

## EOXP TEST PIT 20

Warneford Hospital Grounds, Headington (by permission of NHS Trust)

Date of Excavation: 8 July 2011

Area excavated: 1 x 1m

Weather conditions: Overcast, mild, wet/sunny periods

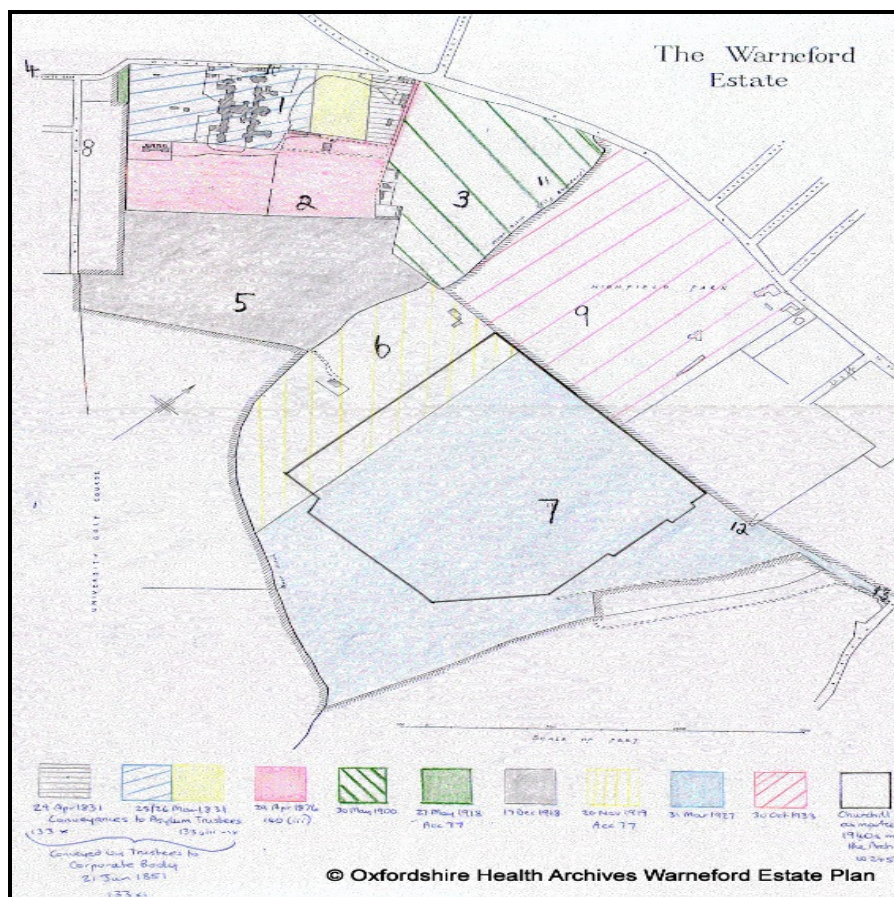
Excavators: Sue Cooke, Tim Lee, Steve Nicholson

Report by: Sue Cooke

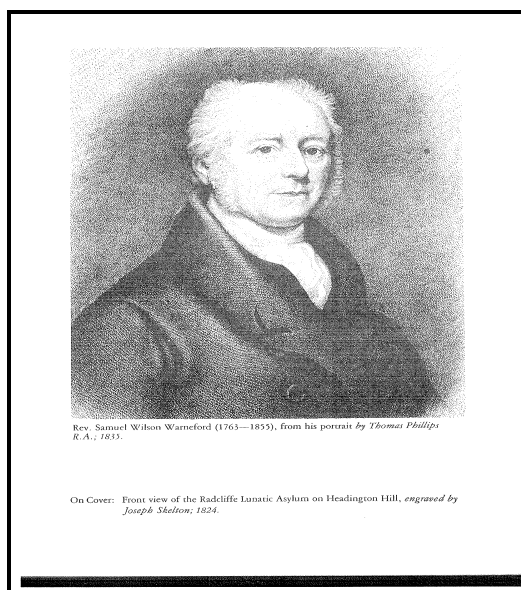
GPS location and height above sea-level: SP 4538 2059, 93mOD

The evidence from this test pit, dug in Warneford Hospital's grounds, added interesting aspects to the story of this part of East Oxford. The hospital was built in 1831 to house mentally disturbed patients. The old map below shows how the site was used. This location near to Oxford would have been attractive to those wanting to provide local facilities for the care, even cure, of the insane.

