW Report No. 170**



<b>Project name</b>	<b>Phase 1 Upper Wensum Restoration</b>
<b>Parishes</b>	<b>Raynham</b>
<b>Event No.</b>	<b>ENF 127262</b>
<b>Grid Ref.</b>	<b>TF 8984 2378 to TF 8822 2467</b>
<b>Date of Work</b>	<b>September 2015</b>

## **Introduction**

Works to improve the wildlife habitats of the upper reaches of the River Wensum (Fig. 1) were undertaken during September 2015. These improvements mainly consisted of in-stream alterations with some bank reconfiguration works. Original plans also included the excavations of short stretches of new channel, but due to local conditions this work was not undertaken.

Archaeological monitoring was carried out according to a Brief for the Monitoring of Works under Archaeological Supervision and Control issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service and a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Heather Wallis.

## **Location and Geology**

Works were undertaken in the upper reaches of the Wensum to the south of Fakenham. From here the river flows northwards before turning eastwards towards Norwich, beyond which it converges with the River Yare. The monitoring took place in the parish of Raynham where the river can be found flowing through a largely wooded area.

The bedrock geology of the area is chalk over which lay alluvial deposits of silt, clay, sand and gravel.

(<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

## **Archaeological Background**

Only a few archaeological sites are known in the immediate area of the works. Some finds of prehistoric pottery and struck flint have been made in the vicinity of the eastern parts of the works. Roman activity is known in the wider area and a Roman road once crossed the River Wensum towards the west end of the works passing through Norman's Burrow Wood. This road, on a

north-east to south-west alignment, joined the Roman settlement at Toftrees to two other major Roman roads (the Fen Causeway and Peddars Way), so linking this and other rural settlements to the national communication and trade routes.

Medieval settlement has been recorded from around the present villages particularly at Godwick and West Raynham and earthworks and a moat have been noted at South Raynham. To the south of the river and close to the works is site of an Augustinian Priory which was founded in 1160. By 1200 this had become an alien Cluniac cell and during the second half of the 14th century it became a regular cell. The study of aerial photographs has shown this site includes a two cell rectangular building possibly within a curving enclosure ditch.

### **The works**

The works extended for a c.2km length of the Wensum (Fig 1) and were carried out during September 2015. They consisted of the narrowing of the river channel and the creation of pools within it, as well as the cleaning of some adjoining dykes.

### **Monitoring and Recording methods**

The machine excavation of soils was monitored at archaeologically sensitive points and when unexpected deposits were encountered (Fig. 2). Regular monitoring of the in-stream works was not undertaken. Archaeological records of the watching brief comprise written and photographic data.

All works were carried out in full accordance with national and regional guidelines for the treatment of archaeological remains, and in particular the guidance set out in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2001).

## Observations

### Area A (Fig. 2, Plate 1)

A wooden plank and two posts were noted by the contractors where a side channel joined the river. These were removed under archaeological supervision and on inspection proved to be modern in date consisting of square, pointed posts and a plank (measuring 6ft by 14 inches by 2 inches). It is thought that these may have either revetted or formed a crossing of the side channel.



Plate 1. Wooden plank and post.

### Area B (Fig. 2)

Adjacent to the river and a side channel a low rise was noted. As this was just 60m north of the known site of Norman's Burrow medieval priory the deposits forming this rise were inspected. These consisted of sands and silts which were thought to be historical risings from the excavation/cleaning of the side channel and river

### Area C (Fig. 2, Plate 2)

A Roman road once crossed the River Wensum just to the east of the modern bridged crossing of the A1065. Within the Norman Burrow's Wood a low broad rise indicates the position of the Roman Road, although it is not possible to

follow this rise to the river's edge. Works were not undertaken in the area of the road, but a ditch, located adjacent to it was cleaned out. The machining of this was monitored to ensure that no damage was caused to any possible Roman deposits. Silt was removed from the existing channel to reveal the underlying gravel bed. The deposits observed in the side of the channel were natural silts suggesting that at some point the side channel may have been wider than at present. No archaeological deposits or artefacts were disturbed.



Plate 2. De-silted channel, looking north. Roman Road runs in wooded area to west (left) of channel.

## Finds

Two finds were recovered by the contractors during in-river excavations; a single small sherd of samian pottery and a cattle humerus. This bone was from a small breed and showed evidence of butchering (Julie Curl pers. comm.). A central hole in one end of the bone suggests that it may have once been put on a spit and the small size of the cattle breed would be consistent with a possible Roman date.

## **Conclusions**

The river improvement works were successfully carried out without damage to nearby archaeological sites. One sherd of Roman pottery and a cattle bone were recovered from the river bed. Other than modern wood, no other notable deposits or artefacts were present.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks must go to the site contractors, 5 Rivers, for the consideration given to possible archaeological deposits and for requesting monitoring visits at appropriate times. Julie Curl identified and commented on the animal bone.



