



## **NAU Archaeology**

Report № 1309

# **An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land Adjacent to Cherry Tree Cottage, Foxley, Norfolk**

NHER 50506 FXL

B. Hobbs  
September 2007

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<b>Project checklist</b>		<b>Date</b>
Project overseen by	D Whitmore	27/09/07
Draft complete	B Hobbs	27/8/07
Graphics complete	D Dobson	27/8/07
Edit complete	A Hutcheson	27/9/07
Signed off	A Hutcheson	27/9/07

## Contents

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### ***Summary***

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Geology and Topography
- 3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background
- 4.0 Methodology
- 5.0 Results
- 6.0 Conclusions

### ***Acknowledgements***

### ***Bibliography***

Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table

Figures

- Figure1 Location of site
- Figure 2 OS extract showing area affected
- Figure 3 Plan showing trench layout
- Figure 4 Section 1, facing south-east



<b>Location</b>	Land north of Cherry Tree Cottage, Chapel Road, Foxley
<b>District</b>	Breckland DC
<b>Grid Ref</b>	TG 0376 2157
<b>HER No</b>	50506 FXL
<b>Date of fieldwork</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> July 2007

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by NAU Archaeology on land adjacent to Cherry Tree Cottage, Foxley to monitor groundworks. This work observed a large pit in the section of a footing trench. No artefactual evidence for dating was recovered from the fill of this feature and no other features or finds of archaeological interest were located on the site during the excavations.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The archaeological watching brief was requested by R.L. Parker Building Design Consultants Limited in response to a Norfolk Landscape Archaeology brief stipulating archaeological monitoring during groundworks for a residential development on land north-east of Cherry Tree Cottage, Chapel Road, Foxley, Norfolk.

The site to be monitored was being development for two residential properties and was approximately 475m<sup>2</sup> in area. The site lies on to Chapel Road in Foxley, located between Cherry Tree Cottage to the south-west and The Old Chapel to the north-east.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: EJR 24/11/06).

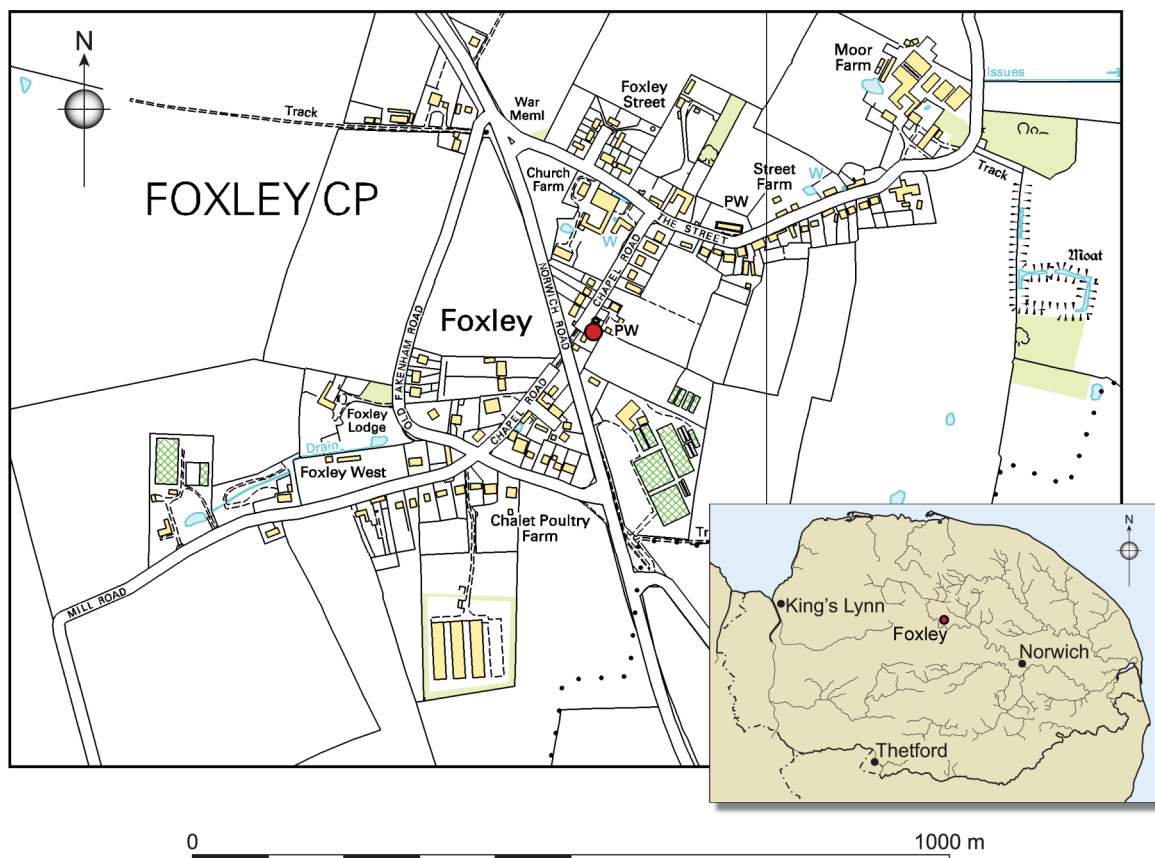
The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service in due course, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

