

# Northstowe, Longstanton, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Cambridgeshire Archaeology Unit Report 781

A watching brief was carried out by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit at Longstanton between the 4<sup>th</sup> May and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007. This brief consisted of monitoring the investigation of magnetic anomalies by Bactec, and also the excavation of geotechnical test pits by WSP Environmental. The investigation work was observed by an archaeologist, and halted when necessary to excavate/record possible archaeological features. Both of these surveys took place across Oakington Airfield (Areas C and D) and on land adjacent to Longstanton Golf Course (Area A; fig. 1). Given the extensive nature of both surveys, and the limited size (and often depth) of the excavations, the brief concentrated on monitoring test pits within the vicinity of known sites. Additional excavations in non-archaeologically sensitive areas were monitored only as and when the opportunity arose.

The Bactec survey consisted of 206 investigations within the vicinity of areas of archaeological interest (117 from Sites XVI and XXXIII, 51 from Site XVIII, 25 from Site XXXIV and 13 from Site XXXIX). The majority of these entailed hand-digging within the topsoil, and were of no archaeological interest. Deeper or more elusive signals were investigated by a 360° machine with a 1.80m wide toothless ditching bucket, resulting in an excavation approximately 2 metres square, although most of these excavations likewise failed to reach the surface of the natural geology. Of the seven investigations to impact significantly on the natural geology, only one contained a possible feature, TP 39 in Area A (fig. 2). This revealed a rather amorphous feature 2.00m x 1.10m and 0.25m deep, roughly an elongated rectangle in plan with a V-shaped profile. Although this feature contained some charcoal flecking, it was not conclusively archaeological in character and contained no artefacts. A natural origin for this feature is likely, but it coincidentally fell within the putative prehistoric 'site' (Site XXXIX) in Area A (fig. 2) which itself contained an amorphous but genuine pit (Evans and Mackay 2004).

The geotechnical test pits were excavated by a JCB with a 0.60m wide ditching bucket, and tended to be *c.* 3.00m long and *c.* 3.00m deep. Only the uppermost metre or so was normally of any potential archaeological interest. Of the 79 pits monitored, only two exposed any deposits of potential archaeological interest. These occurred in TPB 66, within Site XVIII, and TPC 50B on the south-eastern periphery of Sites XVIII and XV (fig. 3). TPB 66 contained a 0.35m thick layer of dark grey-black silt clay containing five sherds of 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century Roman pottery, including a Nene Valley colour-coated sherd and three sandy greyware sherds (K. Anderson *pers. com*). This was sealed by 0.60m of mixed topsoil and subsoil, seemingly a 20<sup>th</sup> century levelling episode associated with the construction of the airfield. The Roman layer could, therefore, form part of a horizontal occupation layer, or the base of a shallow feature truncated by the levelling activity. TPC 50B exposed a small ditch, 0.80m wide and 0.27m deep, lying on a southeast by northwest alignment (fig. 4). This was excavated by hand, but no artefacts were uncovered. All that could be said was that the feature

appeared to be sealed by the subsoil, making a pre-Medieval date likely. Iron Age and Roman ditch systems were found on a broadly similar alignment on Sites XVIII and XV, and this feature may be an outlier to one of these systems. No archaeological features were encountered in Area D (fig. 5).

The test pit survey did indicate areas of truncation, particularly around the main hangers and to the north of them, TPC 5 to 14 inclusive showing truncation and WWII period rubbish dumping, which was indicated by the one trench put through that area in 2005 (Evans *et al.* 2006), to the point that little archaeology would be likely to survive within that swathe. Although other pits did show disturbance, these tended to be more isolated, and did not identify 'zones' of truncation.

## References

Evans, C. and Mackay, D. 2004 *Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, A village Hinterland*. CAU Report No. 696.

Evans, C., Appleby, G., Mackay, D. and Armour, N. 2006 *Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, A village Hinterland (II)*. CAU Report No. 711.

