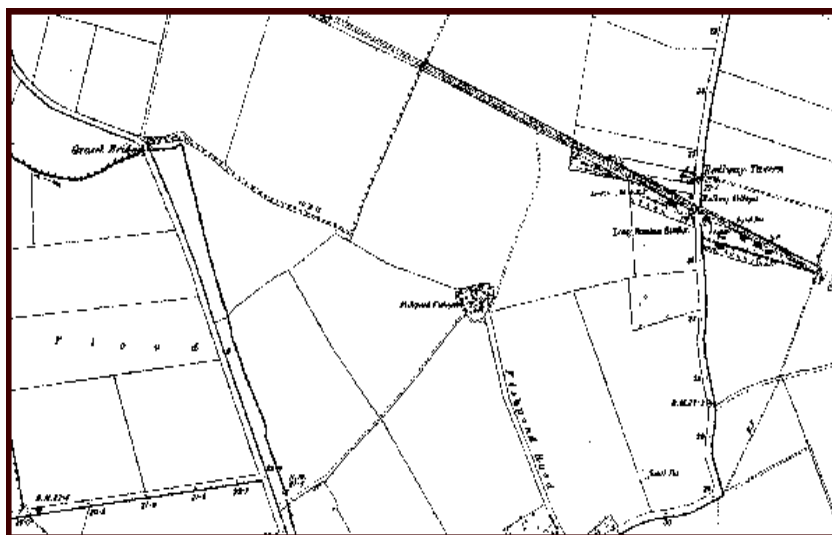


# Northamptonshire Archaeology

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
at Longstanton Balancing Pond  
Cambridgeshire  
September 2005**



Charlotte Walker

October 2005

Report 05/129

**Northamptonshire Archaeology**

2 Bolton House  
Wootton Hall Park  
Northampton NN4 8BE

w. [www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.northantsarchaeology.co.uk)

t. 01604 700493/4

f. 01604 702822

e. [sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:sparry@northamptonshire.gov.uk)



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY  
OCTOBER 2005**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
AT LONGSTANTON BALANCING POND  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
SEPTEMBER 2005**

**STAFF**

Project Manager    Ant Maull Cert Archaeol  
Text                Charlotte Walker BSc AIFA  
Fieldwork         Steve Morris  
                         Jonathon Cousins  
                         Anne Foard-Colby Cert Ed  
Finds                Pat Chapman BA PIFA  
Illustrations      Charlotte Walker

**QUALITY CONTROL**

	Print name	Signed	Date
Checked by	Pat Chapman		
Verified by	Ant Maull		
Approved by			

**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		
Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at Longstanton Balancing Pond, Cambridgeshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	<p>Northamptonshire Archaeology excavated a series of trial trenches on land to the east of Over Road at Longstanton, Cambridgeshire on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants. A geophysical survey of the area had indicated the presence of a ditch or land drain, five possible pits and an iron pipeline. A number of shallow gullies were found in four of the trenches. They were sealed by alluvium, suggesting they may have been of some antiquity. No finds were recovered from any of them. A large post-medieval ditch, or dyke, which cut the alluvium, was seen in three trenches aligned with the track to the north-east of the site. A number of tree-boles, which may correspond to the pits located by the geophysical survey, were observed. The linear feature found by the geophysical survey was a land drain.</p>	
Project type (eg DBA, evaluation etc)	Evaluation	
Site status (none, NT, SAM etc)	None	
Previous work (SMR numbers etc)	Geophysical Survey (NA 2005)	
Current Land use	Arable	
Future work (yes, no, unknown)	Unknown	
Monument type/ period	Post-medieval ditches	
Significant finds	None	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Cambridgeshire	
Site address	Over Road, Longstanton	
Study area (sq.m or ha)	c1.6ha	
OS Easting & Northing (use grid sq. numbers)	53871 26809	
Height OD	c5mAOD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology for John Samuels Archaeological Consultants	
Project brief originator	Andy Thomas, Principal Archaeologist, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice	
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Steve Morris / Charlotte Walker	
Project Manager	Anthony Maull	
Sponsor or funding body	Persimmon Homes	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	12/09/05	
End date		
<b>ARCHIVES</b>	<b>Location (Accession no.)</b>	<b>Content (eg pottery, animal bone etc)</b>
Physical		
Paper		
Digital		
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)		
Title	An Archaeological Evaluation at Longstanton Balancing Pond, Cambridgeshire	
Serial title & volume		
Author(s)	Charlotte Walker	
Page numbers	7	
Date	19/10/05	