Foxley lies on the Norfolk Boulder clay plateau consisting of mainly Lowestoft and other Anglian tills covering an underlying solid geology of Upper chalk (Funnell, 2005).

The natural geological deposit observed at the base of the excavation consisted of glacial sandy clays containing flint nodules. The subsoil was a compact light brown sandy silt, overlain by a mid brown garden soil.

The elevation of the site is approximately 46m-50m OD with the water table located at approximately 2m.



**Figure 1** Location of site - Scale 1:10,000

Local Authority No.100019340

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### 3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

The position of Foxley, close to a Roman road (NHER 2796: now the B1145) and within walking distance of the important Roman settlement of Billingford (NHER 7206), suggests that the area is likely to have been subject to traffic during the Romano-British period. Indications of this seem to appear in the archaeological record in terms of artefacts such as pottery found in the vicinity of the village.

Foxley is recorded in Domesday (AD 1086) as a moderate-sized settlement held by a Saxon, Godric, by 1066, and later held by a Norman Count, Alan, with Godric holding it under him.

The relevant entries of archaeological finds and monuments within a 0.5km radius of the site taken from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) are listed below by period.



### 3.1 Iron Age and Romano-British

250m to the south-east of the site a silver coin was recovered (NHER 34367) while 600m to the south-east harnesses from the Iron Age and Roman periods have been retrieved (NHER 31231). Adjacent to the chapel, immediately to the north-east, several sherds of Romano-British greyware pottery associated with fragments of bone have been found (NHER 7197).

### 3.2 Medieval

600m to the south-east of the site a buckle was recovered (NHER 31213), while 250m to the south-east another buckle and part of a harness was found (NHER 34367). 400m to the north-east a decorated strap fitting (NHER 35960) was recovered.

### 3.3 Post-medieval

Approximately 300m to the south-east of the site a buckle and jetton trade token were found (NHER 34376); 320m to the south-west is a probable early to mid 19th-century ice house; 200m to the north-east an 18th-century building has internal architectural marks attributed to the early 17th century (NHER 19249).

Previous archaeological work in the area amounts to a watching brief carried out on the adjacent property, a 19<sup>th</sup> century chapel, which did not locate any archaeological features (Hobbs, 2002).

## 4.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the machine excavations of house footings in an area of open ground adjacent to Chapel Road.

The Brief required that the monitoring archaeologist be in constant attendance during all groundworks associated with the new development. This comprised the house footings and two large holes for sewage treatment plants adjacent to the east of the footing trenches, with associated pipe trenches.

