

Report 2887



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Archaeological Watching Brief at Beach Road, Happisburgh, Norfolk

ENF128386

Prepared for
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Location:	Beach Road, Happisburgh, Norfolk
District:	North Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TG37993105 – TG38123113
Planning Ref.:	not applicable
HER No.:	ENF128386
OASIS Ref.:	123911
Client:	Anglian Water Services Limited
Dates of Fieldwork:	26 January - 7 March 2012

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Anglian Water Services Limited during groundworks associated with a sewer diversion at Beach Road, Happisburgh, Norfolk between January and March 2012.

The works extended through the centre of the historic core of the village and were of a depth where it was thought that they may impact upon important proto-Thames river deposits dating to the Early to Mid Pleistocene age (990,000-780,000 bp) in the area, and their evidence of early human activity.

Unfortunately the only deposits encountered were modern wall foundations and a cobbled road surface.

No artefacts or ecofacts were recovered.

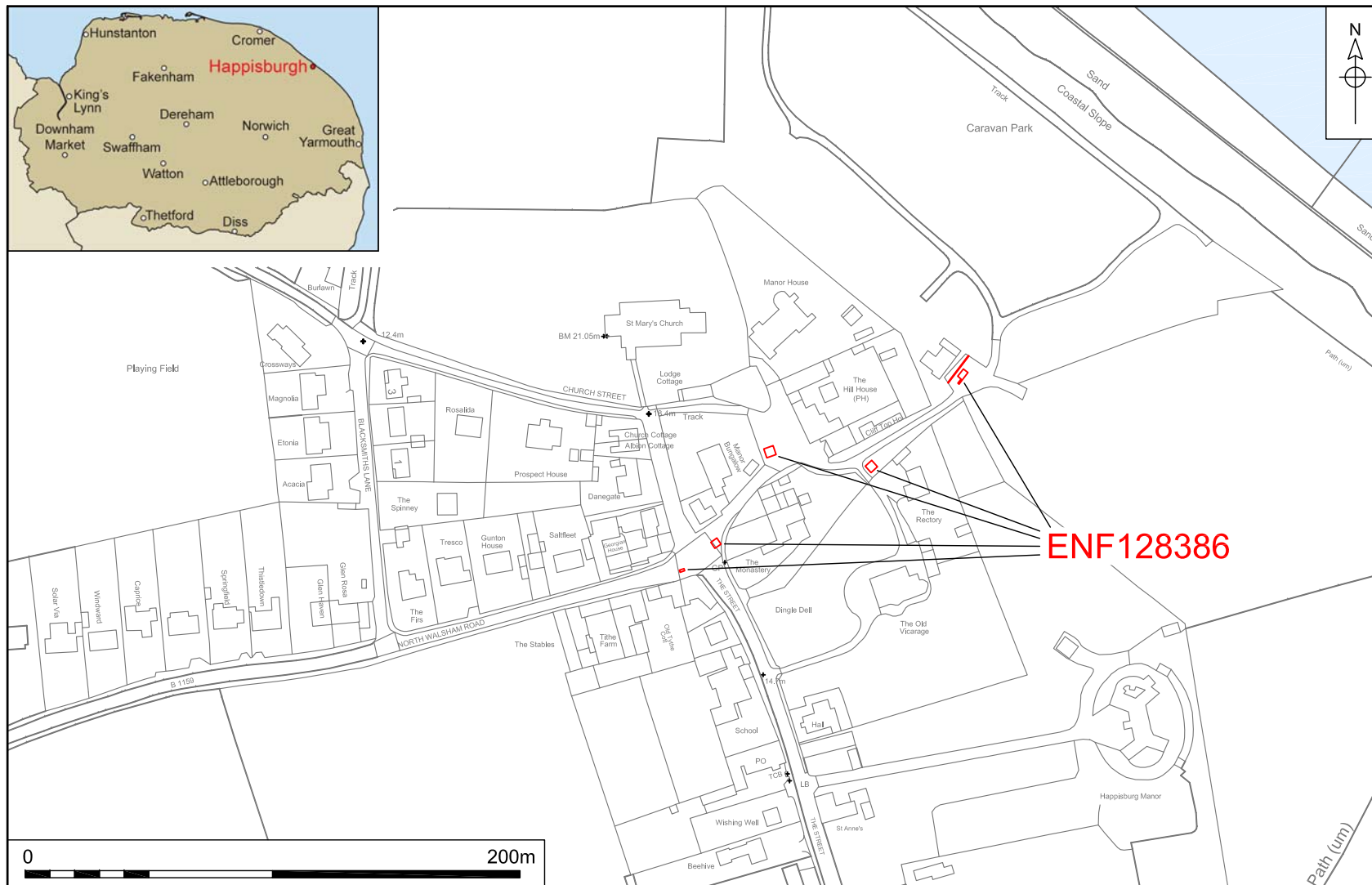
1.0 INTRODUCTION

This project consisted of archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with a sewer diversion at Beach Road, Happisburgh. The works took place within the historic core of the village and were of a depth where the geological sequence laid down by the proto-Thames river 1,000,000-700,000 years ago might be impacted upon.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a request by Anglian Water Services Limited and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF43660). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2887/DW). This work was commissioned and funded by Anglian Water Services Limited.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:2500

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The development site lies close to Happisburgh Parish church on a hill top overlooking the coast, at a height of c.18m OD.

The development site is situated upon the sandy clays of the Anglian Cromer Till (BGS 1991) which lies above Cretaceous Upper Chalk (BGS 1985).

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and historic mapping sources were consulted during the preparation of this section.

