

Nene Washes Peterborough



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report



May 2009

Client:

OA East Report No: 1084

OASIS No: 53648

NGR: TL 26964 99199 to TF 32131 00680

Nene Washes, Peterborough

Watching Brief

Site Code: PENENE 08

CHER No. N/A

Date of Works: 18/07/08 - 5/9/08

Report No: 1084

Excavator: Tom Phillips

Client: Environment Agency

Report Date: May 2009

Client Name: Environment Agency

Client Ref No:

Document Title: Nene Washes, Peterborough Cambridgeshire

Document Type: Watching Brief

Issue Number: 1

National Grid Reference: TL 26964 99199 to TF 32131 00680

Planning Reference:

OA Job Number: 4161
Site Code: PENENE08
Invoice Code: PENENEWB
Receiving Museum: Cambridgeshire County Museums Service
Museum Accession No: TBC

Prepared by: Tom Phillips
Position: Project Officer
Date: 12th May 2009

Checked by: Dan Dodds
Position: Head of Smallworks
Date: 12th May 2009

Approved by: Alan Hardy Signed.....
Position: Senior Project Manager
Date: 14th May 2009

Document File Location \\Server1\Smallworks\PROJECTS\Cambridgeshire
CA\8654 Nene Washes\Report.doc

Graphics File Location
Illustrated by

Disclaimer:

This document has been prepared for the titled project or named part thereof and should not be relied upon or used for any other project without an independent check being carried out as to its suitability and prior written authority of Oxford Archaeology being obtained. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of this document being used for a purpose other than the purposes for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Oxford Archaeology for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. Oxford Archaeology accepts no responsibility or liability for this document to any party other than the person/party by whom it was commissioned.

Oxford Archaeology
© Oxford Archaeological Unit Ltd 2009

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
t: (0044) 01865 263800
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Oxford Archaeological Unit Limited is a Registered Charity No: 285627

Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
1 Geology and Topography.....	4
2 Archaeological Background	4
3 Methodology.....	4
4 Results.....	5
4.1 Summary.....	5
4.2 Slacker 1.....	5
4.3 Slacker 2.....	5
4.4 Slacker 3.....	5
4.5 Slacker 4.....	5
5 Discussion and Conclusions.....	6
6 Acknowledgements.....	6
Bibliography	7
Appendix A. OASIS Report Form	8

List of Figures

Fig. 1 Location of slackers (black) along the development area

List of Plates

Plate 1 A narrow slot through the area of Slacker 1 showing total depth of excavation

Summary

Between 18th July and 5th September 2008 OA East (formerly CAM ARC, Cambridgeshire County Council) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Nene Washes, Peterborough (TL 26964 99199 to TF 32131 00680). The monitoring was carried out during the installation of four slackers (freshwater feeds) through the River Nene Cradge Bank which was constructed in 1726 when the path of the River Nene was changed.

There was only minimal disturbance of the peat and alluvium below the post-medieval bank and no archaeology was encountered.

1 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.1.1 The sites were located approximately 6 km east of the City of Peterborough, on the banks of the River Nene (Fig. 1). The works consisted of the installation of four slackers (freshwater feeds) through the southern River Nene Cradge Bank.
- 1.1.2 These sites were spread out over an approximately 4 km length of river (NGR: TL 26964 99199 to TF 32131 00680), with ground level along its course ranging between approximately 2-3 m OD (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.3 The ground level of the sites range between 2-3 m OD and the underlying geology is Nordelph Peat overlying Older Marine Alluvium according to the (British Geological Survey, 1984).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 Work carried out by the Fenland Archaeological Trust (French and Pryor 1993: 101-107) maps the development of the North Level, which the site is part of, from prehistory through to the Roman period. It indicates that the site was located either in peat fen or saltmarsh up until the Roman period. It is likely that the area was uninhabitable until post-medieval drainage took place. However, these are only general statements and it may be that earlier prehistoric remains do survive, buried beneath later peat and alluvium.
- 2.1.2 Several archaeological investigations have taken place to the west and north, on higher ground. Recent excavations at Brigg's Farm, Thorney, 2km to the north-west of slacker 1, revealed evidence of a Bronze Age barrow on the fen edge, along with elements of a Bronze Age field system and settlement, which continued in to the Iron Age (Pickstone, Forthcoming). A wooden trackway was also encountered heading south-west towards Flag Fen.
- 2.1.3 Flag Fen itself lies 4km to the west. It is most famous for a Bronze Age wooden post alignment and associated ritual platform with discrete deposits of ceramics and metalwork. Also found were stock enclosures and field systems.
- 2.1.4 An excavation at Bradley Fen, 4km to the west, also revealed evidence of prehistoric settlement in the form of field systems, watering holes, burnt mounds and structures. Exceptional artefacts such as spearheads and sword fragments were also recovered (Gibson and Knight 2006).
- 2.1.5 All of the above excavations were located on slightly higher ground, which historically sat along the fen edge.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.
- 3.1.2 The Environment Agency advised that an archaeologist be present during the works.