# **Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>THE EVALUATION EVIDENCE</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>THE FINDS</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>

## **Figures**

Fig 1: Site location

Fig 2: Trench plan showing all features

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AT LONGSTANTON  
BALANCING POND CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
SEPTEMBER 2005**

**ABSTRACT**

*Northamptonshire Archaeology excavated a series of trial trenches on land to the east of Over Road at Longstanton, Cambridgeshire on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants. A geophysical survey of the area had indicated the presence of a ditch or land drain, five possible pits and an iron pipeline.*

*A number of shallow gullies were found in four of the trenches. They were sealed by alluvium, suggesting they may have been of some antiquity. No finds were recovered from any of them. A large post-medieval ditch, or dyke, which cut the alluvium, was seen in three trenches aligned with the track to the north-east of the site. A number of tree-boles, which may correspond to the pits located by the geophysical survey, were observed. The linear feature found by the geophysical survey was a land drain.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

Northamptonshire Archaeology conducted an evaluation of an area of land which has been designated for the construction of a balancing pond, situated to the north-east of the village of Longstanton, Cambridgeshire (Fig 1; NGR TL 3871 6809). The work was undertaken on behalf of John Samuels Archaeological Consultants, at the request of Cambridgeshire County Archaeological Office. The trial trenching of the site follows a previous geophysical survey (NA 2005).

The evaluation was designed to meet the requirements of the *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation* issued by Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice (CAPCA 2005).

**2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY**

The village of Longstanton is located 9km north-west of Cambridge on a low gravel ridge c1 km wide. The land just north-east of the village also lies on gravel but most of the parish is covered with clay, except for small patches of alluvium in the north-west and greensand in the south (VCH 1989, 220-23). The site itself is located on a parcel of land in a triangle

formed by Over Road to the west and a track to the north and east and is situated 1km to the north-west of the village of Longstanton. The site is a fairly level parcel of land, generally lying at c5m OD.

The solid geology of the site comprises Amptill Clay, Kimmeridge Clay and Corallian Ragstone covered with an alluvial drift ([www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex.index/html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index/html)). The land was under cultivation at the time of the evaluation.

### **3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The area surrounding the evaluation site has been extensively settled and cultivated in the past.

Evidence for prehistoric activity in the area has been found in the form of a variety of flint tools, including a Neolithic flint axe, which was found in the village itself. Further flint tools were found during fieldwalking at Home Farm (Ellis and Rátkai 2001). Iron Age activity has been found close to the site, mainly concentrated on the gravels to the east. A multi-phase Iron Age settlement was located to the east of the village and an undated rectilinear cropmark complex is situated 750m to the east of the site, and may form a contemporary continuation of this settlement. Excavation at Home Farm to the south of the site proved that there was also scattered prehistoric occupation and utilisation of the clay soils with the excavation of a ring gully, which denoted an Iron Age house site, as well as the discovery of a further ring ditch to the south (ibid).

It appears that the multi-phase Iron Age site to the east continued to be occupied during the Roman period. A further concentration of Roman material has been found c500m to the north of the present site and includes a kiln site, a cropmark complex and a layer of dark soil which has yielded large quantities of Roman pottery (Jones 1995). A few finds of Roman pottery have been made to the south-west of the site (Ellis and Rátkai 2001).

