

EOXP TEST PIT 63

Location of Test pit: E of Cowley Road in front of Littlemore Fish Bar

Date of Excavation: 15-16th May 2013

Area excavated: 1.0m x 1.0m

Weather conditions: Overcast with prolonged heavy showers, dryer spells on day two with light showers.

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Report by: J.R

GPS location and height above sea-level: 453769 east 203160 north 72.14m OD

Introduction

The test was dug on the green space between Littlemore Fish Bar and Cowley Road. Historic mapping shows that up until the 1950s this land was allotments and from the 1960s, green space after the construction of the Cowley Road. The road to the E of the green space that joins Long Lane to the N shows on the 1870's mapping.

Earlier work in Littlemore has shown that it was once an important medieval village. The Archaeology of East Oxford Project recently excavated Minchery Priory in Littlemore which yielded interesting results, particularly a number of worked prehistoric flint tools including a tanged and barbed arrow head and a leaf shaped arrow head suggesting prehistoric activity in the area of Littlemore.

Excavation summary

The natural was reached at around 0.27-0.3m below the turf (100). Layer (101) was a dry and compacted sandy silt roughly 0.1m deep with very occasional finds of pottery, glass slate and slag all of which were small fragment sizes.

(102) was a light to mid yellowish brown silty sand with lighter yellow sandy lenses below (101) and measuring approximately 0.08-0.12m in depth. Finds increased slightly in this layer and included a (modern) button, clay pipe, very occasional glass, pottery, CBM, very occasional bone fragments and slag. All finds were in a very fragmentary condition similar to that of (101).

There was a slight colour change in layer (103) below (102) which changed from a yellowish brown to a more greyish/yellowish brown silty sand. The layer measured around 0.07-0.085m deep. Finds were still occasional and included highly fragmentary CBM, pottery, slag, Fe, glass and a Guinness token.

Layer (104) lay below (103) and contained much higher proportions of sand to any of the layers above. This layer was a very compact yellowish brown silty sand with a small amount of clay measuring 0.03-0.04m in depth. Finds decreased once again in this layer and included glass, brick, bone and flint fragments.

Due to the lack of finds and increasing sand the trench as half sectioned N/S and taken down in the N to avoid the large roots in the S. As predicted a very natural sandy layer was (105) was revealed below (104) with dark brown silt filled roots holes and clay lenses which contained no finds aside from charcoal most likely bought in my root action. After 0.9-0.11m a second spit (106) measuring a further 0.4m was dug to confirm the natural. Natural mid brownish yellow soil with clay lenses was recorded and the test pit was then backfilled.

Despite the lack of finds this test pit did identify very little in terms of intrusive material.

Results

Spit/ context	Type of deposit	Description	Comments
(100)	Layer	Turf layer	
(101)	Layer	<p>Dry and compacted light to mid yellowish brown sandy (50%) silt (50%), approximately 100mm deep.</p> <p>Inclusions: Infrequent charcoal, frequent poorly sorted rounded river pebbles measuring 6-350 mm. Frequent flint pieces.</p> <p>Finds: < 1% slate, < 1% pottery, < 1% mirror glass and glass, <1% slag.</p> <p>Very frequent root and worms. Layer below (100) with diffuse boundaries. Mattocked and hand trowelled.</p>	Top soil below turf which comes down onto a more compacted layer.
(102)	Layer (spit)	<p>Dry and compact light-mid yellowish brown silty (30%) sand (70%) with lighter yellow lenses. 80-120mm deep.</p> <p>Inclusions: Occasional</p>	Very compacted soil with occasional finds and frequent yellow sandy lenses. Interpreted as plough/allotment soil.

		<p>limestone fragments, frequent poorly sorted rounded river pebbles from 10-50mm, frequent flint pieces, <1% fossil shell and occasional mortar.</p> <p>Finds: Button, clay pipe, very occasional glass, occasional pottery (<1%), occasional CBM, <1% slag and very fragmentary bone pieces.</p> <p>Very frequent roots and worms. Mattocked and hand trowelled. Below (101) and above (103) with diffuse boundaries.</p>	 <p>(102) Facing N</p>
(103)	Layer (spit)	<p>Dry and compact, light-mid greyish/yellowish brown silty (20-30%) sand (70-80%). 70-85 mm deep.</p> <p>Inclusions: Frequent poorly sorted rounded river pebbles 20-40mm, frequent charcoal flecks, occasional fossil shell.</p> <p>Finds: CBM <1%, slag <1%, occasional fossil shell, <1% fe, < 1% glass, 1 Guinness beer token C. 1960-1970s?</p> <p>Frequent roots and worms. Below (102) and above (104) with diffuse boundaries to both. Mattock and hand trowelled.</p>	<p>Allotment/plough soil. Layer comes down onto a much sandier layer which began as sand lenses in (102) and (103).</p>  <p>(103) Facing N</p>
(104)	Layer	<p>Very compact dry light brownish yellow silty (10-20%) silt sand (80-90%) and a very minimal amount of clay, measuring 30-70mm in depth.</p>	<p>A sandy soil layer (mainly sand) with limited finds and heavy rooting in the SE corner hence the half section being located to the N. Possible start of a transition layer between allotment soil</p>

		<p>Inclusions: Frequent rounded river pebbles 10-60mm. Small sub angular natural stones 8-55mm, occasional limestone and fossil shell fragments, occasional charcoal fragments and more frequent flecks.</p> <p>Finds: Occasional glass, brick and flint fragments. One bone sherd.</p> <p>Occasional large roots, frequent worms. Below (103) and above (105). Diffuse to both. Mattock and hand trowelled.</p>	<p>and natural sand.</p>  <p>(104) Facing N</p>
(105)	Layer (spit)	<p>A compacted mid brownish yellow sand (95%) with grey and orangey clay lenses and silt filled root holes. 90-110mm.</p> <p>Inclusions: Occasional charcoal flecks.</p> <p>Frequent worms. Mattock and hand trowelled. Below (104) and above (106) with diffuse boundaries to both. Excavated in half section.</p>	<p>Natural sand. Charcoal likely to have been brought in by root action.</p> 
(106)	Layer (spit)	<p>A firm but friable mid brownish yellow sand (+95%) with clay lenses. Spit excavated to confirm natural layer. Dug to a total depth of 770mm below turf with a mattock, spade and trowel.</p> <p>Diffuse to (105) above.</p>	<p>Natural sand.</p>