

## **EOXP Test Pit 67**

Test pit location: 8 Kirby Place, Temple Cowley, Oxford.

GPS Location: SP 5465 0439, 79m OD

Area Excavated: 1m x 1m in small turfed back garden.

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

Conditions: Consistently Sunny and Warm

Excavators: VLO, RM, LQ, SM, HS, RB.

Report by: R Barber and R McLean.

### **Summary of Excavation**

A test pit was dug inside the small turfed back garden of a house registered in 1992 and lived in by the owner since 1999. Historically the 1879 OS map (1<sup>st</sup> edition) identifies the area as pasture and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was a timber yard owned by the Organ family.

The test pit was positioned 2.87m north of the rest of the house, 1.70m from the fence to the West, 1.20m from the fence to the East, and 1.16m to the South of the shed. The test pit was dug to a depth of 0.46m (generally) and 0.57m in the sondage. The natural geology was not reached. Excavated soil was sieved for finds.

The first 0.20m spit (101) was a dry, firm to compact layer under the turf. The soil was a mid, yellowish brown, sandy clay. It included mixed stone (0.01 – 0.09m), angular limestone pieces (0.05 – 0.06m) flint and granite (at less than 10%), charcoal pieces, flecks and flint was also present. Finds were greatly variable in date. They included modern glass, CBM, glazed pottery, roof tile, barbed wire, asbestos and a rubber fragment. Metal work included iron nails, a large iron door hinge and a copper stud. Three pieces of Roman pottery were identified (including Oxford grey ware) and some medieval green and brown glazed pot shards (Brill Boarstal ware). A flint scrapper, bone fragments and shell fossil were also found. The area was matted and heavy trowelled and contained roots and worms. Its boundaries were diffuse to both the turf (100) and lower spit (102).

The second spit (102) was dug to 0.33m after which the pit was half sectioned. The layer was slightly damper than (101) but in terms of colour and composition was the same. It included mixed stone at a lesser percentage than (10), lenses of sand and clay, flint and larger but less frequent charcoal pieces. The sandy lenses gradually became more distinct in the SE corner, and the soil to the North end of the pit was noted to be dryer with more prominent clay lenses.

Finds included slag, mortar, brick, modern blue and white glazed pottery and other domestic debris (barber wire, glass, plastic screwdriver handle and modern plastic). Degraded iron nails were also present which were larger (0.06 – 0.07), and had possible square heads compared to the nails in (101). This layer was matted and heavy trowelled and contained roots. Its boundaries were diffuse to upper and lower spits, (101 and 103).

The third spit (103) was a half pit section in the Eastern side of the trench. It was therefore 0.5m in diameter and dug to an overall depth of 0.40m. The layer was dry and compact and the soil was a dark, orangey brown, sandy (20%), silty (20%), clay (60%). The inclusions consisted of charcoal pieces, granite and flint fragments as before, but to a lesser degree (less than 5%). However it also included decayed wood, mortar and concrete fragments. Finds included fragments of glass, pieces of china, pot sherds, brick, bone fragments, 1 animal tooth, iron pieces and a piece of flat wood veneered on one side ( 0.07m x 0.02m).

(104) was a fill within (103) in the South east corner of the pit. In previous spits it had appeared as 'lenses' before becoming more apparent as a 'fill'. The soil was a moist, loose, mid yellow sandy (90%), clay (10%). Inclusions (x1 piece of flint, x1 piece of granite x1 river washed pebble) were minimal. In situ were modern, substantial building materials, (white brick – 0.12 x 0.16 visible in SW section, red brick 0.10m x 0.06m visible in S section, grey brick 0.10m x 0.13m visible in S section, green plastic tape in situ in SE corner). The deposit extended unevenly to a varying width of between

0.13 in the South corner and 0.04 at south west edge of the South facing half section. A context sheet was not completed for a cut of the fill (104) as it appeared as an even 'tip' spread. If we were to describe it however, the 'Tip' appeared as a gradual, smooth, roughly concave, variable sloping layer in the North facing section.

(105) was a sondage 0.50m x 0.50m square dug in the NE corner of the test pit, to a depth of 0.57m. The layer was damp and compact and the soil was a dark brownish grey, gritty/silty (60%), clay (40%). Inclusions consisted of charcoal pieces, river washed pebbles (small angular, less than 10%) and flint sherds (less than 10%). Finds included FE nails, glass, mixed pot sherds, bone, wood and mixed brick fragments. This layer was dug quickly with a mattock and spade and its boundary was clear to (103). The natural was not reached.

### **Interpretation**

The test pit was placed in this garden with awareness/acknowledgment that the area had previously been a timber yard, and prior to that, pasture. The mixed variety and date (Roman through to modern) of finds from (101) suggest that this was a substantially redeposited layer, lain following the building of the current house. The finds appear to confirm what is historically known of human activity in this area. (102) appeared to contain relatively modern debris and (103) produced evidence (e.g. pieces of veneered wood) that may link it to its time as a timber yard. The uneven fill (104, within 103), of yellow sand with few finds, but much modern building material in situ, suggest this may have been a builders dump of material. The presentation of (105), which appeared and smelt more organic, may mean we had reached evidence of the areas previous pastoral use.



**Looking south**





**Looking south**



**Looking south**





**Looking south**

