

## **EOXP TEST PIT 68**

**45 Temple Road, Temple Cowley, Oxford**

**Area excavated:** 1.5m x 1.5m in lawn

**Date of Excavation:** 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June 2013

**Conditions:** Dry and sunny

**Excavators:** Gary Hamilton, Marilyn Yurdun, Peter Banks, Chris Carsson, Val Shelley.

**GPS location and height above sea-level:** SP 54369 04664, 71m OD

**Report by:** The Team and PB

### **Summary of Excavation**

The site of the test pit was the rear garden of 45 Temple Road, Temple Cowley Oxford. The test pit was excavated as part of a series of test pits excavated in the Temple Cowley area of Oxford over the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June.

The owner of the premises advised us that the house had been built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and his grandfather had purchased the house shortly after it had been constructed for the sum of £250, having knocked the price down from £500 due to the fact that the house was undecorated. The current owner's family had therefore lived in the house for 3 generations. In this day and age of such volatile social mobility this is no mean achievement!

In the south western corner of the garden there was a well dating back to before the house was built. The current owner's father had shored up the sides of the well to prevent his son from falling into the well as a little boy. The well is covered but still in use today.

Before we began to mark out the area for the test pit the owner also told us that we would probably have to dig through some 3 feet of loam topsoil which had been added to the garden since the property had been built to build up the level of the garden. Indeed the raised rear of the garden was some 2-3 feet above the patio area at the front of the garden nearer to the house.

The test pit was measured in and aligned north-south. The garden was quite compact and we were limited as to the choice of where to place the test pit. Unfortunately due to an error in our calculations the test pit was actually measured in at 1.5m x 1.5m! However as it would turn out later this was a fortuitous error on our part. There was no turf to be removed and so the first context, below a thin layer of topsoil skimmed off, was **101** and was dug to a depth of 0.08m, 0.064m and 0.042m. These measurements were taken along the eastern edge of the test pit at the northern corner 0.5m along the edge and in the southern corner respectively. (As indeed are all depth measurements to follow) Context **101** proved to be a loose friable layer of greyish brown sandy-silt soil. The sand was fine in consistency and contained a relatively large quantity of angular and rounded pebbles/stones no greater in size than 0.01m and overall made up about 25% of the context layer. The finds consisted of 15-20 iron nails, several pieces of CBM, the ubiquitous clay pipe stem, along with several pieces of broken glass and slate. There were 6 pieces of pottery all of which appeared to be post medieval, 1 metal button and 1 20<sup>th</sup> century coin. There were a few small and medium tree roots but nothing to cause any major problems as they made up less than 5% of the layer. There was also a strip of green plastic garden netting of the sort usually used to cover ones strawberry patch in the southern quarter of the test pit running east to west.

There was then a gradual change in context to **102** at the depths mentioned above. Context **102** was again a loose friable layer of greyish brown fine silty sand. However the stone inclusions all but completely vanished from this layer and small to medium fleck of angular charcoal began to appear. These were no bigger than 0.05m in size. The finds were similar in nature to the previous context with 6 pieces of CBM, 6 pieces of glass, 14 pieces of pottery, 3 iron nails, 3 pieces of clay pipe stem, 1 button and 2 pieces of animal bone. There were also 5 Fe objects that were unidentifiable. The tree roots continued into this layer but began to grow fewer in number. At the arbitrary spit level of 0.2m we stopped and changed context recording the details of context **102**. The depth of context **102** was 0.2m, 0.2m and 0.042m. In the southern most quarter of the test pit we encountered the remains of a concrete path that ran east-west along the southern edge of the garden. This cut off approximately 0.3. of the southern end of the test pit thus meaning our extra 0.5m of length came in useful as the test pit was only restricted to 1.5m x 1.15m as a result of discovering the path.

Context **103** was the change of spit. Context **103** was again a loose friable layer of greyish brown fine silty sand. It was dug to a depth of 0.33m, 0.354m and 0.042m. There were no stones or charcoal in this layer. The finds in this layer consisted of 10 pieces of animal bone, 4 pieces of glass, 3 Fe Objects, 10 + pieces of pottery, 2 buttons and 2 pieces of slate. The small amount of small tree roots persisted into this layer but accounted for no more than 2% of the layer.

At the bottom of **103** the soil began to change colour gradually and so it was necessary to change context. Context **104** was a friable yellowish brown layer. The consistency was one of silty sand. There were small flecks of charcoal inclusions > 0.02m-0.03m in size making up no more than 1-2% of the layer. The finds in this layer consisted of 3 pieces of CBM, 1 piece of glass, 4 pieces of pottery, 6 pieces of animal bone, 1 Fe object and a piece of slag. There was contamination from very small tree root however at this level there were very few in number > 1-2% of the layer. This yellowish soil appeared to be the end of the sandy soil added to the garden to build up the rear level of the garden, although the soil did not go as deep as the 3 feet suggested by the owner of the property. Context **104** was excavated to a depth of 0.4m where upon the next spit was reached.

