

Report № 1887

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Wighton WTW Nitrate Compliance Scheme

NHER 51647, 51649, 51650, 51651 and 51652

Produced for

anglianwater



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Figure 1 Site location showing local NHER sites

Plates

Plate 1 The gravel layer (2) in section, looking west

Location: Wighton
District: North Norfolk
Grid Ref.: TF 9345 4079 to 9354 3896
HER No.: 51647 (TF 9350 4091), 51649 (TF 9346 4027), 51650 (TF 9356 4002), 51651 (TF 9358 3926) and 51652 (TF 9354 3896)

Dates of Fieldwork: 22 July–13 August 2008

Summary

A programme of archaeological monitoring work was completed along the length of an Anglian Water pipeline running north–south to the west of the parish of Wighton. Topsoil was stripped to a depth of 0.3m along an easement 2.4km long and 12 metres wide. A 0.3m wide and 1m deep pipe trench was then excavated within the easement. Few archaeological deposits were observed, but the remains of a metalled road thought to be Roman were observed running east–west across the line of the trench at TF 9358 3926.

1.0 Introduction

A programme of archaeological monitoring work was completed along the length of an Anglian Water pipeline running north–south to the west of the parish of Wighton (Fig. 1). Topsoil was stripped to a depth of 0.3m along an easement 2.4km long and 12 metres wide. A 0.3m wide and 1m deep pipe trench was then excavated within the easement.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: WAT 03773). The work was commissioned and funded by Anglian Water.

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

2.0 Geology and Topography

The area traversed by the pipeline was overlain by mid-greyish-brown silty clay topsoil to an average depth of 0.35m. The underlying natural consists of upper cretaceous white chalk interspersed with glacial sands (Ashwin and Davison 2005).

The pipeline ran across rolling countryside, the current land-use of which is arable farmland. A vehicle track ran along the edge of NHER 51651.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Several Bronze Age finds of flint tools have been recorded, mainly centred to the west of the survey area near to Quarles farm. To the east of the survey area two ring-ditches (NHER 11277 and 11725) and another possible ring-ditch (NHER 17822) have been identified. These ring-ditches have been suggested to lie on the periphery of occupied areas of the Bronze Age landscape, therefore it is suggested that the survey area lay within the periphery of any settlement.

To the south-east of the survey area an Iron Age rectangular enclosure was located at Copy's green (NHER 2072). The Iron Age Wighton camp (NHER 1113), a circular bank and ditch enclosure, lies to the north-east of the pipeline. Excavations at Whey Curd farm in 1974, to the south of the present village, revealed a north–south bank and five burials beneath the bank dating from the Iron Age (Lawson 1976). These enclosures are defensive in nature and were perhaps used on an intermittent basis. These enclosures are situated overlooking the eastern banks of the river Stiffkey, with Iron Age settlement being present further to the east.

An east–west Roman road is visible within the landscape crossing the route of the pipeline. Along the length of this road a scatter of Roman building material has been collected dating from the 2nd and 3rd century AD (NHER 2050). To the south of this road where it crosses the river Stiffkey large amounts of Roman material has been recovered. This is thought to be the location for a small Roman town, which included a temple site (NHER 2024) and a possible bath house (NHER 2980). Occupation of this settlement is dated to the 2nd–4th centuries AD and recognised as being fairly affluent.

A Saxon cremation cemetery was recorded (NHER 2030) within Walsingham parish and, along with a few findspots within Wighton parish, indicates Saxon activity in the vicinity. All Saints' church (NHER 2061) located to the south of the high street was originally built in 1300 and some reused Roman material is visible within the existing fabric. The medieval settlement foci are located to the east of the present day village with bank and ditch enclosures interpreted as tofts and crofts (NHER 1850, 18560 and 31606). A possible manorial site to the south of the village had associated enclosures and fishponds.

To the west of the pipeline is an enclosure comprising of a bank surrounded by a ditch suggested medieval ringwork castle, known as 'Crabbs Castle' (NHER 2009). This 'ringwork castle' is situated on a raised area overlooking the surrounding landscape.

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during excavation of the pipeline and related easement. The topsoil was stripped to a depth of 0.30m along the 12m wide easement and within this area a trench 0.3m wide was excavated to a depth of 1 m.

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

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the NAU Archaeology pro forma. Where necessary, trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits. No environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were generally good with the weather overcast.

