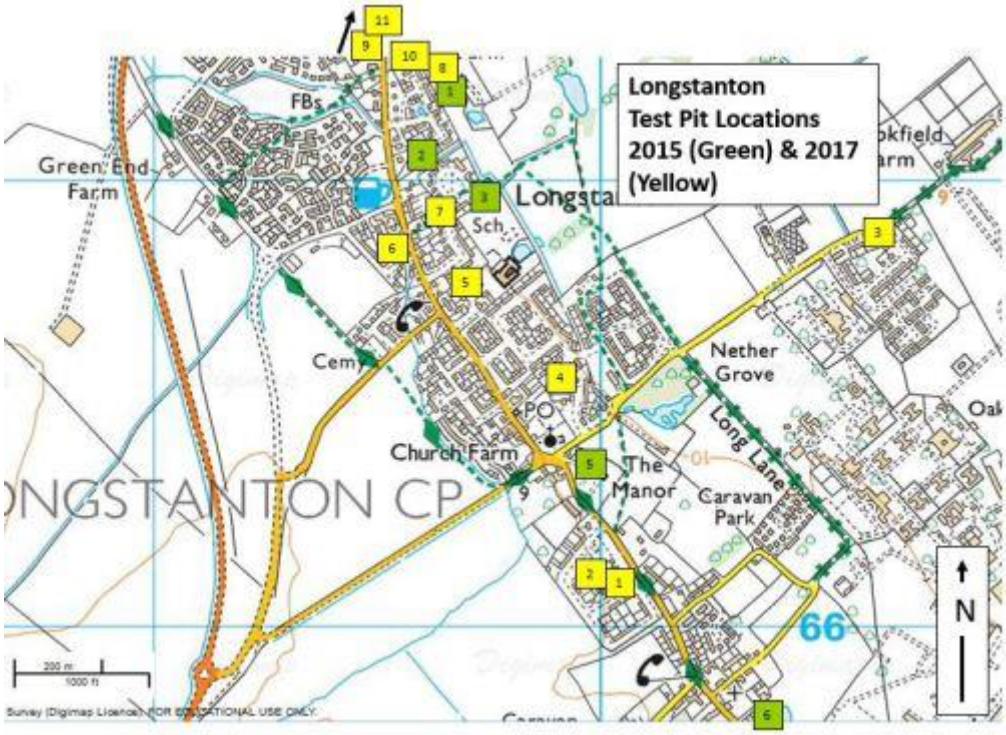
Longstanton Community Test Pitting Weekend, 9th-10th September 2017

Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) with the **Cambridge Archaeological Unit** (CAU) as part of the **University of Cambridge** ran a weekend of archaeological test pitting in the village of Longstanton on the 9th and 10th September 2017 in conjunction with the **Longstanton and District Heritage Society** (LDHS). The test pitting tied in with more recent archaeological work at Northstowe on Phase 2, where the excavation is going to uncover more about the large Roman settlement that has been identified on the old Oakington Airfield. Further information about the site and open day that was held there on the 8th July can be read about here.

The excavations in Longstanton also followed on from a similar test pitting weekend back in October 2015 that coincided with the end of the Phase 1 archaeology at Northstowe that was focused on the golf course. The results from that weekend can be read about here.



The organisation was aided by Rodney Scarle of the LDHS and our base for the two days was at The Manor Longstanton, kindly hosted by Hilary Stroude. The weekend started with around 30 people arriving at The Manor for a quick briefing by Alison Dickens (ACA's manager and Senior Project Manager at the CAU) and then it was out to site in the early autumn sunshine to start digging. A total of 11 test pits were excavated over the weekend, the majority in private gardens and sited along the length of the village between Thatchers Wood in the south, up the High Street, in Thornhill Place and Hattons Park to Striplands Farm and Hattons Farm in the far north. An additional pit was sited in the far east at Rampton Drift. Cat Collins (ACA) toured the test pit sites with Alison both days to offer advice and support where needed and were joined by Project Officer Matt Collins from the CAU on Sunday who is currently running the Northstowe Phase 2 excavations .

Despite some heavy rain Saturday afternoon that ended the day a little earlier than originally planned, the excavations went really well, with all the groups excavating to a decent depth and uncovering a range of finds, all of which adds to our understanding of the wider picture of previous settlement here and how it ties in with what has been discovered during the much larger excavations at Northstowe. The results from 2015 and once we have them for 2017 will be available on the ACA website here.

Of note however, a potential of three archaeological features were able to be identified within the confines of these small 1m^2 test pits, all of which were found in the north of the village and close to the Phase 1 works, suggesting that the archaeology identified there does indeed extend west into the current village as they were recorded as being on the same alignment as the features identified in Phase 1.

Probable linear features of either Late Anglo Saxon (AD 850-1065) or high medieval (AD 1066-1399) date were partially excavated that may have been utilised as part of the settlement or perhaps as field boundaries. Analysis of the pottery will go some way in determining the probable date of the likely ditches, although further excavation in these areas would be the only way to fully determine the extent and use of these features.

Pottery of similar date was also found down the High Street and at Thornhill Place, although the latter showed the amount of disturbance that had likely occurred within the garden as in the same context was also found a tiny plastic mouse!

The excavations also showed that there has been a significant deposit of builder's rubble at both Thatchers Wood and Rampton Drift with a distinct lack of earlier material at the latter, potentially due to its location beyond the original extent of the village, thought to be along Long Lane. At Thatchers Wood, it was found that about 0.3m of builder's rubble had been dumped across the land, but this had actually sealed the earlier archaeology which was still visible in the clayey soils.

There was one test pit that was excavated close to the original manor site of Hattons Park (and named after the last Lords of the manor) and sited likely under Longstanton Primary School is today. Just to the west of this was excavated test pit five which uncovered a range of likely 18th or 19th century brick rubble and mortar suggesting that this may have been the site of or was close to some outbuildings associated with the manor or even remnants of the wall itself when it was taken down. As the majority of the deposit was made up of mortar remnants it is likely that the bricks would have been taken away and reused elsewhere. A nice find from this test pit was also the discovery of an Electro Plated Nickel Silver spoon, probably also of 19th century date.

At the end of the weekend, all the volunteers, garden owners and interested members of the public gathered back at the Manor for a brief summing up by Alison on what was found and tying it into the wider landscape, with a chance to see all the finds on display before they were bagged up and transported back to Cambridge for analysis by ACA.

Feedback from the weekend digging was extremely positive with 99% of the volunteers rating the dig as ‘excellent’, with some particular comments stating ‘It was fun and interesting and a great way to learn about the local area and meeting new people’ (HL), ‘It’s a great way to be outside, find out about the archaeology of the area and meet likeminded people. A great experience, well organised, more please!’ (PS), ‘I enjoyed getting family and friends involved to do something different. The support from Cat, Alison, Matt and Rodney was really helpful and we had a good time looking for finds and cleaning them’ (KH), ‘A good social activity which adds to the village history record’ (PH) and ‘Great fun, good to take part in something local and useful’ (JS).

ACA would like to thank again all those who took part in the excavations and to those whose gardens were dug up and to both Rodney Scarle and Hilary Stroude for their organisation beforehand as well as hosting the event at The Manor. The current phase of the Northstowe excavations may finish in the late spring next year, but there are many more phases to of this

new town to investigate and hopefully we'll be able to come back and dig in Longstanton again in the future. Watch this space!