Medieval settlements within the parish were recorded at Green End, Church End, Golden End, Longstanton All Saints and Longstanton St Michael. There was a further small settlement and moated site at Fishponds Cottages to the east which was never incorporated into the village, but remained as a separate entity until its desertion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The site was part of 'Hill Field', one of the three open fields recorded on the Enclosure Map of 1816, and was noted as being liable to flooding (Jones 1995). The drain to the west of the site was recorded as *Landbrook* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but as *Longbrook* in 1331 (VCH

1989). Although evidence for ridge and furrow cultivation is visible throughout the parish, none has been noted for the development area.

#### **4 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation was undertaken in order to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains likely to be threatened by the proposed development. Particular concerns were the degree of truncation of buried deposits, the presence or absence of a palaeosol, the preservation of deposits within negative features and general site formation processes (CAPCA 2005).

A 5% sample of the area that will be affected by development was sampled, which amounted to eight 50m trenches. The trenches were excavated using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under intensive archaeological supervision. The trenches were stripped of topsoil and overburden down to the first significant archaeological layer, or natural subsoil depending on which was encountered first. All archaeological recording was carried out in accordance with current standard procedures.

The work was undertaken in accordance with the specific requirements as issued by English Heritage (English Heritage 2001 and 1999) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999) and laid out in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003). Reference was made to the documents *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties 1. Resource Assessment and 2. Research Agenda and Strategy* (Glazebrook J (ed) 1997 and Brown and Glazebrook (eds) 2000).

#### **5 THE EVALUATION EVIDENCE**

All trenches were 50m long and 1.50m wide. The natural clay lay at a depth of between 0.45m and 0.75m below ground level. It was composed of compact blue grey clay with patches of orange brown clay silt.

A number of linear gullies were observed which cut the natural clay but were overlain by alluvial deposits, suggesting that they were of some antiquity. However, no finds were recovered from any of the features, so precise dating is not possible. The gullies were not



waterlogged and there were no ecofacts within the fills of the features. The overlying alluvial layers were between 0.25m and 0.40m thick across the site. It was made up of dark yellow brown silty clay with occasional small stone and chalk flecks.

A large ditch, or dyke, was located aligned along the north-eastern boundary of the site, mirroring the path of an extant drain. The only find was a piece of post-medieval brick. The ditch cut the alluvial layers.

A number of amorphous features, which also cut the alluvium, were also found; these were probably tree boles. The site was crossed by a relatively large number of land drains, reflecting wet nature of the area. The topsoil was between 0.25 and 0.35m thick and was composed of dark grey brown clay loam with occasional small stones and chalk. No buried soils (or palaeosols) were observed on site.

### **5.1 Trench 1 (Fig 2)**

Two shallow gullies were noted on a similar north-east to south-west alignment. The most northerly [106] terminated within the trench. It had fairly steep sides and a flat base and was 0.40m wide and 0.08m deep. The single fill consisted of firm red brown silty clay with occasional chalk and flint derived from the surrounding soils. The southern gully [110] was U-shaped in section and measured 0.65m wide and 0.22m deep. The fill made up of light brown grey silty clay with similar inclusions to [106]. A circular posthole, [108], was located adjacent to [110]. It had a diameter of 0.35m and was 0.16m deep. It had a tapered, V-shaped profile, suggesting that the post had been hammered in, rather than the posthole being excavated first. These features were all sealed by the alluvium.

To the north of the trench, the southern edge of a wide linear, north-west to south-east aligned feature was observed [104]. The base of the feature was not found. The southern edge of the feature was shown to be sloping gradually to the north. The upper fill of the feature consisted of a light orange brown silty clay with occasional flint and chalk inclusions. A post-medieval brick dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and fragments of bone from an unidentified ungulate was retrieved from this fill. The feature cut the alluvium and was at least 0.80m deep.