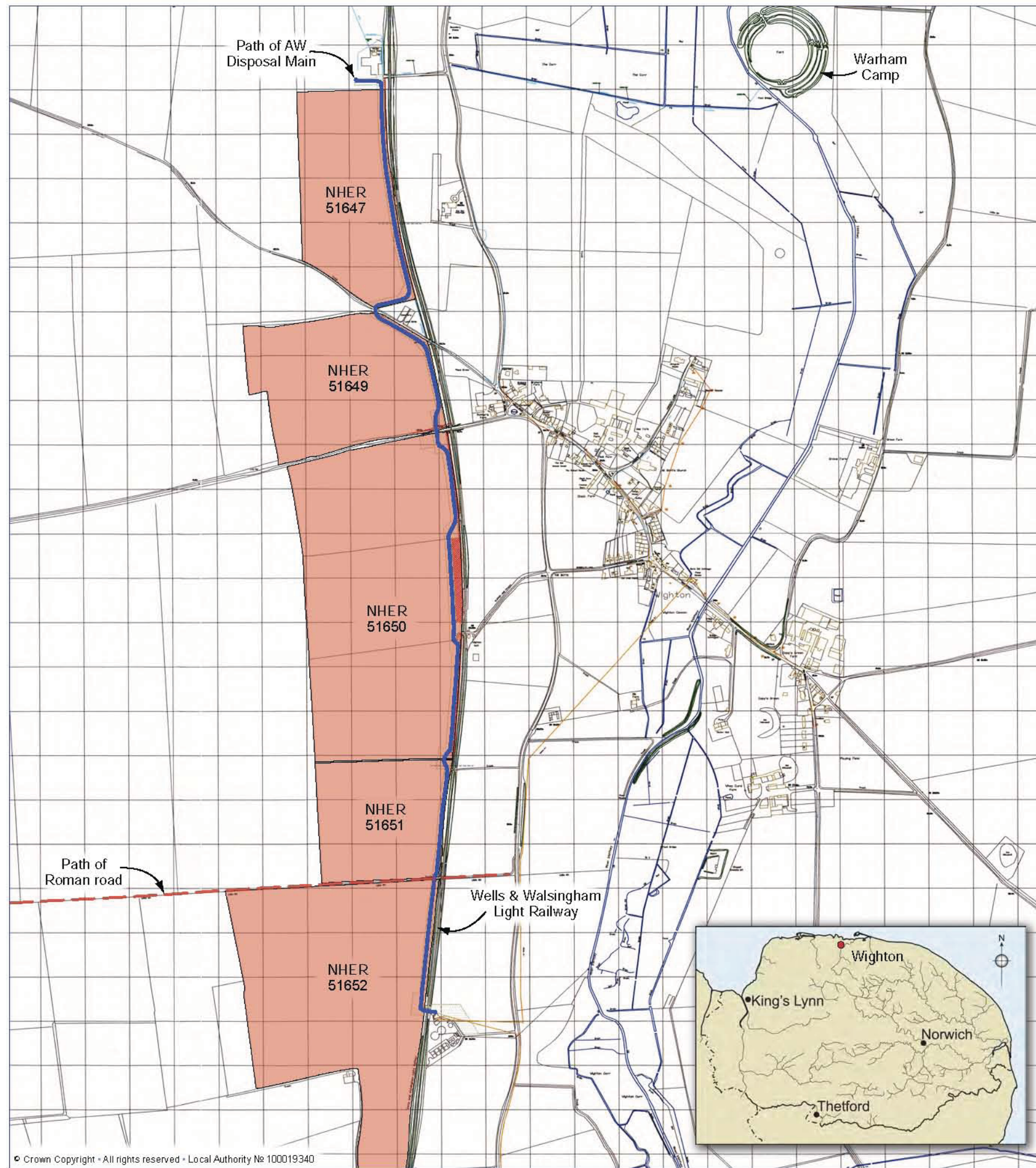


Figure 1 Site location showing local NHER sites
 From the location plan supplied by Anglian Water Services Ltd

5.0 Results

5.1 NHER 51647

The easement cut through the topsoil (1), a mid-greyish-brown silty clay. Topsoil stripping was completed to the required depth of 0.3m. This pre-defined depth meant that the subsoil was only partially exposed, with patches of topsoil still obscuring any potential archaeological features. The visible natural accounted for approximately fifty per cent of the stripped surface.

The stripped sections were observed at regular intervals, where natural deposits were visible, and no archaeological features or deposits were observed. Metal-detecting and visual scanning of the stripped topsoil area and spoil recovered no artefacts of archaeological significance.