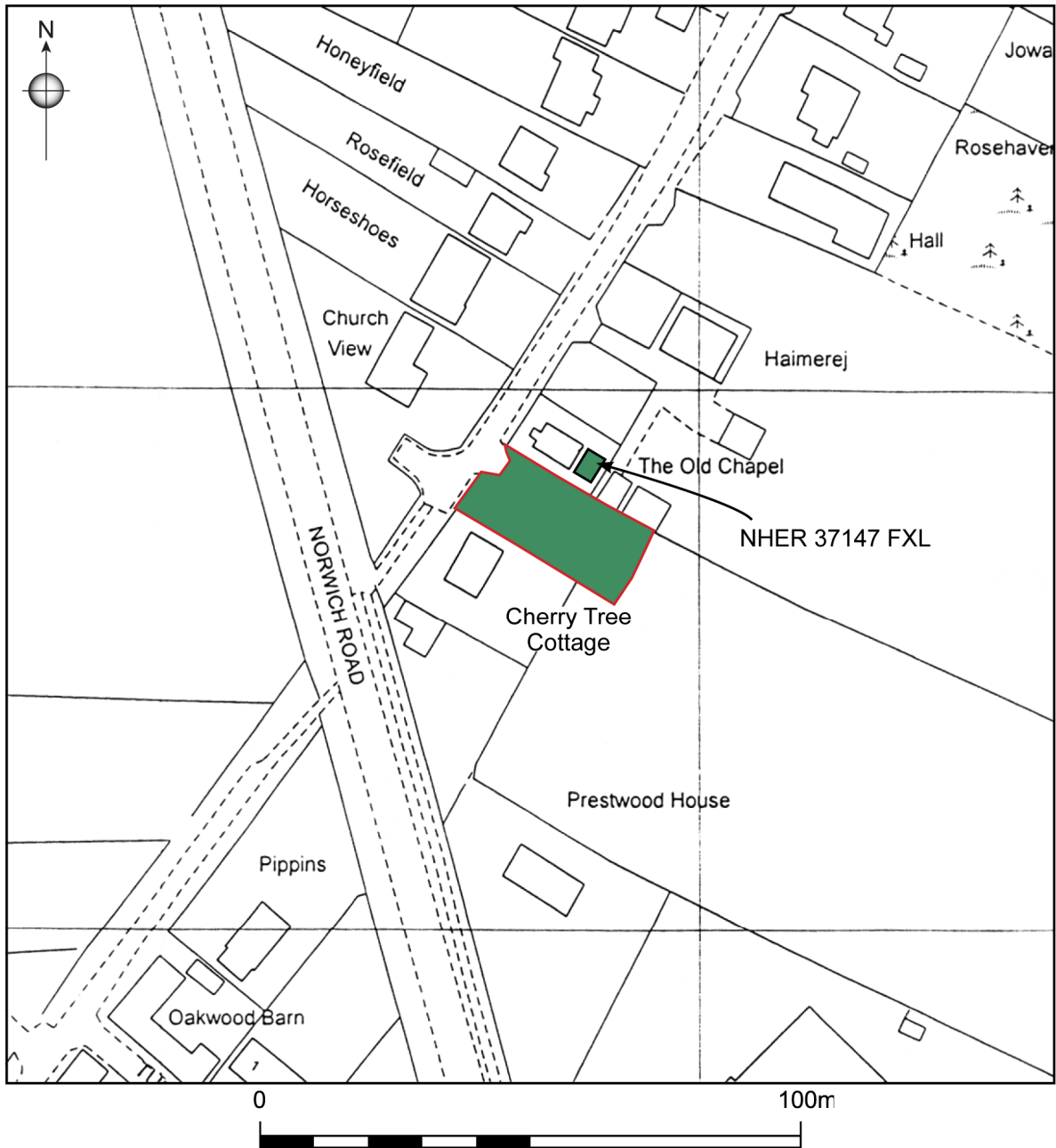
The contractors utilised a tracked 360° excavator to remove the soil from the trenches and sewage treatment plant holes.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. No metal detected or hand-collected finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the spoil of the groundworks: Modern artefacts observed in the spoil were not recovered.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

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

Site conditions were fair with occasional moderate rain. Access to the site was directly from Chapel Road.

