

## **EOXP TEST PIT 23**

### **Elder Stubbs Allotments, RESTORE grounds**

**Date of Excavation:** 30-31 August 2011

**Area excavated:** 1 x 1m

**Weather conditions:** Dry, overcast

**Excavators:** 30 August: Rob, Gordon and Leon, Tim Lee, Jane Harrison, Paula Levick; 31 August: Jeremy, Rob, Henry and Pat, TL, JH, PL

**Report by:** the Team

**GPS location and height above sea-level:** SP 5378 0450, 58m OD

#### Introduction

The test pit was dug north of the active allotments used by RESTORE, in an area that had been under grass for some time, on the edge of the old orchard. Old maps suggest that before the land became orchard and allotments it may have been used for pasture.

The culverted Boundary Brook runs just to the north-west suggesting this may have been damp ground at certain times of the year. However, the test pit showed no signs of old marshy/peaty layers and in fact limestone bedrock was reached surprisingly quickly, about a third of a metre down from the surface. This sequence of orchard soil, sandy subsoil and bedrock contrasts sharply with a large test pit being excavated about 300m to the NNW (TP\_22, not yet complete, work suspended over the winter), where natural is yet to be reached at a metre from the surface, and a very different sequence is being revealed. The area of TP\_23 may have had top-soil removed but the sequence in TP\_22, although different, also does not reveal any old water-logged layers.

#### **Excavation summary**



Test pit 23 was dug to a depth of 0.24m, with a further c 0.1m in a sondage 0.4 x 0.4m in the SE corner. The natural limestone geology was reached at c 0.33m depth. All deposits were completely sieved/ sorted by the team.

The first spit (101) was dug with spade and trowel to a depth of 0.1m. This layer was a very humic homogenous garden-type soil. However, the lack of modern finds suggested the soil had been undisturbed for some time, perhaps while the area has been an orchard. Its rich organic character also suggested that the area may previously have been in agricultural use, perhaps as pasture or hay meadow

The second spit (102) was transition zone between the orchard/agricultural soils and the sandy clay (103) below (above bedrock). There were very few finds. Layer (103) was sandy clay that became increasingly clay with depth. At its upper boundary with (102) were small, relatively thin spreads of darker material within which were found most of the finds for (103). These spreads in the SW corner and N corners were siltier and contained much more charcoal and may have been the bottom of severely truncated and disturbed pits.

The layer in the 0.4m square sondage in the SE corner was very clay, contained no finds and after less than 0.1m came down onto limestone bedrock.

## Results

Spit	Type of deposit	Description	Soil sample	Comments
101 1.m x 1m	Layer, under thin turf	Turf removed by hand. Friable mid brown slightly sandy silt; very organic. 0.1m deep <b>Inclusions:</b> v occasional small angular stones; occasional charcoal flecks; v occasional flint fragments, some burnt; inc charcoal with depth. <b>Finds:</b> c 2% overall; occasional pottery, some white glazed some possibly pre-modern; clay pipe fragments; fuel ash slag.		Few finds: suggests this area had not been an allotment. <b>Homogenous orchard soil with very few modern finds.</b>  <b>101: facing NW</b>
102	Layer: below (101)	Friable mid blackish brown sandy silt; less organic than the layer above. 0.1m deep (0.2m from surface). <b>Inclusions:</b> more charcoal c 2%; occasional flint; occasional river pebbles max size 0.1m; limestone fragments; increasing charcoal with depth – some larger pieces. <b>Finds:</b> c 2% overall; fragmentary pottery; clay pipe fragments; occasional flint and iron (Fe) fragments.	1	Transition layer between organic soil above and sandy clay above natural. <b>Less organic soil with some evidence for activity producing charcoal.</b>  <b>Charcoal spread on surface of (103): truncated pit? Facing NW</b>
103 After 0.04m dug in sondage 0.4m x 0.4m in SE corner	Layer: below (102)	Compact light-mid yellowish-orangey brown slightly sandy clay. Increasingly clay with depth. Dug to 0.33m in sondage where very shelly limestone bedrock revealed. <b>Inclusions:</b> 3% charcoal; 3% fragmentary limestone with occasional larger angular pieces; v occasional flint. <b>Finds:</b> fewer with depth, sondage almost sterile, finds concentrated in charcoal spreads. V occasional fragmentary glass, small sherds abraded pottery, fragmentary iron (Fe); occasional burnt shell and limestone.		Two thin spreads of more charcoal-rich and silty darker material in SW and NW (see plan). <b>Clay layer above bedrock: on upper surface possibly the remains of truncated and disturbed pits.</b>