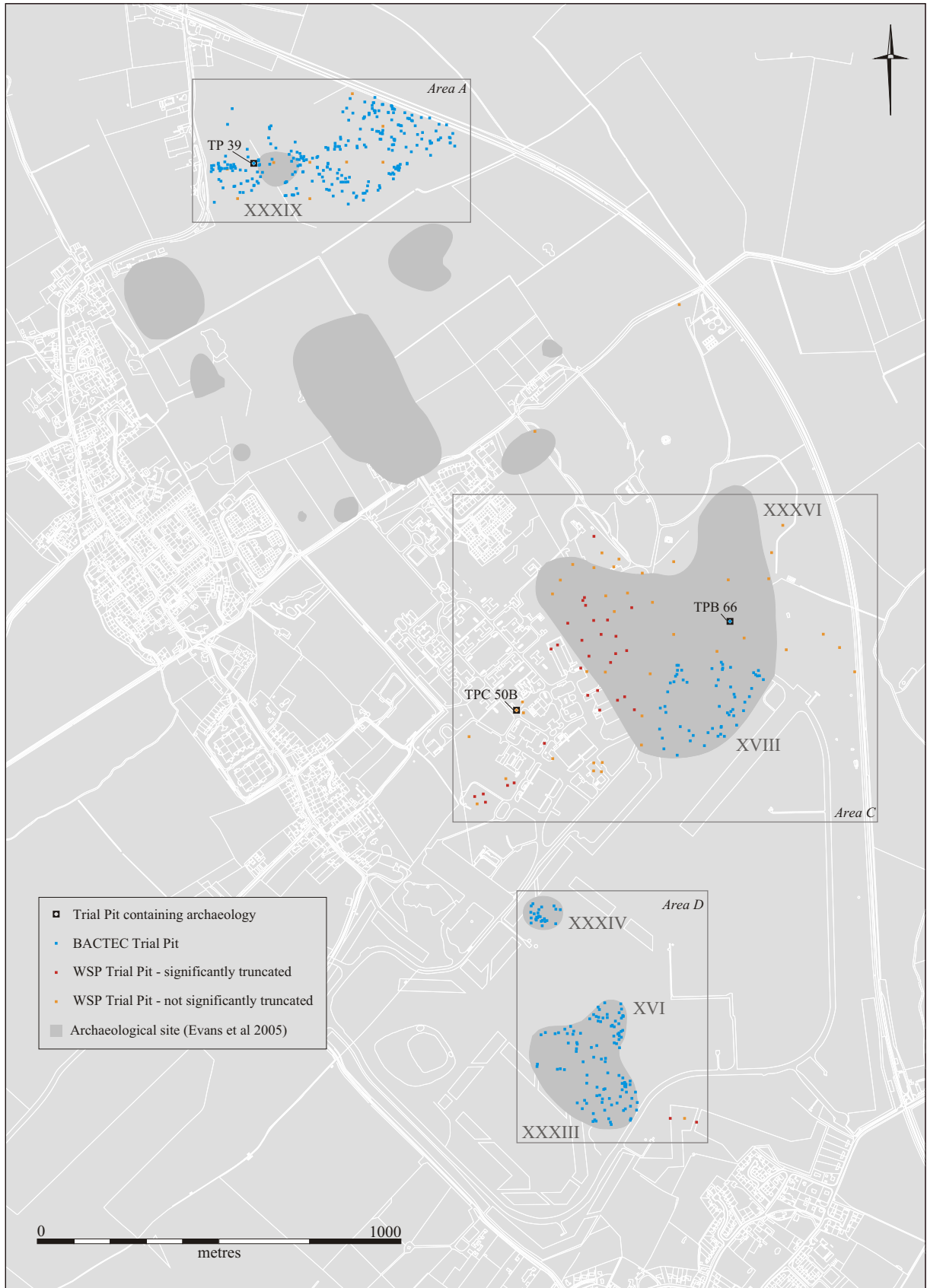


Figure 1. Watching Brief Areas

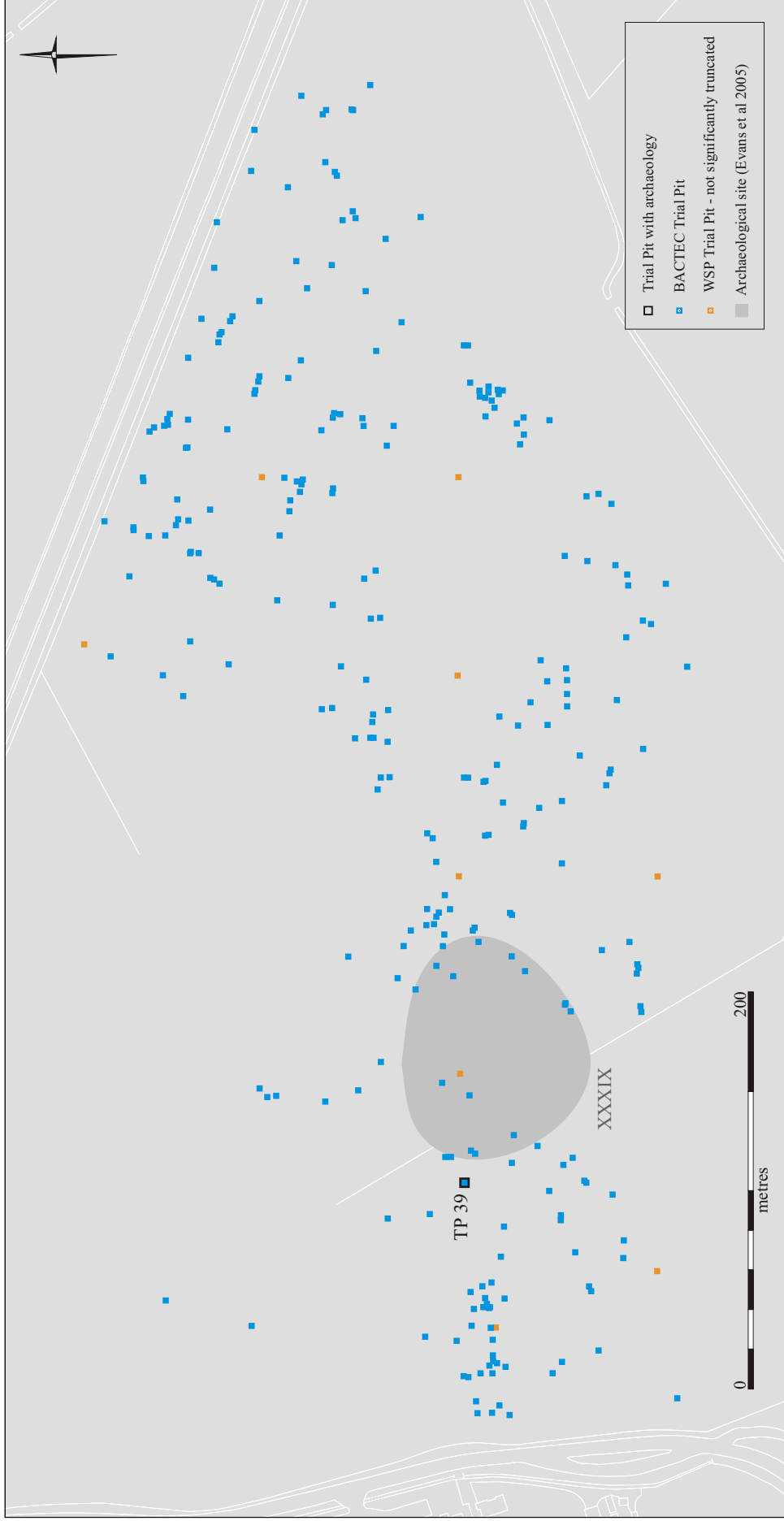


Figure 2. Area A

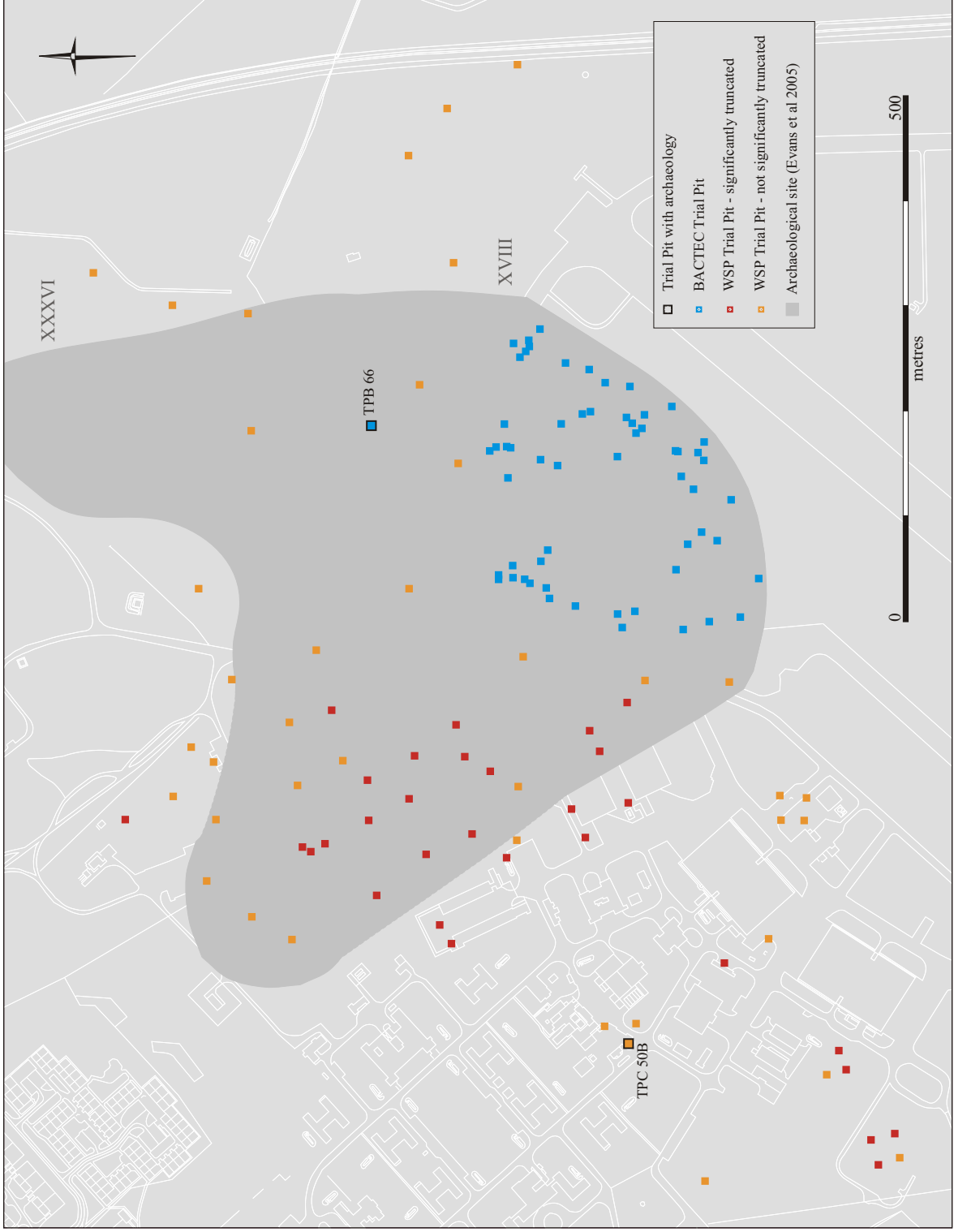


Figure 3. Area C

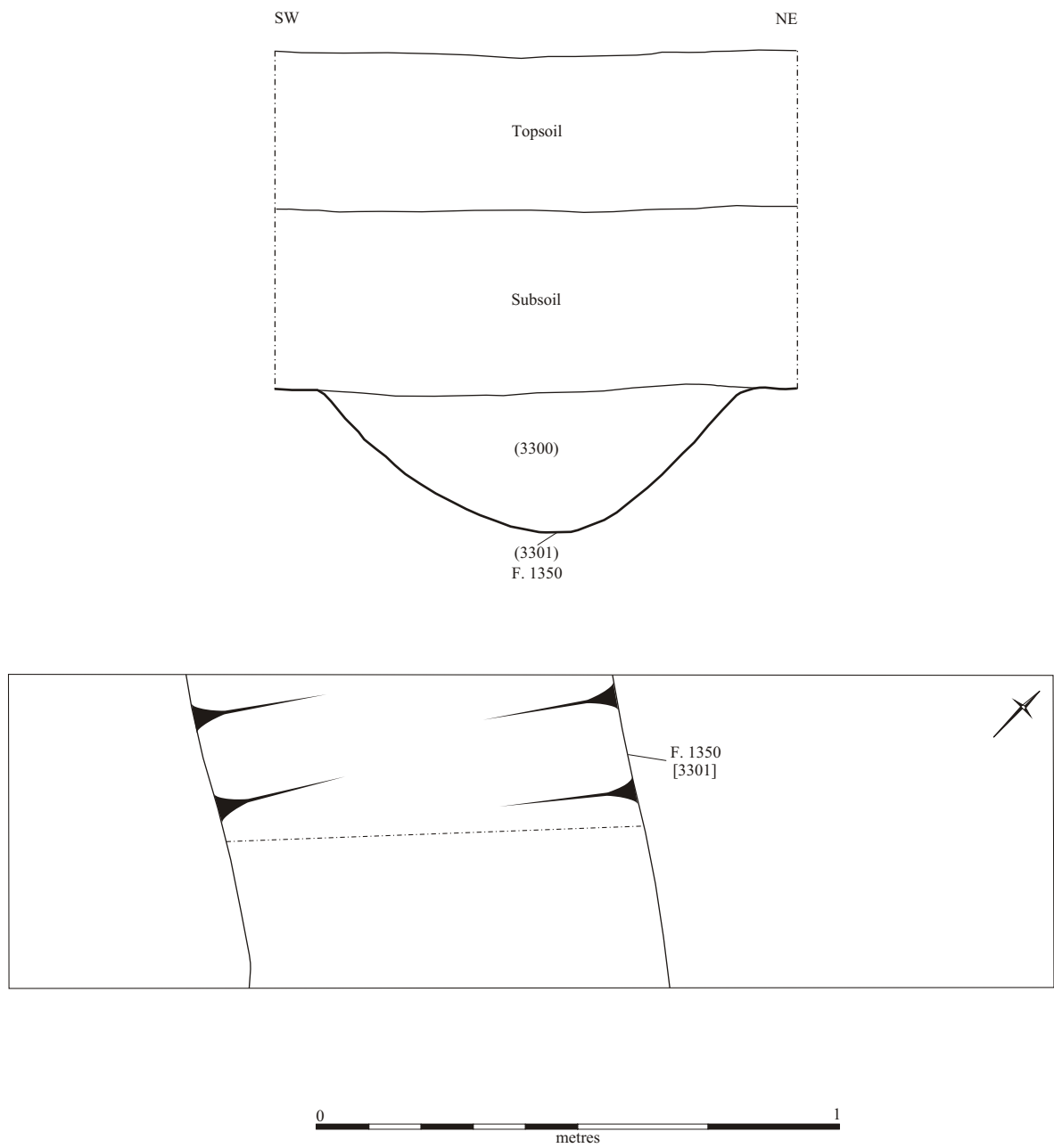


Figure 4. Plan and section of Test Pit TPC 50B

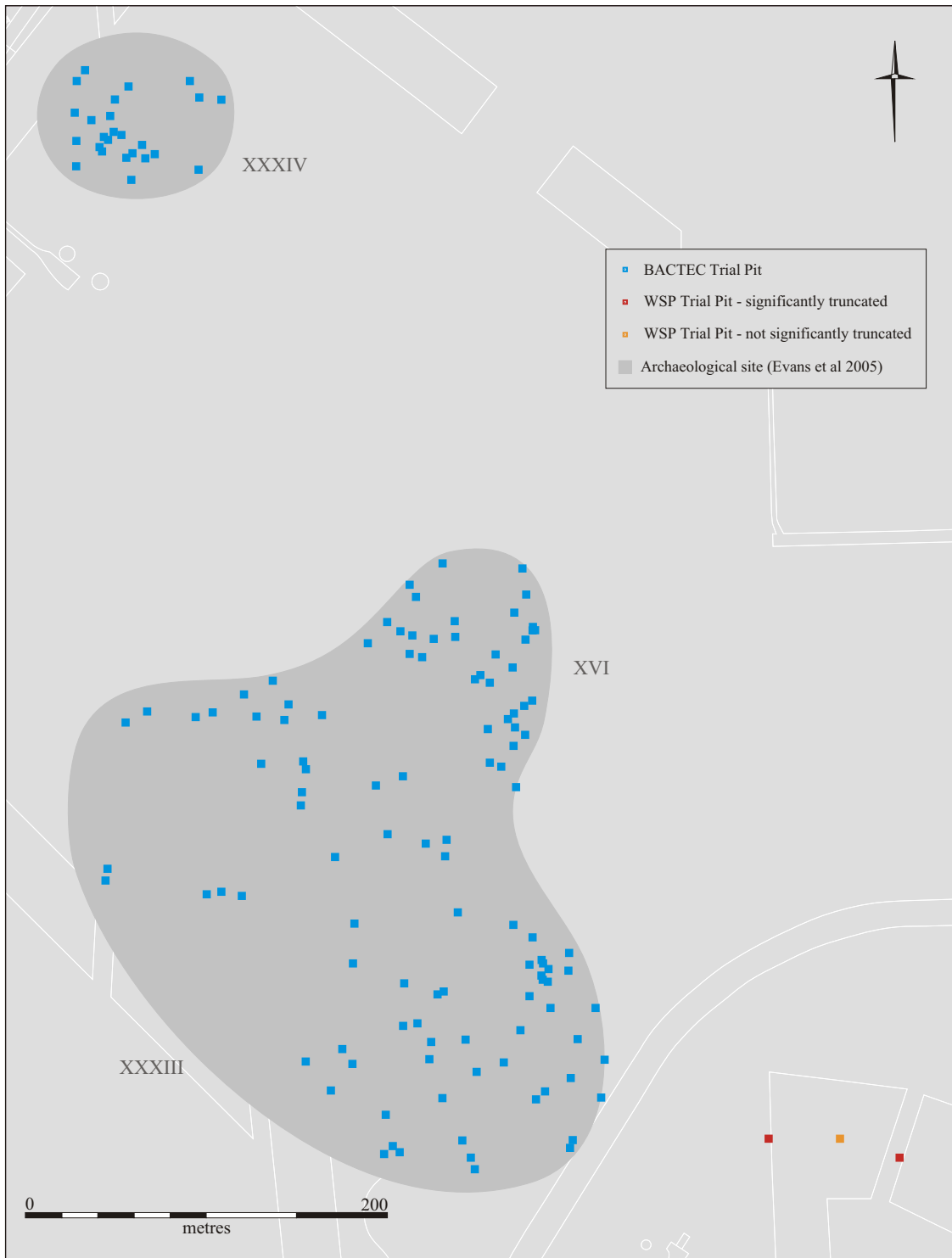


Figure 5. Area D

## Northstowe, Longstanton, Cambridgeshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief (Phase 2)

Nick Armour

From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2007, an archaeological watching brief on 24 geotechnical test pits was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on behalf of WSP Environmental. The test pits were excavated by a JCB with a 0.45m toothed bucket, to a depth of between 2.50m and 3.00m. The work was observed by an archaeologist, and halted when necessary to excavate and record possible archaeological features. Only the upper deposits, particularly the interface between subsoil and natural formations, were of potential archaeological interest. Two areas were examined to the south of the proposed Northstowe development area; a field south of New Close Farm and two fields lying between Slate Hall Farm and Pypers Farm. The field and site numbers referenced below are taken from the 2006 CAU evaluation report (Evans *et al.* 2006).

### *Results*

#### *Field 14*

Two areas were targeted for testing. The first area tested lay around the periphery of Field 14, which is centred approximately 300m southeast of Site XII: NGR TL 386 641. This field had previously been subject to prospective archaeological investigations, these revealing little of archaeological interest (*ibid.*) suggesting there was no southern continuation of the Iron Age and Romano-British enclosures of Site XII.