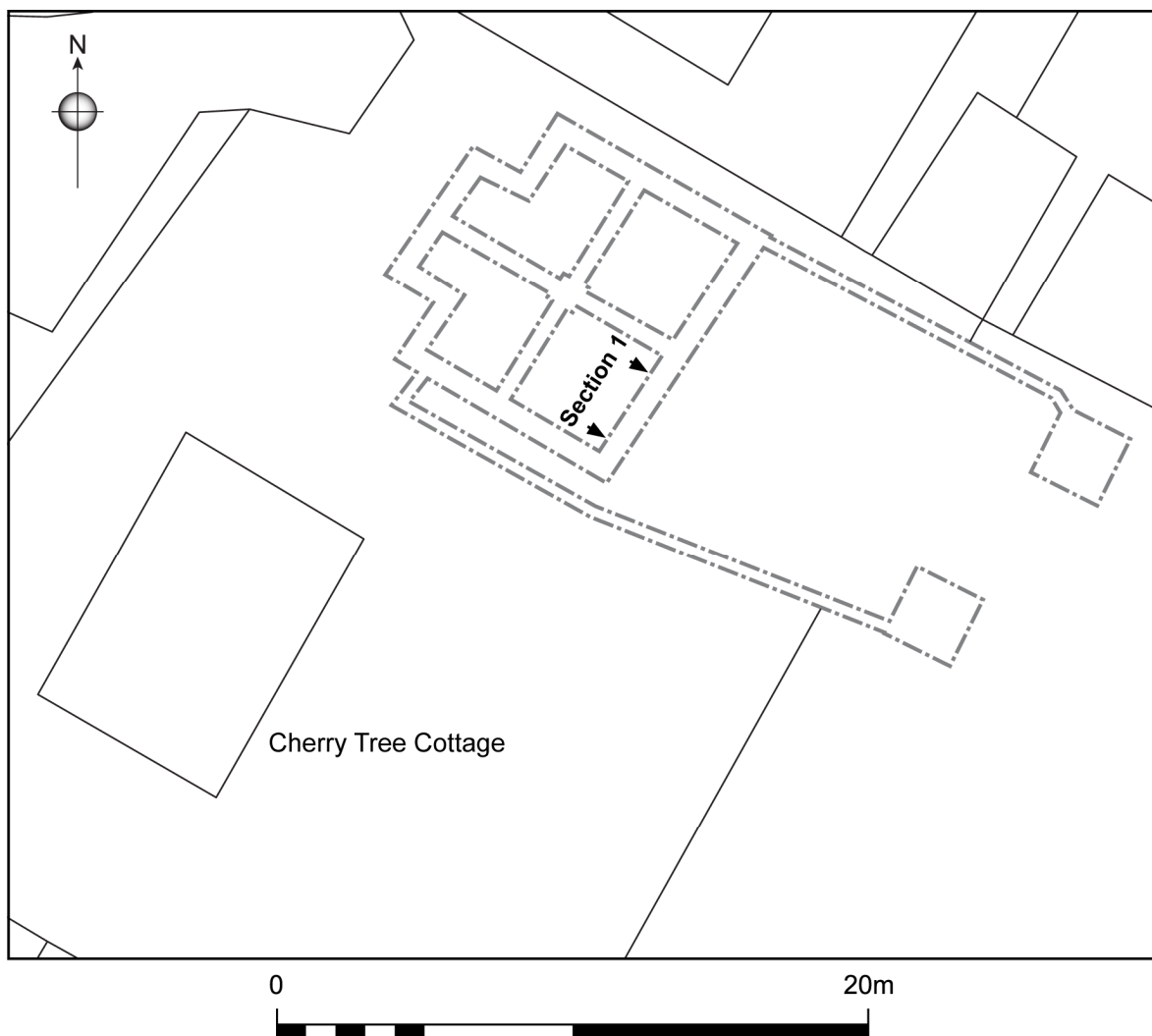


**Figure 2** Extract from OS National Geographic Database showing area affected - Scale 1:1250  
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## 5.0 Results

The initial trench of the footings was dug along the eastern edge of the house plot and was excavated 1m wide and to a depth of approximately 2.1m. This was the only trench to be excavated to this depth and this was due to the presence of an oak tree along the eastern boundary of the site. The intent was that the depth of the trench would be filled with concrete to block the progression of tree roots and prevent them undermining the new building.

The remainder of the trenches were excavated to a width of 0.80m for the external wall footings and 0.60m for the internal walls and to an average depth of 1.10m to reach underlying solid deposits to conform to building regulations.