Context **105** began with the change of spit. The soil below was largely similar to the soil above. It was made up of friable yellowish brown silty sand. There were also small flecks of charcoal inclusions in context **105**. They were > 0.02m-0.03m in size making up no more than 1-2% of the layer. Again there were a few small tree root intrusions as the layer above. Finds included 1 clay pipe stem, 2 Fe objects, 11 pieces of pottery, 6 pieces of CBM, 1 piece of slate, a large number of animal bones, perhaps as many as 50 pieces, and 1 bit of slag. The animal bones were concentrated in two particular areas: a dense collection of bones in the north eastern corner of the test pit with some pieces of bone going into the baulk and another concentration of bones in the centre of the test pit. There were also pieces of medieval pottery apparent in this context with what may have been a few pieces of Brill/Borstal ware. The presence of medieval pottery in this layer was perhaps suggestive that we were getting below the soil added to bulk up the rear of the garden, although this layer was represented by both recent and some medieval finds. Context **105** was dug to a depth of 0.54m, 0.49m and 0.042m.

There was a gradual change in context between context **105** and **106**. Context **106** was friable, brownish yellow, clayey sand. Context **106** was certainly becoming damper than the layers above. There were the same small flecks of charcoal inclusions as from context **104** and **105**. They were > 0.02m-0.03m in size making up no more than 1% of the layer. Again there were a few small tree root intrusions as in the layers above. The finds from this layer included 20+ animal bones, 15+ pieces of pottery and 8 pieces of building mortar. There was a lens of grey sandy material in

the north eastern corner approximately 0.3m x 0.4m in diameter. This was underneath the concentration of animal bones from context **105** in the north eastern corner. The concentration of animal bones, medieval pottery and mortar in this layer may signify that the layer was a deposit of medieval waste from occupation in the area around the time of the Knights Templar complex that existed not far away further up Temple Road. This possibility may be strengthened by the presence of a piece of 12<sup>th</sup> century medieval pottery that was also found in this layer. Context **106** was excavated to a depth of 0.6m, 0.6m and 0.042m. At the bottom of this context there was a change of spit.

Due to time constraints and a desire to try and reach the nature bedrock before the end of the excavation it was decided to sink a 0.5m x 0.5m sondage into the north western corner of the test pit. This was context **107**. Context **107** was a friable-firm layer of brownish yellow clayey sand. It still contained the same small flecks of charcoal as the previous layers above it but there was no contamination from tree roots at this depth. The finds from this layer consisted of 2 animal bones, 5 pieces of pottery, 1 Fe object and 2 pieces of mortar. It is possible that this may have represented a continuation of the medieval occupation layer. Due to time constraints the natural was not reached before the end of the excavation.

Spit	Deposit	Description	Soil Sample	Drawing
<b>101</b> <b>1.5m x</b> <b>1.5m</b>	Layer	Dry Loose-Friable. Greyish Brown. Fine Sand. c.25% small angular and rounded stones about 0.01m in diameter. <b>Finds:</b> pottery shards, iron nails, CBM (roof and floor tiles), clay pipe stems, pieces of slate and glass, metal button and 1 modern coin. <b>Bioturbation:</b> Some small/ medium root intrusions.	N/A	 Looking north
<b>102</b> <b>1.5m x</b> <b>1.15m</b>	Layer above spit 1	Dry Loose-friable. Greyish Brown. Fine Sand. Small flecks of charcoal > 0.05m in diameter. <b>Finds:</b> pottery shards, animal bone, iron nails, glass, CBM, Fe objects, clay pipe stems and a button. <b>Bioturbation:</b> Some small root intrusions > 2%.	N/A	N/A

103	Layer below spit 1	<p>Dry Loose-friable. Greyish Brown. Fine Sand. No inclusions.</p> <p><b>Finds:</b> 10 pieces of animal bone, glass, 3 Fe Objects, 10 + pieces of pottery, 2 buttons and slate.</p> <p><b>Bioturbation:</b> Some small root intrusions &gt; 2%.</p>	N/A	N/A
104	Layer above spit 2	<p>Dry Friable. Yellowish Brown. Silty Sand. Small flecks of charcoal &gt; 0.02m x 0.03m in diameter.</p> <p><b>Finds:</b> CBM, blue glass, pottery, slate, animal bone, Fe objects, slag.</p> <p><b>Bioturbation:</b> Very few small root intrusions &gt; 1-2%.</p>	N/A	 <p>Looking north</p>
105	Layer below spit 2	<p>Dry Friable. Yellowish Brown. Silty Sand. Small flecks of charcoal &gt; 0.02m x 0.03m in diameter.</p> <p><b>Finds:</b> clay pipe stem, Fe objects, pottery, CBM, slate, animal bones and slag.</p> <p><b>Bioturbation:</b> Very few small root intrusions &gt; 1-2%.</p>	N/A	N/A
106	Layer above spit 3	<p>Moist Friable. Brownish Yellow. Clayey Sand. Small flecks of charcoal &gt; 0.02m x 0.03m in diameter.</p> <p><b>Finds:</b> Pottery, animal bones and mortar.</p> <p><b>Bioturbation:</b> Very few small root intrusions &gt; 1-2%.</p>	N/A	 <p>Looking north</p>
107	Sondage	<p>Moist Friable- Firm. Brownish Yellow. Clayey Sand. Small flecks of charcoal &gt; 0.02m x 0.03m in diameter.</p> <p><b>Finds:</b> Pottery, animal bones and mortar, Fe</p>	N/A	N/A

		Objects. <b>Bioturbation:</b> None		
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**Looking north**



**The well**