The pipe-trench was then excavated to a width of 0.4m and a depth of 1m within the easement. This was observed to cut through the natural geology with no archaeological features exposed.

5.2 NHER 51649

The easement was excavated to depth of 0.3m through the topsoil (1). Sub-soil deposits were visible in patches, with thirty per cent of the stripped area still covered by topsoil. Regular monitoring showed no archaeological deposits cut into the natural, although the un-stripped topsoil obscured any potential archaeological features. Visual scanning and metal-detecting of the stripped area and the spoil heaps recovered no artefacts of archaeological significance.

The pipe-trench was excavated within the easement with a width of 0.4m and to a maximum depth of 1m. During regular monitoring no archaeological features were recorded.

5.3 NHER 51650

The easement was excavated through the topsoil (1) to the depth of 0.3m. This exposed the subsoil underneath in patches, amounting to approximately fifty per cent of the land surface. No archaeological deposits were observed or archaeological artefacts recovered in this section of the pipeline. Scanning of the stripped areas and the removed topsoil both visually and with a metal-detector recovered no archaeologically significant finds.

The pipe-trench was excavated within the easement with a width of 0.4m and to a maximum depth of 1m. No archaeological deposits were observed within the section.

5.4 NHER 51651

The easement was excavated through the topsoil (1) across the majority of the field, ending short of the projected line of the Roman road. The subsoil was partially exposed throughout the easement, amounting to approximately fifty per cent of the land surface. Regular monitoring observed no archaeological deposits and artefacts. The stripped topsoil was scanned visually and with a metal-detector, but no archaeological artefacts were recovered. The pipe-trench was excavated within the easement which detected no archaeological features.

At the point at which the pipe-trench crossed the line of the Roman road (NHER 51651, TF 9358 3926) topsoil of mid-orangey-brown was removed to a depth of 0.05m. Underlying this a layer of flinty gravel metalling (2) was visible c.4m wide and 0.3m deep. It was observed to be resting on the natural chalk/red silt. No roadside ditches were visible. The section was not drawn, but photographs were taken of the gravel metalling in the section (Plate 1).



Plate 1. The gravel layer (2) in section, looking west.

5.5 NHER 51652

The easement was cut through the field, stripping the topsoil (1) to a depth of 0.3m. Natural deposits were exposed in patches, covering approximately sixty percent of the surface area. These stripped sections were observed at regular intervals, but no archaeological features or deposits were observed and no artefacts were recovered. Topsoil was left intact in the remaining forty percent of the land surface. Metal-detecting and visual scanning recovered no archaeological artefacts.

The pipe-trench was excavated within the line of the easement at a width of 0.4m to a maximum depth of 1m. This was observed to cut through the natural geology with no archaeological deposits within the section.

6.0 Conclusions

The easement was excavated to a fixed depth of 0.30m along its length. This resulted in the majority of the stripped area still being covered by topsoil, obscuring any features that might be cut into the subsoil. The areas where the subsoil was exposed contained no archaeological features or deposits. The pipe-trench was excavated through the easement and no archaeological features, except the road, were recorded in the sections of the route.

At the point where the pipe-trench was excavated through the projected line of a Roman road (NHER 2050) a metalled surface was discovered. The known projected line of the road would suggest that the metalled surface recorded is of Roman date, however no artefacts were recovered to substantiate this. Due to the metalling being recorded at a depth of 0.05m beneath the current land surface, it is possible that only the metalling at the bottom of the deposit is of Roman date, with metalling been added and repaired within modern times. The line is still used as a track for heavy machinery. It is possible that none of this material was Roman.

Further along its projected line the road was observed to be visible on the surface. The topsoil covering the road surface was observed to be heavily churned by vehicles and in areas tyre tracks were visibly eroding the metalling deposits.

No other archaeological features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1a: NHER 51647 Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Layer	Topsoil – mid-greyish-brown silty clay	Modern

Appendix 1b: NHER 51649 Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Layer	Topsoil – mid-greyish-brown silty clay	Modern

Appendix 1c: NHER 51650 Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Layer	Topsoil – mid-greyish-brown silty clay	Modern

Appendix 1d: NHER 51651 Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Layer	Topsoil – mid-greyish-brown silty clay	Modern
002	Layer	Flinty gravel, densely compacted	Roman

Appendix 1e: NHER 51652 Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
001	Layer	Topsoil – mid-greyish-brown silty clay	Modern

Appendix 1f: OASIS feature summary table

Period	Feature type	Quantity
?Roman (42 to 409AD)	Road	1