- 3.1.3 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations and details were recorded and digital photographs were taken of the four slacker trenches.
- 3.1.4 Site conditions were generally good. The ground became slightly wet under foot at the lowest points of excavation due to the proximity of the river Nene but this did not hinder the monitoring in any way.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Summary

4.1.1 The works consisted of the installation of four slackers (freshwater feeds) through the River Nene Cradge Bank which was constructed in 1726 when the path of the River Nene was changed from its original course to the new cut between Peterborough and Guyhirn. Each slacker required the cutting of a section through the bank to ground level, approximately 4m wide. This was mainly to create a safe working area. In the centre of this cut a narrow trench was then excavated, approximately 1m wide and 0.6m deep, for the installation of a High Density Plastic Pipe running perpendicular to the river which would improve the management of water levels within the Nene Washes.

4.1.2 Nothing of archaeological interest was recovered from the bank material. It was only the central pipe trench which penetrated below ground level. However, only alluvium and peat were encountered in all four slackers. Specifics for each slacker are listed below.

4.2 Slacker 1

4.2.1 Slacker 1 was located approximately 0.5km to the west of the B1040. The top of the bank was at 3.73m OD and the buried pipe penetrated to a depth of 1.6m below this. Only 0.3m of material underneath the the 18th century bank was excavated and no archaeology was encountered.

4.3 Slacker 2

4.3.1 Slacker 2 was located approximately 1km to the east of the B1040. The top of the bank was at 4.71m OD and the buried pipe penetrated to a depth of approximately 2.2m below this. Therefore 0.6m of material underneath the 18th century bank was excavated but no archaeology was encountered.

4.4 Slacker 3

4.4.1 Slacker 3 was located approximately 3km to the east of the B1040. The top of the bank was at 4.38m OD and the buried pipe penetrated to a depth of approximately 2.2m below this. Only 0.3m of material underneath the 18th century bank was excavated and no archaeology was encountered.

4.5 Slacker 4

4.5.1 Slacker 4 was located approximately 4km to the east of the B1040. At this point the bank was higher, the top was at 4.93m OD and the buried pipe penetrated to a depth of 3m below this. Approximately 0.5m of material underneath the 18th century bank was excavated but no archaeology was encountered.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The excavation carried out for the installation of the slackers mainly affected the post-medieval bank. This was re-deposited material and although there was a chance of artefacts being present in the bank none were seen. The ground below the bank was excavated up to a maximum of 0.6m but only peat and alluvium were encountered.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the Environment Agency who commissioned and funded the archaeological work. The project was managed by Daniel Dodds. David Brown and the author carried out the archaeological monitoring. Gillian Greer created the illustrations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

British Geological Survey, 1984, *Peterborough. England and Wales Sheet 158. Solid and Drift Edition*

French, C. and Pryor, F., 1993, *The South-West Fen Dyke Survey Project 1982-86*. East Anglian Archaeology Report 59

Gibson, D. and Knight, M., 2006, *Bradley Fen Excavations 2001-2004, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Assessment Report*. Cambridge Archaeological Unit Report 733

Pickstone, A., Forthcoming, *Brigg's Farm, Thorney*. Oxford Archaeology East

APPENDIX A. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-53648			
Project Name	Nene Washes, Peterborough			
Project Dates (fieldwork)	Start	18-08-2008	Finish	05-09-2008
Previous Work (by OA East)	No		Future Work	No

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	PENENE 08	Planning App. No.	n/a
HER No.	n/a	Related HER/OASIS No.	n/a

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt: Environmental (unspecified schedule)

Please select all techniques used:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
n/a	Select period...	n/a	Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Cambridgeshire	Site Address (including postcode if possible) Nene Washes, Peterborough	
District	Peterborough		
Parish	Peterborough		
HER	Peterborough		
Study Area	4 km	National Grid Reference	TL 26964 99199

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	n/a
Project Design Originator	n/a
Project Manager	Daniel Dodds
Supervisor	Tom Phillips

Project Archives

Physical Archive	Digital Archive	Paper Archive
n/a	OA East	Peterborough
n/a	PENENE 08	PENENE 08

Archive Contents/Media

	Physical Contents	Digital Contents	Paper Contents
Animal Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human Bones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Metal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stratigraphic		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Survey		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Textiles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Bone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worked Stone/Lithic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Digital Media	Paper Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Database	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerial Photos
<input type="checkbox"/> GIS	<input type="checkbox"/> Context Sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysics	<input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Images	<input type="checkbox"/> Diary
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illustrations	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing
<input type="checkbox"/> Moving Image	<input type="checkbox"/> Manuscript
<input type="checkbox"/> Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/> Map
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Matrices
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Microfilm
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual Reality	<input type="checkbox"/> Misc.
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research/Notes
	<input type="checkbox"/> Photos
	<input type="checkbox"/> Plans
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sections
	<input type="checkbox"/> Survey