Four test pits were excavated around the southern edges of Field 14: TPD 47, TPD 48, TPD 49 and TPD 50. None of these test pits revealed deposits of archaeological interest. Test pit 50 did, however, cut into a post-Medieval field boundary indicating an original depth of just over 2.00 metres for this feature. The basal fill, 0.20m thick, was of coarse sand and gravel mixed with dark grey silts suggesting water-lain deposition. The upper fills were of a compacted orange silty sand, a backfilling deposit derived from the local natural geology. Some sherds of 20<sup>th</sup> century porcelain found within the deposit indicated a relatively modern date for the backfilling episode.

#### *Field 21*

The main area for geotechnical investigations lay within Field 21, approximately 400m to the south west of Pypers Farm: centred on NGR TL 400 638. This field was the subject of a fieldwalking investigation which located a Mesolithic flint scatter (designated Site XXVIII) and a geophysical survey in 2005 which failed to locate any archaeological features (*ibid.*). In addition, a field to the northwest of Field 21, centred NGR TL 396 641, was also sampled. This field had not previously been archaeologically investigated.



Twenty test pits were excavated: TPD 80 – TPD 88 and TPD 88 A – TPD 88 J (fig. 1) No archaeological features were identified within the test pits; however, the southeast half of the field seems to overlie a post-glacial Palaeochannel, perhaps giving an environmental basis for the Mesolithic flint scatter (site XXVIII) identified in this area. Furthermore, test pit TPD 82 appeared to have identified an undated later channel which seems to have been cut, or eroded, into the top of this Palaeochannel.

The upper deposit, a mid greenish brown sandy clay approximately 0.85m thick, appears to have been a natural accumulation. This deposit overlay dark grey interleaved silts and sands in a clay matrix with some charcoal inclusion. The presence of layered organic remnants attest to the water-logged and fluvial origin of this deposit. No finds were recovered except for the single horn core of a sheep/goat. The basal deposit was of a silvery blue silty clay. There was a clear depression visible in the field where this channel had once been. This appeared, on casual exploration, to be a relict channel of the Oakington Brook.

### *Metal Detecting*

Given the wartime activities of the adjacent RAF Oakington it was decided to metal detect the localities of each test pit. This was prompted by the discovery of aircraft fragments by the geophysical team in Field 8 (*ibid.*), approximately 400m to the north. In all, ten metal fragments were recovered and one fragment of Perspex, these being predominantly from the north-western half of the area under investigation, ie that part closest to end of the runway. Little can be concluded from these fragments, detailed below, except that they represent the detritus of an operational airbase in wartime.

### *Summary*

No clearly identified archaeological deposits or features were identified during this watching brief. The Palaeochannel identified in the Site XVII trenching evaluation (Evans *et al.* 2006) was seen to continue northeast from Field 18, and a possible later channel relating to Oakington Brook was observed in Field 21.

### **References**

- Evans, C., Appleby, G., Mackay, D. and Armour, N. 2006. *Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, A village Hinterland (II)*. CAU Report No. 711.
- Tebbutt, R. 2005. *.303 Service Cartridge*. In 'The Dropzone' magazine, volume 3 issue 1. Harrington Aviation Museums.

**Appendix 1 – Metal-detecting and Surface Finds**

TPD 86:

One piece of Perspex, triangular (100 x 70 x 94mm; 8mm thick), one edge charred/melted, black paint adhering.

One piece of aluminium sheet (40 x 44 x 50mm), two rivet holes.

One .303 cal. cartridge case, Imperial Chemical Industries Kynoch factory, Kidderminster in 1942. Armour piercing round (Tebbutt 2005). Unfired, shoulder and bullet missing. Not kept.

One small nut – 8mm (anodised?)

TPD 88

One flattened fragment (30 x 45 mm) aluminium container/cartridge with rolled rim – flare cartridge?

TPD 88A

One twisted copper fragment – bullet jacket?

One copper penny, heavily corroded.

TPD 88B

One fragment of steel? Rounded, finely cast, in excellent condition – modern?

TPD 88D

Two fragments of thin aluminium sheet, one folded, one crumpled.

One fragment of iron (25 x 15 x 5mm) with remnants of fine internal thread and external flat band surface. Jagged edges. Probable AA shell cone shrapnel.

**Appendix 2 - Test Pit Summary**

Test Pit	Topsoil	Subsoil	Archaeological Deposits	Underlying Geology	Notes:
TPD 47	0.40m	0.30m	No	Orange clay banded with grey/white sand and gravel	
TPD 48	0.40m	0.25m	No	Orange clay banded with grey/white sand and gravel	
TPD 49	0.40m	0.20m	No	Chalk marl with sand and gravel	
TPD 50	0.35m	/	Post-Medieval	Blue-Grey Gault Clay	Test Pit cuts post - Medieval field boundary ditch.
TPD 80	0.30m	0.50m	No	Orange sandy clay over green sand over banded sands and degraded organics	Test pit cuts Palaeochannel
TPD 81	0.30m	0.50m	No	Orange sandy clay over green sand over banded sands and degraded organics	Test pit cuts Palaeochannel
TPD 82	0.25m	0.30m	Potential - undated	Green/Black silts and sands with layered organics	Potential man-made channel over Palaeochannel