Unfortunately the area of the test pit appeared to have had the top soil stripped from it in recent times, perhaps when the cricket ground was created. Roman pottery in the sandy sub-soil hinted at the possibility of activity of that period in the area. Trial trenches on Warneford Meadow to the south had uncovered lengths of Romano-British ditches. The possible medieval pottery was interesting as so little evidence has been found in the area for medieval Headington.



**Rev. Samuel Wilson Warneford (1763 – 1855), a portrait by Thomas Phillips.**



**Excavation summary**

The test pit was dug to a depth of 0.18m, with a further 0.22m + in a sondage 0.5m x 0.5m in the SE corner. The natural geology was reached at 0.5m depth.

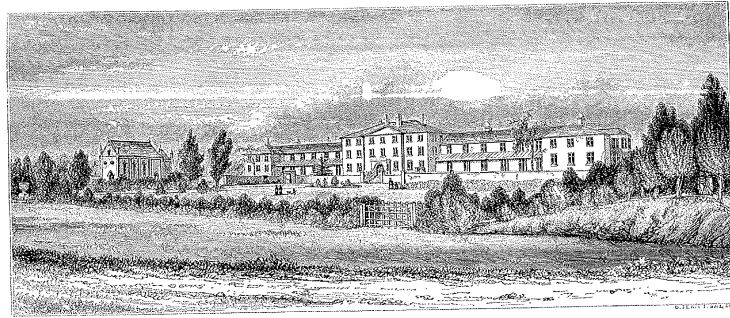
The first spit (101) was dug with spade and trowel to a depth of 0.13m and was damp, loose yellowish brown silty sand (50-60%) with reddish flecks; relatively little organic material with 1-2% charcoal, 1% small round pebbles and pottery fragments (less than 1%). This suggested the area had either had the top-soil stripped off or not been used for agriculture or as a garden area for a long time; perhaps it had originally been part of the orchard just to the south.

The second spit (102) was dug to depth of 0.18m. This was nearly all sand, a yellow brown colour with some stones and charcoal. This spit however did contain more finds, hinting at what might have been, pottery (possibly medieval and roman), bone, a small iron nail, the broken stem of a clay pipe, and less than 1% shell and glass.

The sondage was cut down another 0.22m to give a total depth of 0.5m. We found natural sand (103) with 'leopard spots' of colour (compare TP\_5 Ark-T). The very small amount of pottery found in (102) was interesting as some of it was possibly medieval and roman.

The area had probably had the topsoil stripped off, perhaps when the cricket pitch was created and the land levelled for that. The available maps of the site show the land's various uses with some fairly open farmland. It would be useful to complete excavation on other areas of the site at some point.

The NHS archive in Cowley, holds much information collected over the years, including maps, building plans, minutes, and deeds.






RADCLIFFE ASYLUM ON HEADINGTON HILL.



THE WARNFORD HOSPITAL.  
FRONT VIEW.

## Results

Context	Type of deposit	Description	Comments
101 1.m x 1m pit	Layer	Thin layer of turf and topsoil removed by hand to 0.13m depth. Damp but loose yellowish silty sand (60%) with reddish flecks. <b>Inclusions:</b> 1-2% charcoal flecks; very few rounded pebbles max 0.02m <sup>2</sup> ; flecks of limestone. Diffuse boundaries: gradually becomes sandier. <b>Finds:</b> fragments of pottery (less than 1%: mottled brown and pale grey).	 <p>101: looking North</p>

<p><b>102</b></p>	<p>Layer below (101)</p>	<p>Friable-loose damp yellowish brown slightly silty sand more charcoal than (101); 0.05m deep to 0.18m below surface.  <b>Inclusions:</b> v occasional small angular stones; charcoal flecks 3%.  <b>Finds:</b> fragmentary bone; pottery sherds; small quantity glass sherds; iron (Fe) including square-profile nail; clay pipe stem fragment; 1 shell.</p>	
<p><b>103</b>  <b>Dug in sondage 0.5m x 0.5m</b></p>	<p>Layer below (102)</p>	<p>Excavated in 0.5m square to depth of 0.5m in SE corner. Sterile yellow sand with vertical reddish brown root channels appearing plan in surface as 'leopard' spots.  <b>No further finds</b></p>	

Sue Cooke 8<sup>th</sup> August 2011



**Post-excavation: looking west**