

EOXP TEST PIT TP52

Location of Test pit: 13 Belvedere Road, OX4 2AZ

Date of Excavation: 16-17 Aug 2012

Area excavated: 1 x 1m

Weather conditions: Dry, cloudy 1st Day, Dry, cloudy/ Sunny 2nd Day

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Report by: L Mellor, G Mellor

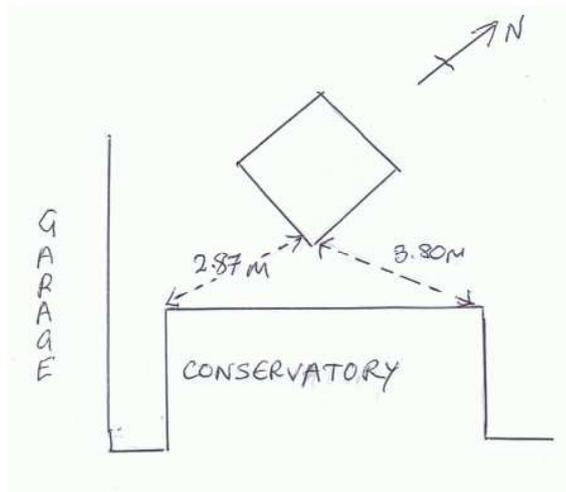
GPS location and height above sea-level: SP 5349 0533 approx. 65.5m OD

Introduction

The Test pit was dug in the back garden of a 30's house, built approx. 1935. The area is shown as a field in the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map and before that, which in effect means before the Enclosures, it is shown as "Cowley Marsh" (Cowley Enclosure Map, 1853; Christ Church Tenancy Map, 1777). The Marsh was bounded, to the North-West by the land granted to Bartlemas Chapel, which now consists of the Chapel itself and Oriel Sports Ground, and to the South-West by Cricket Road, then a track which separated the Marsh from the ridge-and-furrow fields which had been under cultivation from at least late medieval times.

However it is unclear precisely what was meant by the term "Marsh" – the topology is gently sloping, so the normal idea of a flat area of mixed water and boggy ground would not seem to hold. A previous Test Pit (TP 23) in Elder Stubbs Allotments came down onto limestone bedrock after 0.33 m, with no evidence of the sort of organic-rich sediments which one would associate with a "marshy" environment