The site lies within the historic core of the village of Happisburgh. The place name means stronghold/fort of *Haepa*. The topography of the village is of significance, with *Haepa*'s stronghold probably located on the hill top close to the church and a possible market place outside the gate, at what is now the junction of Church Street, North Walsham Road, Beach Road and The Street. If the possible medieval cross base (NHER MNF14149) is really of that date, it would add weight to that hypothesis.

St Mary's parish church (NHER MNF7091) dates from the 14th century, but has possible Norman work in the tower. The tower and south aisle were damaged by a German bomb in 1940.

The Hill House Hotel (NHER MNF18473), which stands adjacent to the new sewer, originates in the 16th or 17th centuries, with an 18th-century front range.

The Monastery (NHER MNF12471) lies to the south of Beach Road and is a medieval hall house with later additions which may originally have been a grange owned by Wymondham Abbey. Medieval and post-medieval pottery has been found in the garden of this property (NHER MNF39388).

Thrums (NHER MNF48206), a small brick and flint house at the western end of Beach Road, is of 18th-century in origin.

A silver penny of Edward I or II was found in the garden of a house to the west of the west end of Beech Road (NHER MNF21644).

The possible base of a Medieval cross has been found outside Tithe Cottage, to the west of the west end of Beech Road (NHER MNF14149).

Happisburgh beach is important for evidence of early human activity, with at least seven Upper or Lower Palaeolithic hand axes having been recovered (NHER MNF13560, MNF31462, MNF40679, MNF62113, MNF62276 and MNF62279). Seventy-eight flint artefacts of Early to Mid Pleistocene age (990,000-780,000 bp) have been recovered from fluvial and estuarine deposits at the base of the cliff (NHER MNF59819).

The area is rich in Second World War defences, but none of these should be affected by the present project.

The Tithe map of c.1840 (<http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk>) shows that Beech Road was then called Town Gap Lane and originally led to a small settlement on the cliff edge called Town Gap which provided access down to the beach. Since 1840 the coastline has receded, forcing the abandonment of this settlement.