**Figure 3** Plan showing trench layout with section 1 indicated - Scale 1:250

The topsoil, [1], had an average depth of 0.40m overall and consisted of a mid to dark brown loam garden soil containing numerous roots and occasional small stones with frequent fragments of building debris. Beneath the topsoil was a greyish-brown sandy subsoil, [2], which was on average 1.2m in depth. This also

contained occasional fragments of building debris and rubble just below the topsoil. The full depth of excavation exposed a mid yellow-brown sandy natural boulder clay, [5], which was deemed suitable for the formation level for the building.

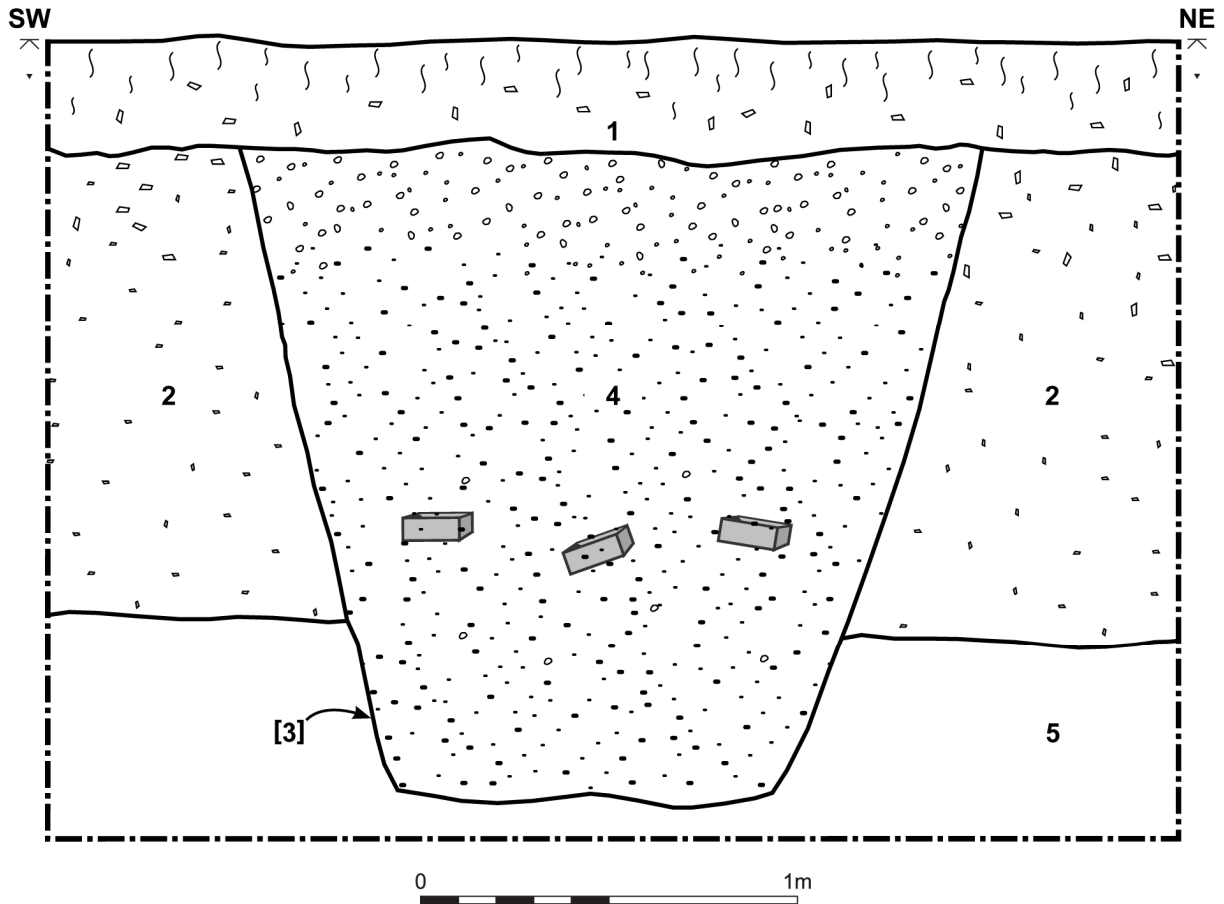


Figure 4 Section 1, facing south-east - Scale 1:20

In the south-east facing section of the eastern trench a dark silt fill was observed, the regular-sided feature being cut from near the surface (section 1). The cut of the feature, [3], was approximately 2m wide at the top and 1.7m deep, narrowing slightly at the base to approximately 1m width. The fill, [4], of the feature was a homogenous mid to dark grey-brown sandy silt containing moderate small stones and exhibiting several fragments of brick rubble at a depth of 1m.

