

Test Pit 19

Bartlemas Farmhouse, Cowley (BT 4)

Area excavated: 1m x 1m

Date of Excavation: 22nd June

Conditions: Sunny- one very heavy rainstorm at 11am

Excavators: Nathalie Garfunkle, Pam England, Ruth Barber, Joan Coleman, Christopher Franks

Report by: Nathalie Garfunkle

GPS location and height over sea level: SP 5345 0545, 66.5m OD

The Leper hospital of St Bartholomew was founded by Henry I in 1126 to care for 12 lepers. In 1329 responsibility for St. Bartholomew's was transferred to the newly formed college of Oriel. Although the houses (Bartlemas Farmhouse, Bartlemas House and Bartlemas Cottage) are now in private ownership and the chapel belongs to the parish of Cowley St. John, the surrounding land still forms part of the college estate. In 1645 the college let the Farmhouse, the core of which is made up of the hospital chaplain's house, as an alehouse. During the civil war the site was occupied by Parliamentarian forces, who destroyed the hospital and stripped the lead from the roof of the chapel for use as shot. After the war Oriel College rebuilt the hospital and reroofed the chapel. In the nineteenth century the Farmhouse and 15 acres were let as a farm to the grandfather of William Morris, the founder of the Morris Motor Company

Over the course of two days (21st and 22nd June 2011) three test pits were dug in the rear garden of Bartlemas Farmhouse. This complemented a test pit already carried out in Bartlemas Farmhouse's front garden (Test Pit 4_BT1), and a geophysical survey carried out in the area surrounding the Chapel.

Summary of Excavation

The test pit was positioned inside and east of the western boundary ditch, in such a way as to avoid an area that the householder identified as previously having been a rose bed. The test pit was dug to a depth of 0.38m. The natural geology was not reached.

The first 0.2m spit (401) was a highly organic garden soil. The spit was rich in finds. A high number of iron objects were found, although the quantity was less than that found in the test pit located just a few metres west on the other side of the boundary. The high number of iron objects could be waste from the smithy which is known to have been located in

the grounds of Bartlemas Cottage a short distance away. This spit also contained significant amounts of carbonized material, possibly resulting from clearing out the furnace in the smithy. The spit also contained large quantities of still sharp broken glass and worn Georgian/Edwardian pottery. One piece of possible medieval floor tile was uncovered. The smithy and household waste were mixed together, probably as a result of the ground having been turned over many times, when it was first an orchard and then a garden. The layer was a loose mid blackish brown silty sandy, with gritty inclusions in the southern corner.

Layer 402 was very similar to 401. The soil remained mid blackish brown silty sand, although it did also contain small lenses of clay. The types of finds were the same as 401, but were much fewer in number. There was a gradual change from one context to the next and was not visible in the section. It contained a higher proportion (10%) of charcoal than 401. An interesting find was a metal wedge, which would have been used to spilt logs into planks. This could indicate that wood working was taking place on the farm.

At 0.38m below ground surface the soil started to change to light greyish brown clay (50%) silt (50%). Unfortunately we ran out of time and were unable to excavate this layer. Flecks of charcoal (8%) and very abraded pottery were visible in the layer, but no finds were recovered.

Most finds appear to have been post medieval and we are unable to say if there was any earlier occupation as we did not reach any earlier layers. It would be worth returning to complete the pit to the natural.

Results

Spit	Type of deposit	Description	Soil Sample	Drawings
401 1mx1m pit. All soils 100% sieved; dug by hand-spade and trowel	Layer Below turf and topsoil. Above (402) Spit 2	0.05m of turf and topsoil removed by hand. 0.2m deep. Loose Mid blackish brown silty sand. Flattish limestone stones (<1%) Finds: Glass, burnt bone, tile, clay pipe (incl. Pipe bowl), pottery, iron objects and slag, medieval floor tile Garden soil possibly with waste from smithy and domestic refuse		

<p>402 Excavated in sondage 0.25mx0.25m in southern corner</p>	<p>Layer. Below Spit 1</p>	<p>0.18m deep. loose mid blackish brown silty sand, Finds: Charcoal, flint, bone, iron objects, pottery, metal wedge</p> <p>Garden soil containing household and smithy waste</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>403</p>	<p>Layer. Below Spit 2</p>	<p>Not excavated. Light greyish brown clay silt. Charcoal and pottery visible in layer.</p>		