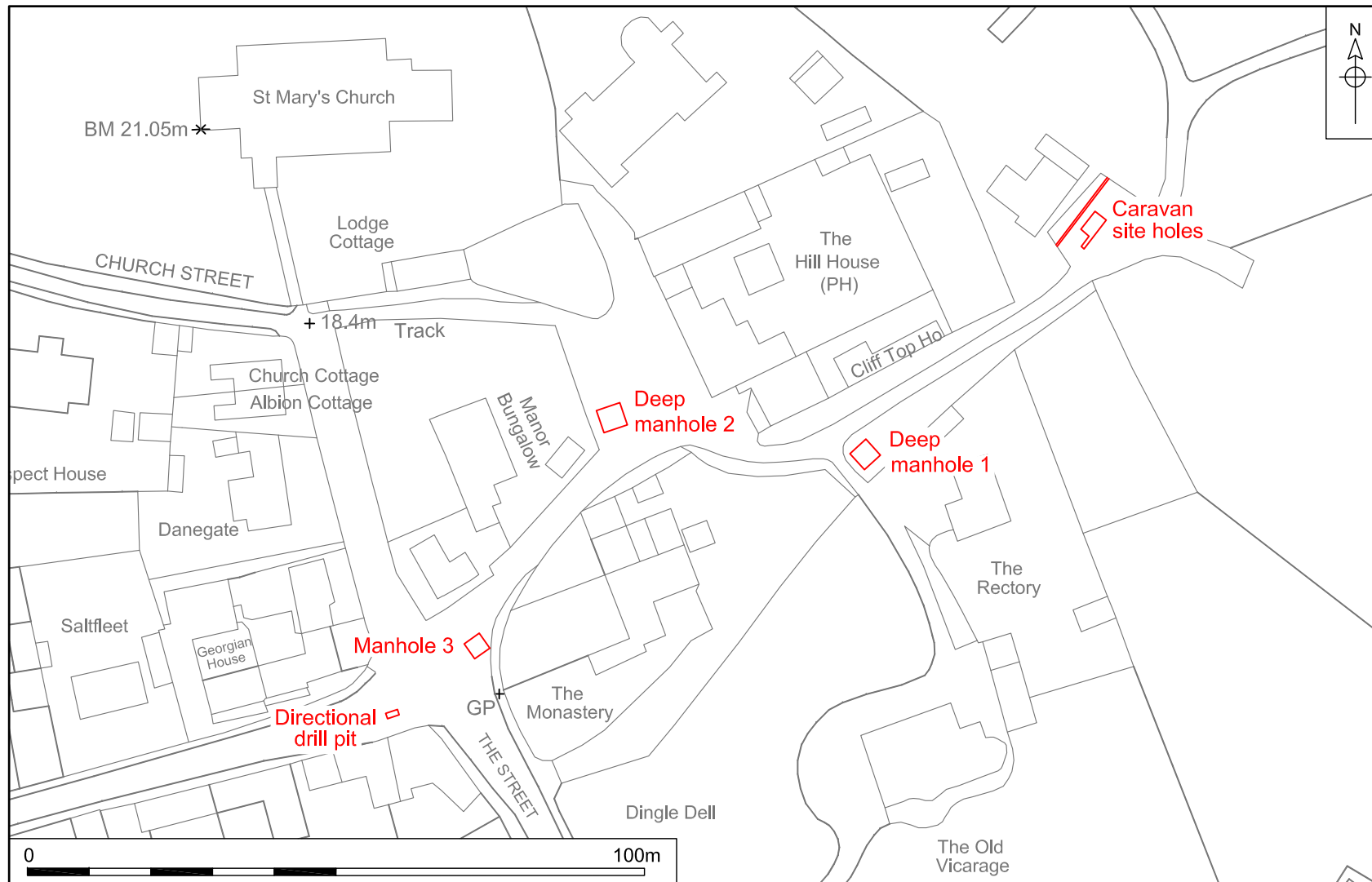


Figure 2. Location of groundworks. Scale 1:1000

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that all ground works be constantly monitored.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type excavator/hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Colour, monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Deep Sewer Manhole 1

This hole was dug adjacent to the entrance to The Rectory (Fig. 2). It was 3.5m long, 3.5m wide and 6m deep (Plate 1).



Plate 1. Manhole 1 before insertion of shuttering

The stratigraphy encountered consisted of (from the top of the trench)

- Topsoil to a depth of 0.3m below ground level (bgl)
- 19th- to 20th-century hardcore (building rubble) and coal fragments to a depth of 0.45m bgl
- Yellow sand and silt.

5.2 Deep Sewer Manhole 2

This hole was located to the front of the Hill House public house (Fig. 2). It was 4m long, 4m wide and 6.5m deep (Plate 2).