Due to the final depth of the trench and the instability of the sections, no access was made into the trench. All spoil from the feature removed by the machining was searched by hand and metal detected. No finds of archaeological interest were recovered from the spoil.

This feature appeared to be a pit as opposed to a ditch section as it was not seen in the opposite north-west facing section. Nor was it observed in the sections of the central footing trench, 4m to the north-west. The homogenous nature of the fill of the feature possibly indicated an organic backfill, such as a cess pit. Topsoil to a depth of approximately 0.30m covered the upper part of the fill.

A modern pipe trench cut had disturbed much of the north-east end of the trench and the south-west end appeared disturbed too as the soil here was looser and contained a greater proportion of sand. The water table was apparent here at a depth of approximately 2m.

No features were observed in any of the other footing trenches. The sequence of deposits was fairly consistent throughout with 0.30m depth of topsoil onto 0.80m depth of sandy subsoil overlying a sandy boulder clay at the base of the trench. The trenches were on average 1.10m deep, although the continuation of the modern pipe trench along part of the north-east trench meant that at one point the excavation was extended to 1.3m to reach a solid foundation layer. Several fragments of early modern bottles, domestic china and tile were recovered from the spoil but were not retained.

In addition to the footing trenches, two holes were excavated for sewage treatment plants, 10m and 11m to the south-east of the trench system. Each hole was 2.5m by 1.2m and excavated to a depth of 2.5m. The depth of deposits in section were the same as seen in the footing trenches with the addition of a small amount of brick and tile rubble at the base of the topsoil layer, most likely indicating an element of made ground within the garden soil. Service trenches linking these sewage plants with the area of the house footings were 0.60m wide and excavated to an average depth of 0.50m, just within the subsoil deposit. No features were observed in these trenches and no artefactual evidence, other than modern tile and domestic china, was encountered.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

The area under consideration produced no archaeological indications to determine any evidence of past habitation. Romano-British remains previously found close to the site to the north-east may indicate the presence of occupation deposits from this period, particularly with the location so close to the old Roman road running through to the archaeologically important settlement of Billington. However no evidence of this or any other archaeologically significant period was located on the current site.

Reference to early 19<sup>th</sup> century maps such as the Enclosure and Tithe maps show the area immediately adjacent to Cherry Tree Cottage to the north-east as being open ground, probably a garden. The pit located in the trench section to the south-east of the site is most likely to have been a rubbish pit for the adjacent property.

The presence of brick fragments within the lower portion of the fill and the thick layer of topsoil above it likely indicates a post-medieval origin for the pit. The single homogenous fill of this feature may indicate it was utilised for the deposition of organic material such as night soil and/or decomposable refuse.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Bob Parker of R & J Parker Building Design for his co-operation during the initialisation of the watching brief. Thanks also go to building contractors DR Building of Lenwade, including Peter Rogers, Mick North, Bill and Charles for their assistance and interest.

The report was edited by Andy Hutcheson and produced by Michael Feather.

## **Bibliography**

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|-------------|------|--|
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| Hobbs, B.   | 2002 | Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at The Old Chapel, Chapel Road, Foxley; NAU Report № 706 (unpublished)      |

**Appendix 1a: Context Summary**

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	D	Topsoil	Modern
2	D	Subsoil	Unknown
3	C	Pit cut	Post-medieval
4	D	Fill of [3]	-
5	D	Boulder clay	Natural

**Appendix 1b: OASIS feature summary table**

Period	Feature type	Quantity
Post-medieval (1540 to 1900AD)	Pit	1