

EOXP TEST PIT 53

Address: 23 Church Cowley Road

Date of Excavation: 25/09/12

Area excavated: e.g. 1 x 1m

Weather conditions: Dry overcast with occasional sunny spells. Previous day there had been very heavy rain

Excavators: Nathalie Garfinkle, Steve Nicholson, Alan Davis, Swi Yii Lim, Jenni Laird

Report by: Nathalie Garfinkle

GPS location and height above sea-level: SP 5345 0410, 67.5m OD

Introduction

A test pit was dug in the rear garden of 23 Church Cowley Road prior to the unveiling of a blue plaque commemorating it as the childhood home of comedian Ronnie Corbett. The aim was to ascertain what activities had taken place in the area prior to the construction of housing along Church Cowley Road in 1934. The test pit was dug at the bottom of the rear garden in an area which had been previously either a flower bed or vegetable patch and was now covered with longish grass.

Excavation summary

The test pit was dug to an approximate depth of 0.39m. A sondage was dug to a depth of 0.02m in the SW corner to confirm that the natural had been reached. All material excavated from the test pit was sieved to aid retrieval of finds. The first two contexts below the turf (101 & 102) were dug as spits.

The removal of the turf (100) revealed dark blackish brown clayey silt which was spread across the entire surface of the test pit. The turf contained several fragments of pot and bone, 2 shards of glass and iron nails.

(101) was dug as a spit: it contained extensive evidence of burning including charcoal (10%), burnt nails (40+) and other burnt objects. A copper alloy belt buckle, fragments of pot. Glass and CBM were also recovered from this spit. At a depth of approximately 0.15m a large lens of sandy material became apparent. It was concentrated in the north western quadrant of the test pit and appeared to be a dump of material.

The second spit (102) was very similar to (101). The soil was friable dark blackish brown clayey (20%) silt (80%). Finds were comparable to those found in (101) (25 nails and iron objects, glass shards, occasional pottery, bone, charcoal). These finds also exhibited signs of burning. The dump of sandy material identified in (101) was also present in (102), but it became more disturbed and spread into the north eastern quadrant.

At a depth of 0.27m a change became apparent as the natural mid brownish yellow silty clay appeared. A small sondage (103) was dug in the South Western corner to confirm that this was natural.

The natural (103) had been cut by [104]. This was an irregular sub circular cut. It seems likely that the dump of sandy material identified in (101) and (102) may have resulted from the digging of this feature. The cut was 0.11m in depth and measured 0.34m North-South and 0.30m East-West. The fill (105) of [104] was very similar to (101) and (102). It was

dark blackish brown clayey silt. It contained charcoal (5%), burnt tin foil, one iron object and glass.

Interpretation

No evidence was found for activities predating the construction of the houses along Church Cowley Road. It seems likely that the evidence uncovered reflects a bonfire that took place at the bottom of the rear garden. The purpose of the cut [104] is not known but it is likely that it was dug as part of the construction of the bonfire as it was filled with the same material as 101 and 102. It is probable that the evidence represents a single bonfire as no stratigraphy was identified in the burning layers.

Results

Spit	Type of Deposit	Description	Sample	Plan/Section
100 1mx1m pit	Turf	0.03m of turf removed by hand. Dark blackish brown friable clayey silt. Inclusions: rounded stones evenly distributed <1%. Charcoal lumps 5mm-15mm (<3%). Shell (<1%) Finds: Pottery fragments (<1%), bone fragments (<1%), 2 glass shards, Fe nails, Fe lump (fashioned), hexagonal nut, CBM	N/A	N/A
101	Topsoil below 100	Depth 0.20m. Trowelled. Dark blackish brown clayey silt (90%) Inclusions: small rounded stones (<1%). Charcoal (10%). Sandy lens in north 0.5mx0.1m Finds: lots of Fe nails (40+), occasional glass, CBM, metal belt buckle, bone (<1%), pottery fragments (<1%). Evidence of burning (bonfire).	N/A	N/A
102	Spit below 101	Depth 0.04m. trowelled Dark blackish brown clayey silt (80%). Inclusions: stones, charcoal (<10%). Sandy lens Finds: 25 Fe nails, 5 glass sherds, pottery, occasional oyster shell, bone fragments, modern brick, glazed pot, charcoal Evidence of burning (bonfire).	N/A	N/A
103	layer below 102 natural	Mid brownish yellow silty clay. Trowelled. Inclusions: stone and river pebbles (0.01m-0.15m) randomly distributed Finds: none Natural layer	N/A	N/A
104	Cut	Cuts 103. Filled by 105 Irregular sub circular cut. 0.34m N-S and 0.30m E-W. Depth 0.14m Cut made during construction of bonfire.	N/A	N/A
105	Fill	Fill of 104. trowelled Dark blackish brown silty clay (80%). Inclusions: Charcoal (<5%) Finds: Fe object, tin foil, glass fragment, flint	N/A	N/A



Looking north



Looking north with sondage