The stratigraphy consisted of

- layers of gravel road surfaces to a depth of 0.2m bgl
- Present in the south and east sides of the trench, beneath the road surfaces, were brick foundations ([1]) consisting of 2½" thick soft red bricks bonded with cement mortar, extending to a maximum depth of 0.7m bgl
- The natural consisted of alternate layers of yellow sand and silt.

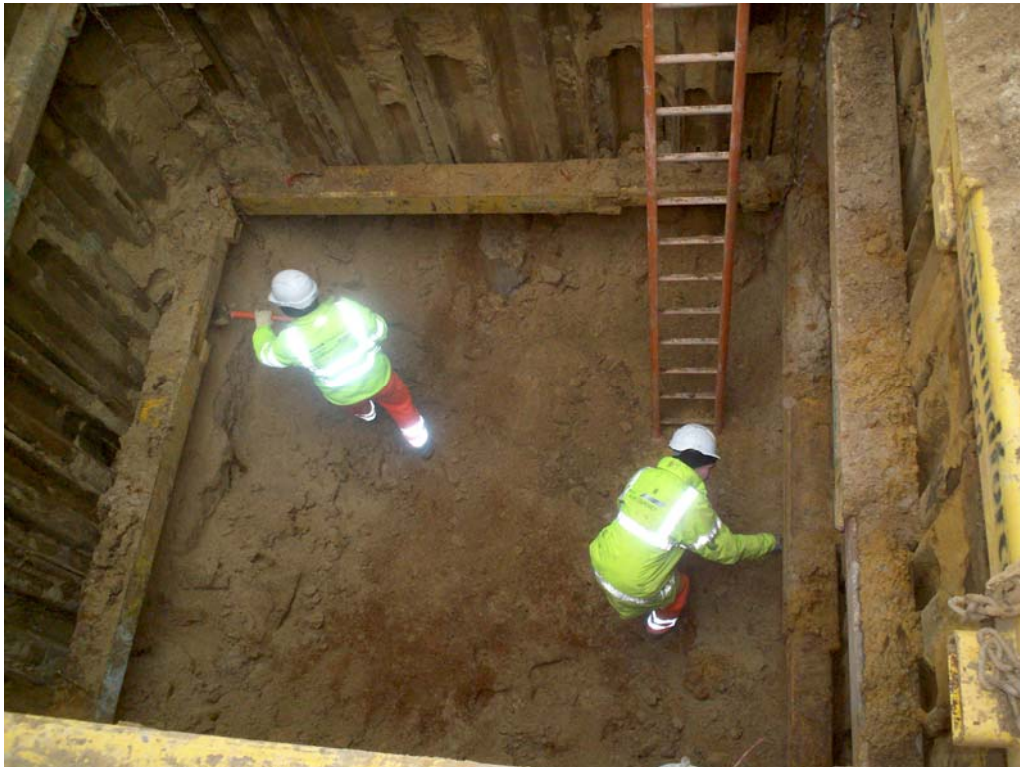


Plate 2. Manhole 2 fully excavated

5.3 Manhole 3

The hole for Manhole 3 was located outside The Monastery (Fig. 2, Plate 2).

The stratigraphic sequence consisted of

- -0.2m of modern tarmac road surface and compacted gravel with modern brick fragments
- Yellow natural sand.



Plate 3. Manhole 3 facing west

5.4 Other works

Directional Drill Pit

A directional drilling pit in the carriageway of the B1159 was monitored (Fig. 2). This measured 2m long, 0.9m wide and 0.7m deep (Plate 2).

The stratigraphy encountered consisted of

- 0.00–0.20m bgl; Modern tarmac road surface
- 0.20–0.30m bgl; Pale brown sand and gravel with rare CBM fragments
- 0.30–0.36m bgl; Dark brown sand with frequent flint gravel
- 0.36–0.50m bgl; Dark brown sand with moderate rounded flint cobbles, CBM and mortar fragments
- 0.50–0.60m bgl; Moderate sized rounded flint cobbles. An old road surface
- 0.07m+ bgl; Natural yellow sand



Plate 4. Directional drilling pit facing north

Manhole and Pipe Trench ('Caravan site hole')

A manhole and a pipe trench were monitored at the eastern end of the scheme, within the caravan park (Fig. 2; Plate 5).