**5.2 Trench 2 (Fig 2)**

No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

**5.3 Trench 3 (Fig 2)**

No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

**5.4 Trench 4 (Fig 2)**

The wide ditch seen in Trench 1 was observed to the north of this trench [404]. Once more, only the southern edge of the north-west to south-east aligned ditch was recovered, demonstrating an initially steep cut which levelled out onto a broad level base that dipped to the east. The ditch was at least 2.60m wide and 0.60m deep.

Two amorphous features, which were interpreted as tree boles on site, were also found, [406] and [408]. They had irregular profiles and were about 0.25m deep. The fills were both yellow brown silty clays with occasional inclusions.

**5.5 Trench 5 (Fig 2)**

Three shallow gullies, which cut the natural clay, were revealed in this trench. Two of the gullies, [506] and [508], were on a similar north-west to south-east alignment. Both gullies had a wide U-shaped profile and measured between 0.60m and 0.80m wide and 0.14m and 0.30m deep. The single fill of each was a firm grey brown silty clay. The third gully [510] had similar dimensions and fill but was positioned on a north-east to south-west alignment. All gullies cut the natural clay but were sealed by the alluvium. No finds were recovered from any of them.

The large, wide ditch seen in Trenches 1 and 4 was also picked up at the northern end of this trench. Again, only the southern edge of the ditch was visible. The ditch was not excavated.

**5.6 Trench 6 (Fig 2)**

Two gullies, [604] and [606], were revealed cutting the natural clay. Both were positioned on a similar north-east to south-west alignment. Gully [604] terminated within the trench. It was a shallow feature with gradually sloping sides and a rounded base and measured up to 0.40m wide and 0.07m deep. The single fill was composed of firm yellow brown clay silt with occasional gravel inclusions. Gully [606] had steep sides leading onto a fairly flat base and

measured up to 0.65m wide and 0.20m deep. The fill was the same as that of [604]. Both gullies were sealed by the alluvium.

A tree bole [608] was also observed in the trench. It had irregular sides and base. The fill was composed of mixed charcoal and burnt clay, suggesting that the tree bole had been burnt out. This feature cut the alluvial layers.

A sherd of Roman pottery was found in the fill of one of the land drains observed in this trench.

#### **5.7 Trench 7 (Fig 2)**

No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

#### **5.8 Trench 8 (Fig 2)**

No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

### **6 FINDS by Pat Chapman**

Three finds were recovered. The first comes from the land drain fill in trench 6 and is one rim sherd of Roman pottery. It is from a bowl with a narrow flange on the rim, in a silty creamy buff fabric with occasional grog inclusions, dated to the late 2nd century.

The second find, from context (105) of trench 1, is two joining fragments from a dark red brick made from coarse sandy clay with gravel inclusions. The surviving surfaces are covered in a thin layer of mortar. It is 100mm (4 inches) wide and 60mm (2 and 3/8 inches) thick. It is probably 17th to 18th century in date.

The third find, also from context (105), is composed of five small fragments of animal bone from an unidentified ungulate.

### **7 CONCLUSIONS**

The geophysical survey of the site had revealed several equivocal archaeological features, including a linear ditch and five possible pits. The subsequent evaluation of this site did not find the putative ditch, meaning it was probably a land drain. The possible pits were not found either, which may imply that the geophysical anomalies may have been iron or ceramic debris in the topsoil.

The evaluation has, however, revealed a number of shallow gullies. The features may not have been picked up by the geophysical survey because they were overlain by the alluvial layer. Although these features may be of some antiquity, the lack of finds and of any sort of ecofactual evidence means that they cannot be dated. However, evidence from Home Farm to the south has shown that the clay lands were being exploited by the Iron Age, so it is possible that the features date from this period or later. The lack of finds evidence, along with the fact that the site was known to be liable to flooding in the past, makes it very unlikely that these features were associated with settlement. It is likely that they were intended as measures to prevent flooding on agricultural land. None of the features showed any sign of having been waterlogged. The single sherd of Roman pottery found in the land drain fill is an indication of the Roman activity known from the surrounding area.

