

EOXP Test Pit 6 (AKT 2)
Ark T Centre – Inner Garden

Area Excavated: 1m x 1.5m in lawn

Date of Excavation: 19/20 March 2011

Conditions: Dry and sunny

Excavators: Jonathan Acton, Anne Bartlett, Greg and Stella Collier, Pam and Philip England, Nathalie Garfinkle, Gill and Leigh Mellor, Caroline Morrell, Steve Nicholson, Ruth Barber

Report by: The excavation team

GPS location and height over sea level: SP5404 0393; 73.0m OD

Summary of Excavation

A test pit was dug to a depth of 1.0m. The natural geology was reached at 0.32m (72.65m above OD). On removing the turf, a thin, uneven spread of pea gravel could be seen immediately below the turfline, mixed with the soil from Spit 1 (context 201). The soil was a well-sorted, mid-brown, medium grain sandy silt (examined with a hand lens and compared to the soils recording chart), with a small number of angular limestone, and rounded quartzite inclusions. Finds included modern blue and pink glazed pottery and other domestic debris (hinge, safety pin, bronze furniture stud, glass sherds, including part of a bottle - possibly from Hook Norton Brewery) and fragments of building material (square profiled iron nails, slate and ceramic tile). A small number of probable Roman and medieval pottery sherds and small pieces of angular fire-cracked flint were also recovered. The flint is of interest as it does not occur naturally in this area, and might have been imported and heated in preparation for crushing into a temper for use in prehistoric pottery making.

At approximately 0.32m (72.65m above OD) a clear interface between 201 and the underlying context could be seen (Spit 2, context 202). The remainder of context 201 was carefully trowelled back following the contours of the underlying surface. Flecks of charcoal, coal and coke, and a small number of pottery sherds were recovered from the interface between 201 and 202, but no further finds were recovered. Context 202 was 0.2m thick and comprised a soft, fine-grained orange and brown mottled sand (examined with a hand lens and compared to the soils recording chart), the brown marks were later identified as staining from roots which had extended downwards into the sand, giving a spotted appearance in plan (Figure 1) and striped appearance in section (Figure 2).



Figure 1



Figure 2

It was thought that 202 was possibly a natural deposit, and after removing a 10cm spit without any finds being recovered a 0.3m wide sondage was dug in the east of the test pit which was taken down to a depth of 1.0 m (71.97m above OD).

At 0.65m thin lenses of light brownish grey clay could be seen in section within the sand and the deposit became more malleable, although the boundary between the contexts was unclear. This was assigned a new context number (203). No finds were recovered.

Interpretation

It was apparent that the upper surface of context 202 and any overlying contexts had been machine-stripped, which had evenly truncated the roots. This must have occurred at some time before or during the construction of the church. Historic OS maps show the area as a field, although a church member recalls that the land had reverted to scrub prior to construction of the buildings. Context 201 was most probably topsoil, either brought in, or more probably moved from somewhere else in the vicinity of the building, and the original ground surface, and possibly some of the natural (202) had been lost.

The same church member also recalls the garden originally having a shingle surface and this might be the origin of the pea gravel at the interface of the turf and 201, although it could equally have been laid below the turf to act as drainage.

Spit/Context No.	Spit	Type of Deposit	Description	Soil Sample	Drawings
1/201	1m x 1.5m test pit; dug by hand; sieved	Layer 0.2m thick	Topsoil - well-sorted, medium grain, mid-brown sandy silt, with pea gravel in upper deposit. Finds: Modern, medieval and Roman pottery sherds, modern glass, building material charcoal, coke, coal		Sect: 1 and 2
2/202 (sondage)	Dug by hand for first 10cm then spade; sieved	Layer 0.46m thick (max)	Natural - soft, fine-grained orange sand, with brown organic staining from roots Finds: None		Sect: 1 and 2; Plan 1
3/203 (sondage)	Spade	Layer thickness unknown dug to 0.25m	Natural - soft, fine-grained orange sand, with brown organic staining from roots and thin lenses of light grey-brown clay Finds: None		Sect: 1 and 2