The manhole was relatively shallow and revealed

- 0.3m of topsoil
- Yellow natural sand.

The stratigraphy of the 14m of pipe trench monitored was the same as that observed in the manhole i.e.

- 0.3m of topsoil
- Yellow natural sand.

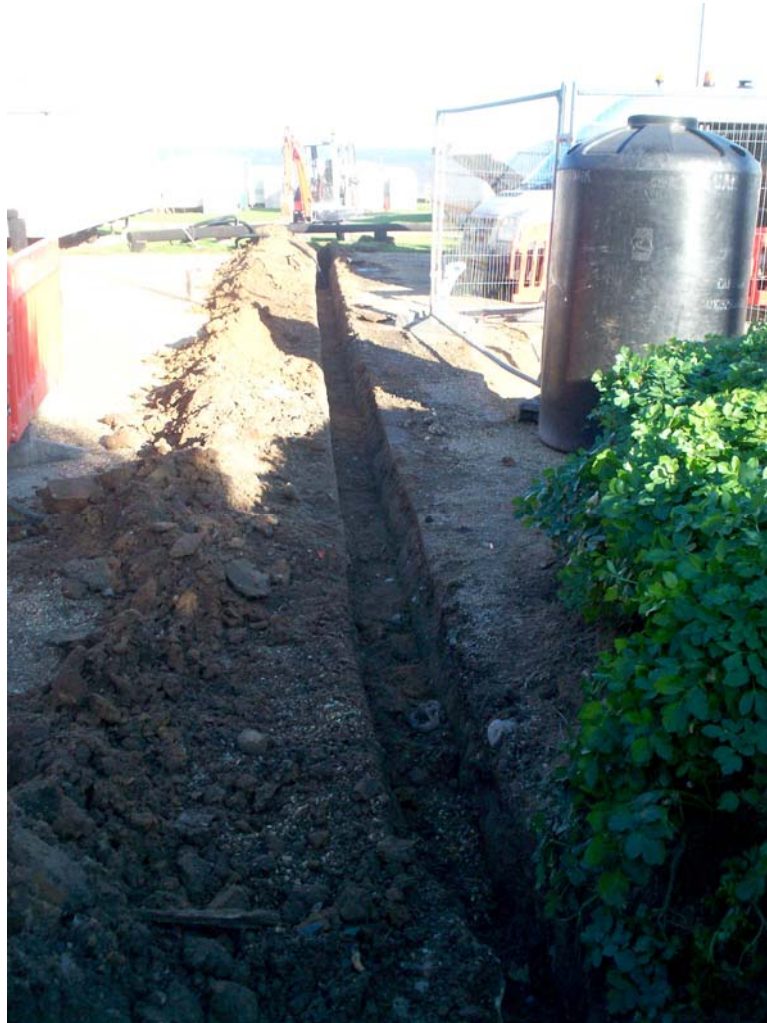


Plate 5. Pipe trench facing north-west with the manhole on the right

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The two main objectives of this project; to find evidence of the medieval or earlier village core and to find the Early to Mid Pleistocene age (990,000-780,000 bp) proto-Thames deposits were not met.

The only archaeological evidence found were the footings of a possible building in Deep Manhole 2 and old road surfaces in the directional drill pit. It is possible that the earliest road surface may have been medieval, but there is no evidence to prove this. It is probable, that the historic landscape of the parish was one of dispersed settlement, rather than the modern landscape characterised by a single village core. However the area around the church, being a hilltop, with a possible market place and a significant place name (Happisburgh means the defended enclosure of Haepa), is suggestive of an Anglo-Saxon estate centre.

The lack of proto-Thames deposits at the base of the two deep manholes, suggests that these important deposits (with their evidence of early human activity) are situated at a deeper level than was reached in this project.

Acknowledgements

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This report was illustrated and produced by David Dobson and edited by Jayne Bown.

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<http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk> accessed 26/03/2012

<http://www.old-maps.co.uk/index.html> accessed 26/03/2012

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Example:

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period	Trench
1	Masonry			Brick foundations	Modern	

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Category	Total
Modern	Foundation	1