Several amorphous features found in some of the trenches cut the alluvial layer and so are unlikely to represent periglacial features. They probably signify tree-throw holes from fairly recent tree clearance activity.

The large dyke found to the north of the site appears to represent a post-medieval or modern precursor to the extant dyke to the north.

Due to the lack of datable evidence, the chronology of the deposition of the alluvial layers on site is not known. The fact that the deposits overlie features of an anthropogenic nature implies they were laid down relatively recently, possibly by the stream which now runs to the west of the site. There was no evidence that there were any palaeosols present on site. The site has been shown through evaluation to exhibit little in the way of archaeological significance that will be impacted by the development.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Brown, N, and Glazebrook, J (eds), 2000 *Research and Archaeology: a framework for the Eastern Counties, 2. research agenda and strategy*, East Anglian Occasional Paper, **8**
- Butler, A, 2005 *A Geophysical Survey on land at Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, May 2005*, Northamptonshire Archaeology Client Report 05/82
- CAPCA, 2005 *Brief for Archaeological Evaluation: Longstanton Balancing Pond*, Cambridgeshire Archaeology Planning & Countryside Advice
- Ellis, P, and Rátkai, S, 2001 Late Saxon and Medieval Village Remains at Longstanton, Cambridgeshire: Archaeological Excavations at Home Farm 1997, in Ellis et al, 2001, 62-103
- Ellis, P, Coates, G, Cuttler, R, and Mould, C, 2001 *Excavations at Pode Hole Farm, Paston, Longstanton and Bassingbourn, 1996-7*, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit Monograph Series, **4**
- English Heritage, 2001 *Guidance for Applicants*
- English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects*
- Glazebrook, J (ed), 1997 *Research and Archaeology: a Framework for the Eastern Counties, 1. resource assesement*, East Anglian Occasional Paper, **3**
- Gurney, D, 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*, East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper, **14**
- Institute of Field Archaeologists, 1999 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Field Evaluations*
- Jones, A, 1995 *Longstanton, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Assessment 1995* Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
- Northamptonshire Archaeology, 2005 *Longstanton Balancing Pond, Longstanton, Cambridgeshire: Specification for Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation*, Northamptonshire Archaeology
- VCH, 1989 *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, **9**, Victoria County History

## **Online Sources**

<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/>

[www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex.index/html](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/index/html)