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Test Pit	Topsoil	Subsoil	Archaeological Deposits	Underlying Geology	Notes:
TPD 82A	0.45m	0.30m	No	Orange clayey sand over banded sands and gravel	
TPD 83	0.30m	0.30m	No	Orange and greenish yellow fine sands – with slight silty component over green sand and clay	
TPD 84	0.38m	0.44m	No	Orange sands mottled blue/grey through clay and sand lensing.	
TPD 85	0.35	0.40m	No	Orange silty sand with greenish yellow sand lenses	
TPD 86	0.50m	/	No	Mid orange silty sand	Metal detector and surface finds
TPD 87	0.50m	/	No	Mid orange silty sand	
TPD 88	0.30m	0.25m	No	Blue grey clay with orange and brown sandy lenses	Metal detector find
TPD 88A	0.30m	0.20m	No	Blue grey clay with orange and brown sandy lenses	Metal detector finds
TPD 88B	0.40m	0.40m	No	Orange silty sand with greenish yellow sand lenses	Metal detector find
TPD 88C	0.30m	0.10m	No	Blocky mixed interleaved sands and clay; a mottled orange/brown/grey	
TPD 88D	0.30m	/	No	Blue grey clay with fine veins of yellow/orange sands and clays	Metal detector finds
TPD 88E	0.25m	0.35m	No	Orange sandy clay over grey clay with orange sandy lenses	
TPD 88F	0.35m	0.10m	No	Orange brown silty sand with veins of white and yellow/white coarse sand and gravel	
TPD 88G	0.25m	/	No	Blue grey clay with fine veins of yellow/orange sands and clays	
TPD 88H	0.30m	0.20m	No	Blue grey clay with fine lenses of yellow/orange sand	
TPD 88 I	0.30m	0.30m	No	Orange brown silty sand with veins of white and yellow/white coarse sand and gravel over grey clay	
TPD 88 J			No	Orange brown silty sand with veins of white and yellow/white coarse sand and gravel over grey clay	