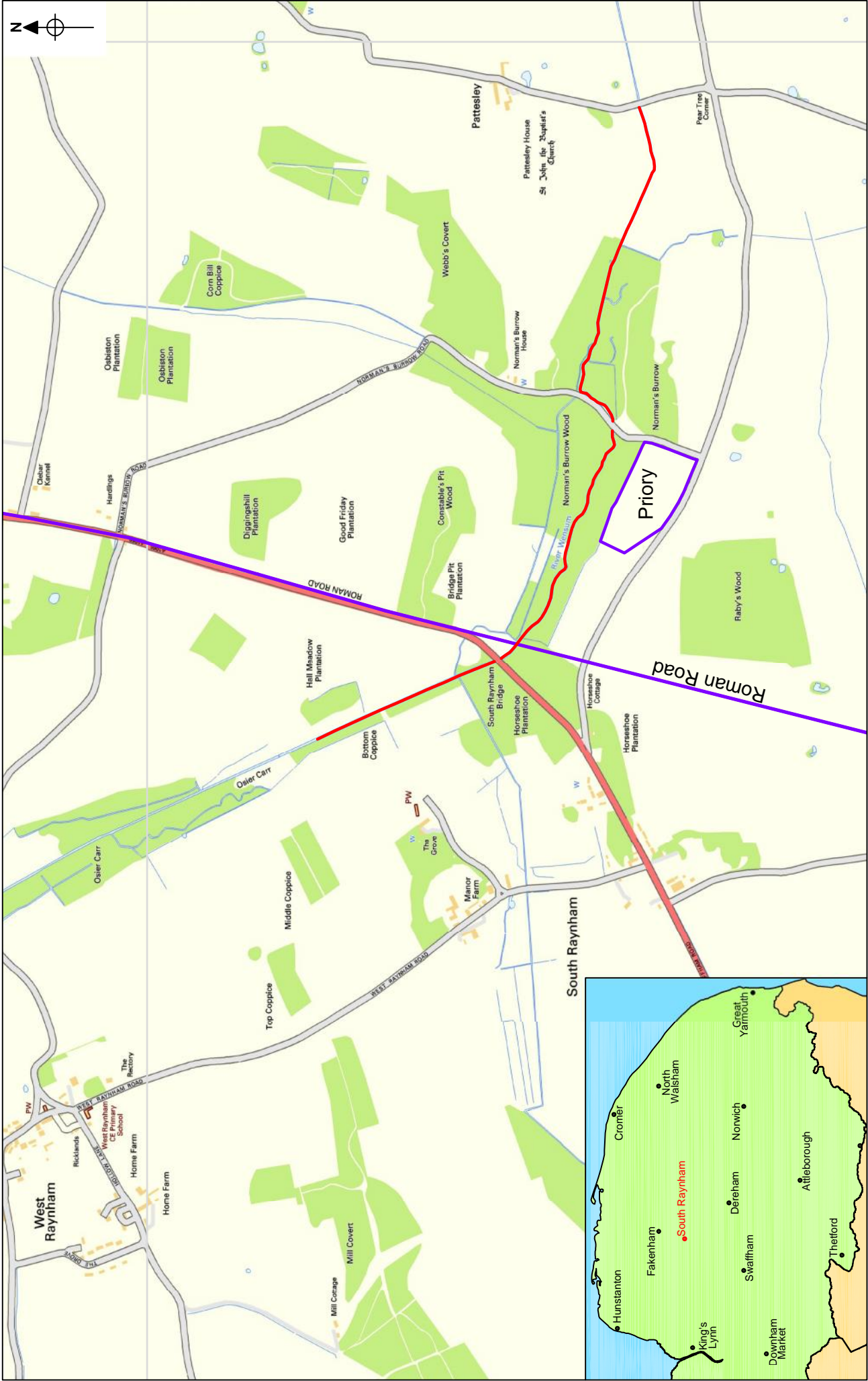


Figure 1. Site location plan. Line of works (red) and adjacent archaeological sites.



Figure 2. Showing location of observations. Scale 1:5000.



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### Project details

Project name	Upper Wensum
Short description of the project	Works undertaken to improve a stretch of the River Wensum was undertaken. The works were mainly in-river improvements but some excavation close to a Roman road and medieval Cluniac cell were undertaken. Works were monitored in order to ensure that archaeological deposits were not disturbed.
Project dates	Start: 14-09-2015 End: 22-09-2015
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ENF 127262 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK NORTH NORFOLK RAYNHAM Upper Wensum Phase 1
Study area	0.66 Kilometres
Site coordinates	TF 8984 2378 52.777761148267 0.814923917387 52 46 39 N 000 48 53 E Line
Site coordinates	TF 8822 2467 52.786322901335 0.791445677389 52 47 10 N 000 47 29 E Line

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Heather Wallis
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design	Heather Wallis

originator

Project director/manager Heather Wallis

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient Norfolk Museums Service

Digital Contents "other"

Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"

Paper Archive recipient Norfolk Museums Service

Paper Contents "other"

Paper Media available "Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes"

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