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

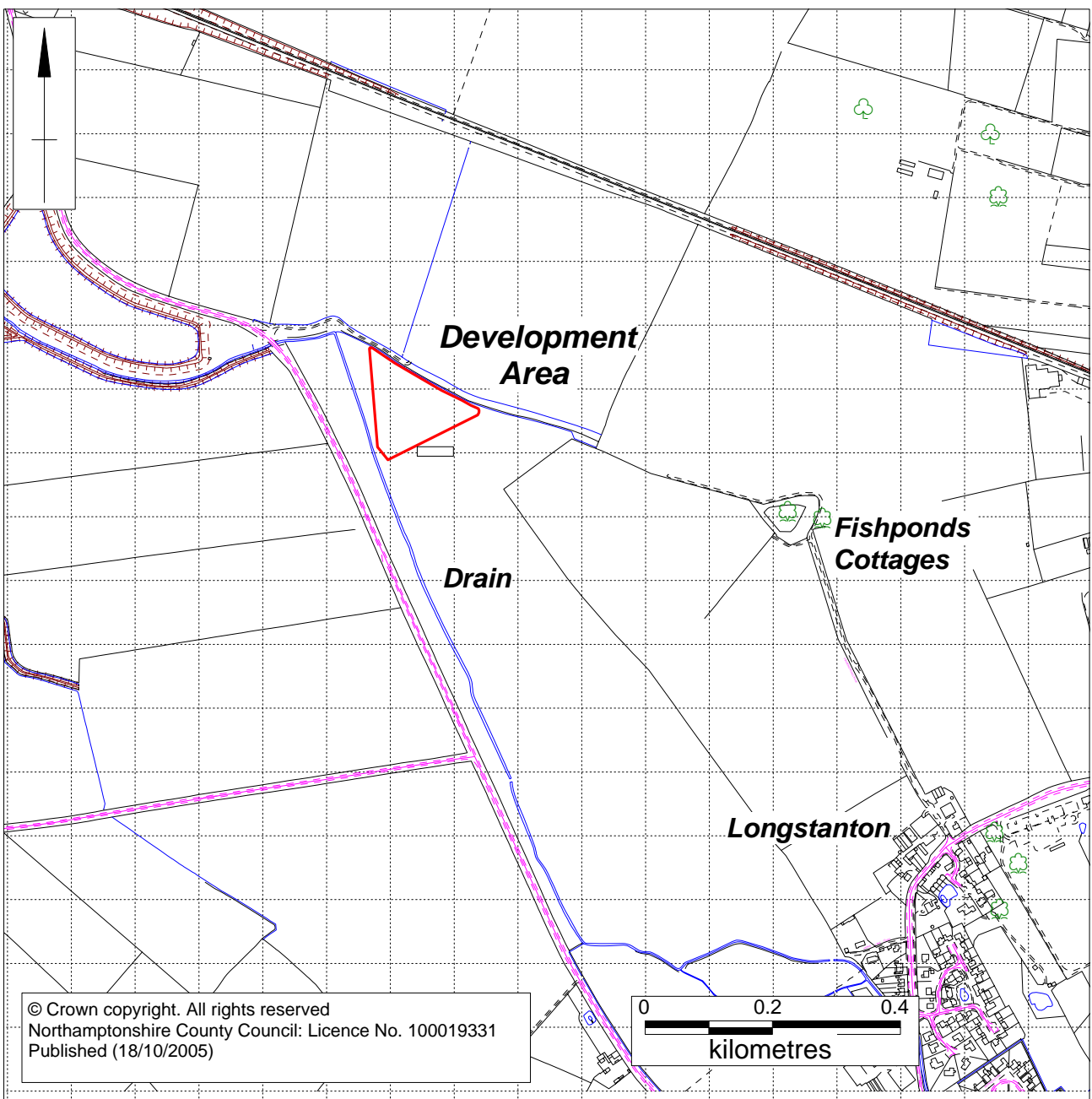
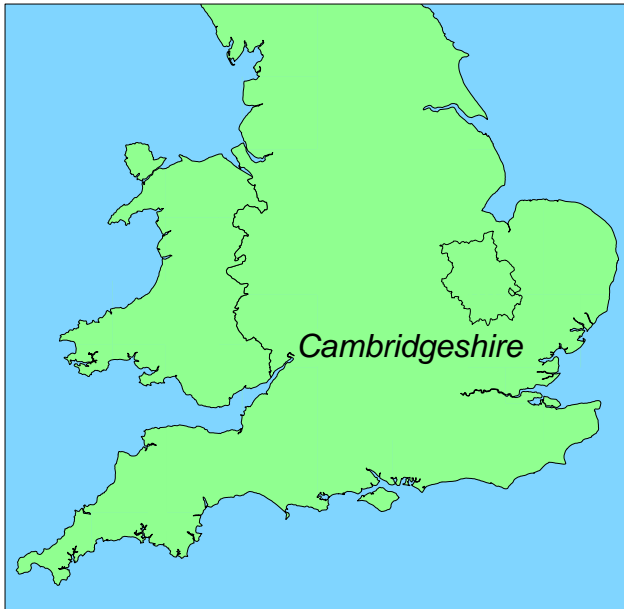