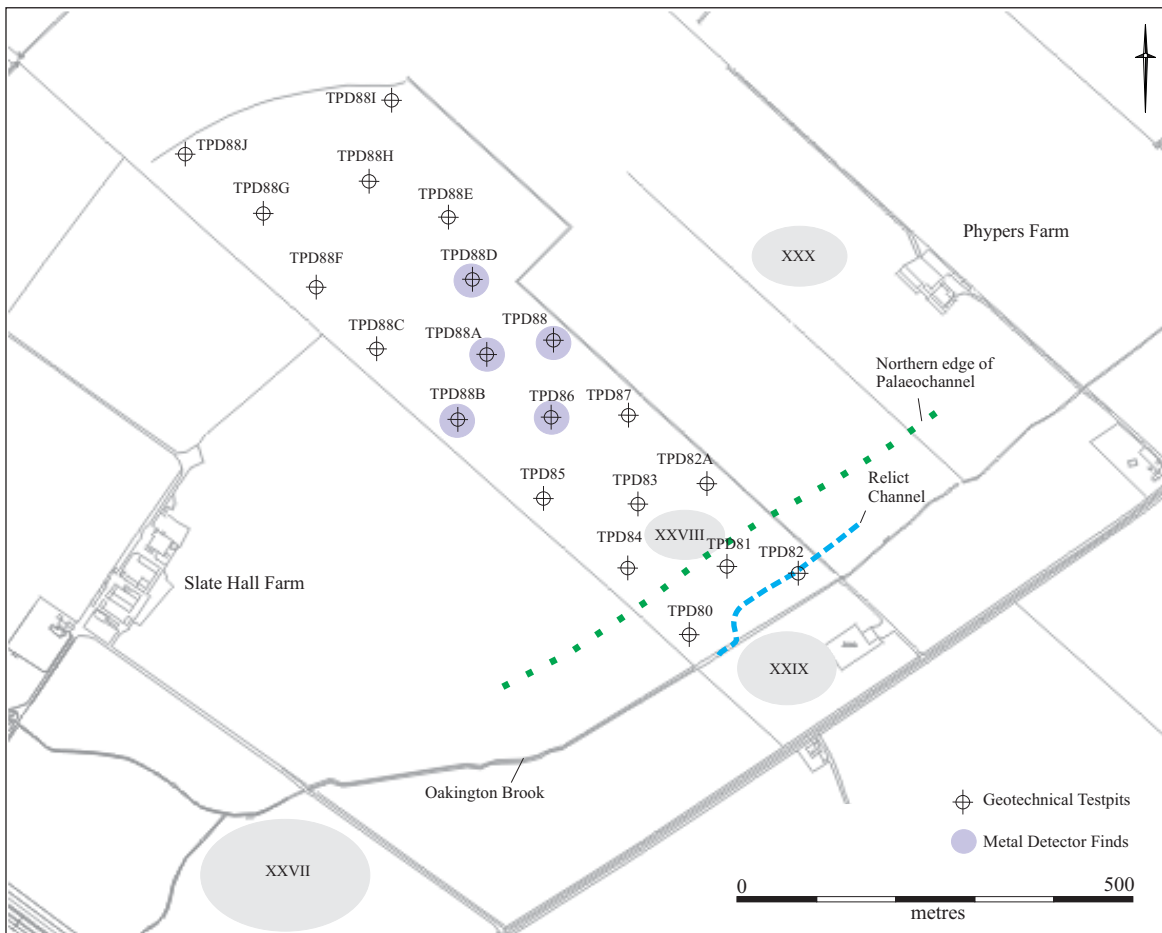
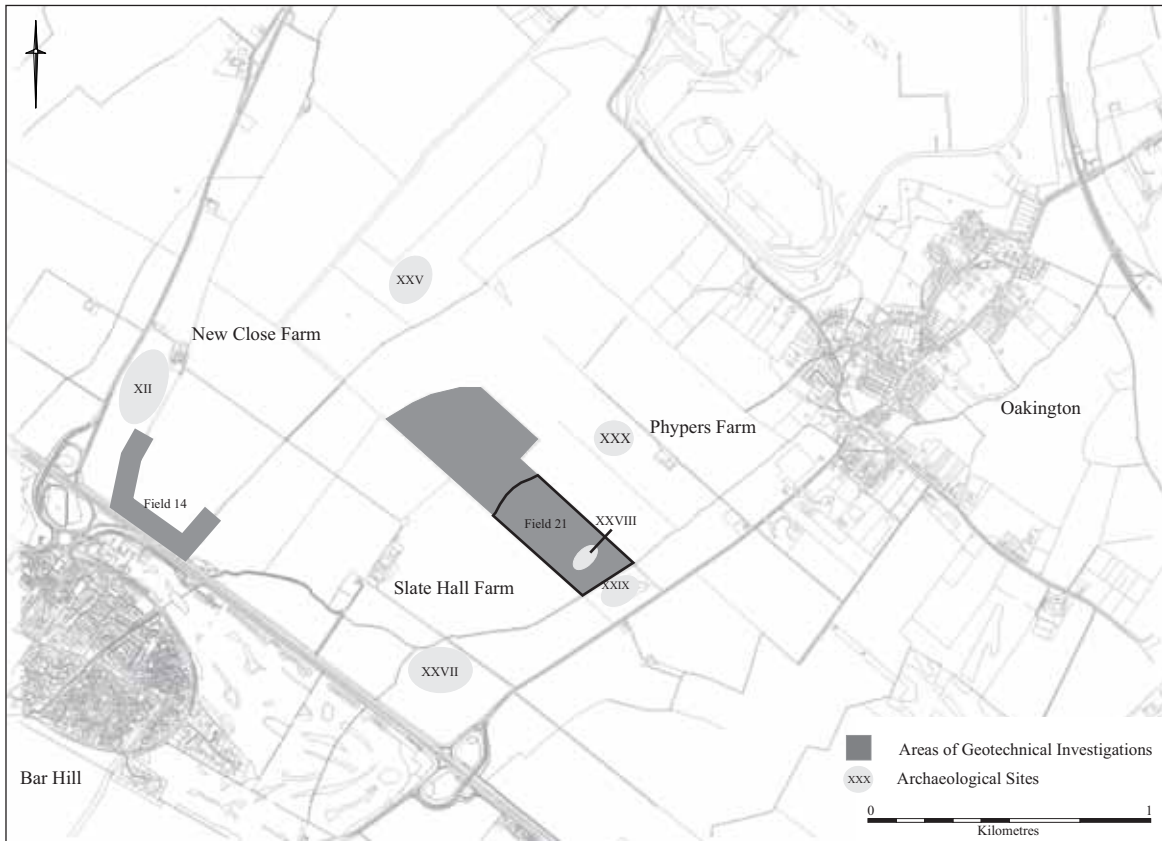


Figure 1. Site and Testpit Locations

## **Northstowe, Longstanton, Cambridgeshire An Archaeological Watching Brief (Phase 3)**

Catherine Ranson

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) on behalf of WSP Environmental over the two days of the 2nd and the 3rd of October 2007. The excavation of 30 test pits, dug by BACTEC to investigate the presence of magnetic anomalies, was observed by an archaeologist, who could halt work where necessary, and excavate and record any possible archaeological features. Only the upper deposits, particularly the interface between subsoil and natural formations, were of any potential archaeological interest.

The test pits were excavated by a JCB with a 0.45m toothed bucket, to a depth of between 2m and 2.5m. The survey took place within Oakington Airfield south of Brookfield Farm in Fields P1, P2 and P3 (as referenced as in 2006 CAU evaluation report; Evans *et al.* 2006).

No archaeological deposits or features were identified during the watching brief.

### References

Evans, C., Appleby, G., Mackay, D. and Armour, N. 2006 *Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, A Village Hinterland (II)*. CAU Report No. 711.