Notes:

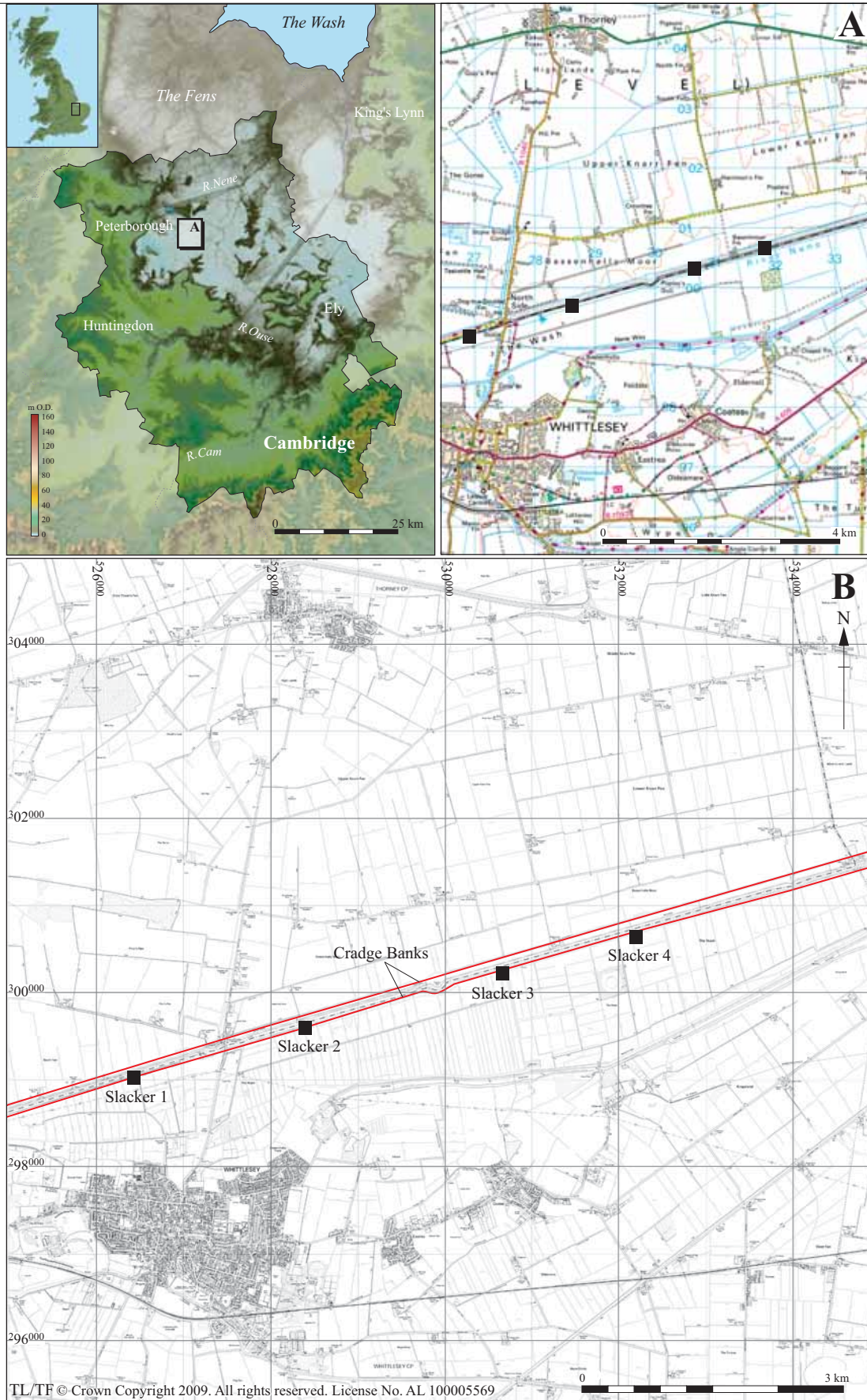


Figure 1: Location of slackers (black) along the development area



Plate 1: A narrow slot through the area of Slacker 1 showing total depth of excavation.



Head Office/Registered Office

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@thehumanjourney.net
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599
e: [oaeast@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net/oaeast>

OA Méditerranée

115 Rue Merlot
ZAC La Louvade
34 130 Mauguio
France

t: +33 (0) 4.67.57.86.92
f: +33 (0) 4.67.42.65.93
e: [oamed@oamed.fr](mailto: oamed@oamed.fr)
w: <http://oamed.fr/>



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

*Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627*