Fig. 1

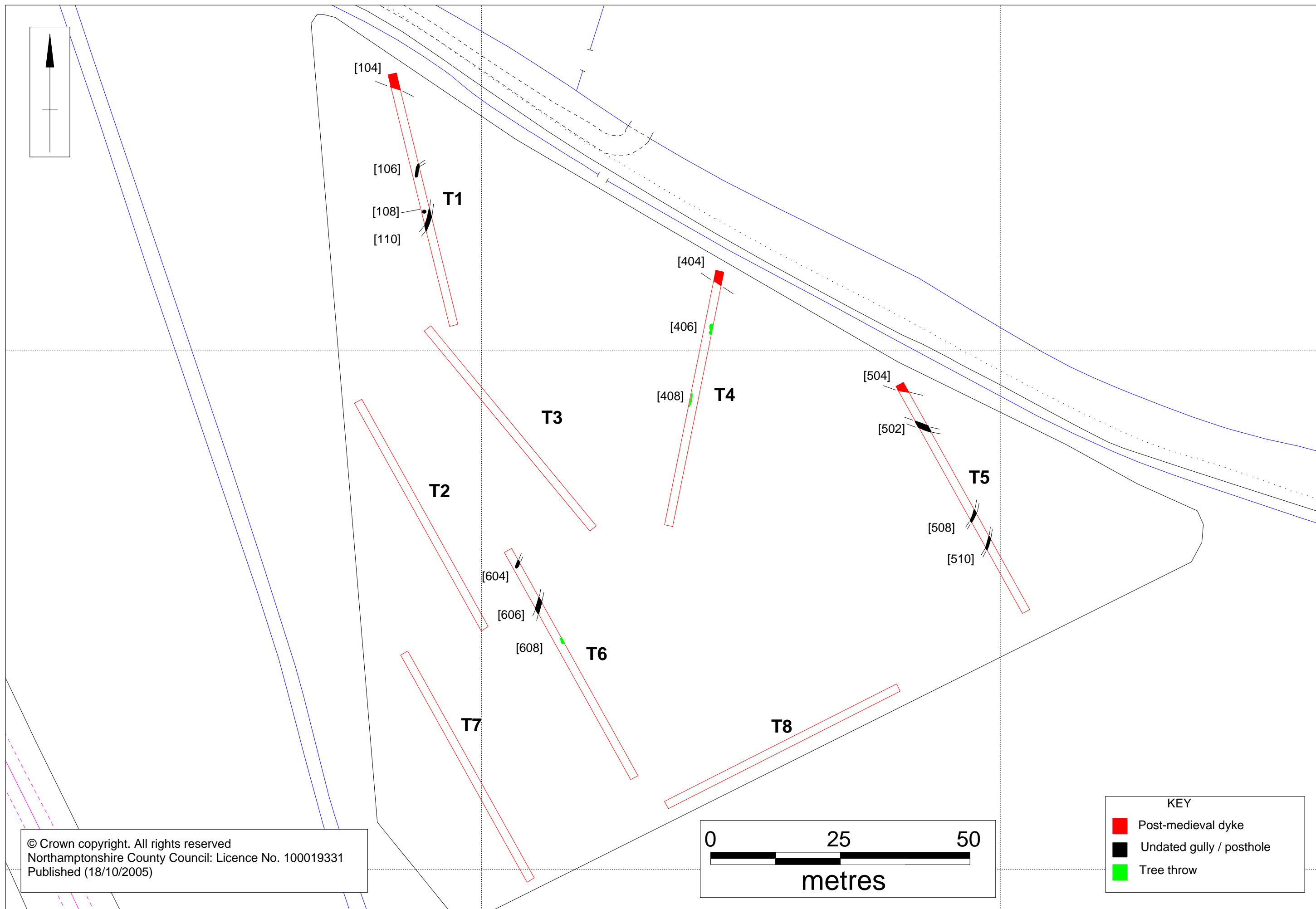


Fig 2