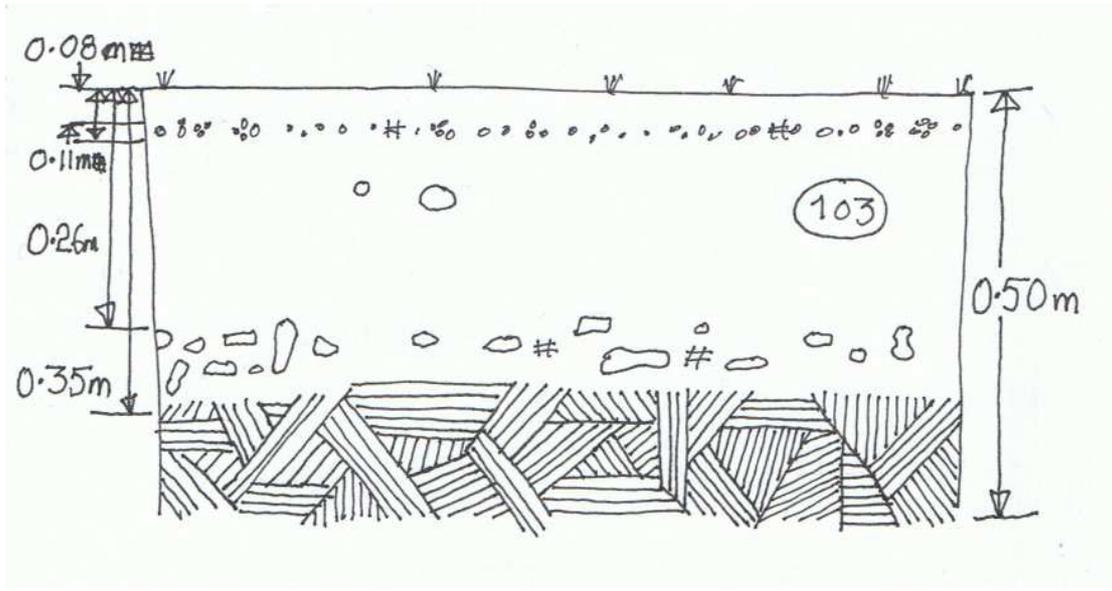
Excavation summary



The test pit was dug to a depth of 0.22m, a further 0.48m in a sondage 1m x 0.5m in the north of the pit, at which depth (0.7m) we reached the natural geology, a blue-grey clay. Trowels, spades and eventually a mini-mattock, were used as the soil became increasingly clayey – this precluded sieving the spoil in all but the topmost layers but the clay was investigated as much as possible.

After removing the turfs, a thin (approx 30mm) layer of pea gravel was encountered, this was taken to be a drainage layer laid when the house was built, before the grass was put down.

Below this, in context (102) and sondage (103) was a disturbed layer containing the detritus left behind during the construction of the house(s) i.e. pieces of brick, some balled-up copper wire, bakelite, nails etc. This was bounded by a clear layer of builder's rubble approx 90mm thick.



Below this was the pre-existing material, a sandy clay, getting more clayey as the depth increased. This was assumed to be "Cowley Marsh"; only 1 find – a sherd of Roman grayware – but a constant background of charcoal. No signs of standing water (darker clay, increased organic content) were noted so the assumption was of pastureland.

Natural geology was reached at approx 0.70m – a blue-gray clay with inclusions of degraded limestone.



The test pit before back-filling.

Results

Spit/ context	Type of deposit	Description	Soil sample	Comments
101 Ground level to 0.08m	Layer	Turf layer removed by hand, then by trowel Friable, dark brown clayey sand with lenses of clay. Root and worm disturbance Inclusions: Charcoal 2%, CBM, few flint pebbles, gryphaea Finds: Glass, charcoal	n/a.	After removing the turfs, there was a noticeable layer of pea-gravel coming through. Using trowels, the top layer was removed down to that layer
102 0.08m to 0.22m	Layer	Firm, dark yellowish brown sandy clay with lenses of clay. Root and worm disturbance. Inclusions: Charcoal up to 20mm 5%, Layer of pea gravel (3mm thick), flint pebbles, river pebbles. Finds: Glass, bone, pottery, shell, Bakelite, lead, nails (Fe), hair slide, metal button.	n/a	Lawn drainage layer (the pea gravel) above levelled soil mixed up with the detritus from the building work.
103 0.22m to 0.5m	Sondage layer	Firm to compact, dark yellowish brown sandy clay with lenses of blue clay, yellow clay. Root and worm disturbance Inclusions: River pebbles 5 - 15mm, 3pc slate 65x25mm 35x20mm 90x20mm, flint pebble 30x10mm, charcoal, mortar? Finds: Cu wire, tiny pieces metal wire, Fe, pot – 3pc, 2pc moulded plaster ?	n/a	General detritus from house-building, including 0.09m thick layer of builder's rubble (modern fragmentary CBM)
104 0.5m to 0.67m	Sondage layer	Firm to compact mid yellowish brown sandy clay Inclusions: Charcoal 1% specks to 10mm, few v. small river pebbles, gryphaea, fine gravel. Finds: 1pc pot (Roman) at bottom of context	n/a	
105 0.67m to 0.70m	Sondage layer	Compact, darker than (104) yellowish clay w. pockets of blue grey clay, Light, almost white fragments concentrated in the grey clay. Inclusions: Gryphaea, fragmented and in larger pieces (approx. 50-100mm across) more than in previous contexts, degraded limestone ?, river pebbles (largest 20mm) <1%. Finds: none	Took approx. 0.1m cube of crumbly mix for examin ation	