

TEST PIT 3

Boundary Brook Nature Park, Oxford Urban Wildlife Group

Date of Excavation: 7 November 2010 (work suspended because of heavy frost) and 6 July 2011

Area excavated: 1 x 1m

Weather conditions: very cold and wet (Nov.); changeable, warm, with sunny spells (July)

Excavators: Mary Lale, Neil Stevenson, Mike Newman. (Nov: Anthony Pritchard, Laura Stafford, Joan Stewart and Fay Pendell.)

Report by: Mary Lale, Jane Harrison.

GPS location and height above sea-level: SP 5325 0478; 60.0m OD



Summary of Excavation

Test pits 2 and 3 were located in an oval clearing in the nature park c. 30m NW-SE and 20m SW-NE. Test pit 3 was in the NW of the clearing 3.5m from a central tree. Small trees are scattered across the clearing which is under rough grass and surrounded by thick brambly undergrowth with other small trees including willows and birch. The clearing had not been dug for some years but had been worked as allotments until c. 10 years previously. In all the historic Ordnance Survey maps the area is part of a field system.

Slight earthworks in the clearing suggested the paths between and boundaries of the old allotment plots. These earthworks were plotted using the plane table in July 2011, while the test-pits were being completed. Although most of the low narrow banks and shallow ditches could be related to allotment layout, there were indications of earlier features which might be linked to the previous agricultural use. The ground slopes gently down from the highest point in the Nature Park at the reserve boundary to the NW.

The test pit was dug to a depth of 0.34m with a c.0.2m² sondage in the SE corner excavated 0.25m to confirm that natural clay had been reached. TP 3 had topsoil of a similar depth reaching clay at 0.3m below ground surface. The topsoil was similar to TP2 but with less evidence for burning.

Context	Description	Comments
100	Turf layer: removed by hand. Depth 0.05m	
101	Topsoil: loosened by spade, removed by trowel, all material sieved. Firm dark, blackish brown clayey silt with worm activity and heavy root disturbance from nearby tree; 0.2m deep. Inclusions: occasional small charcoal flecks; v occasional flint; rounded, limestone pebbles c. 0.03m and limestone flecks c. 5%; occasional fragments of fossil shell. Finds: all less than 1%. Fragments of	Organic garden soil with a thin spread of abraded domestic material. Finds reduce with depth.

	<p>animal bone; sherds of modern pottery, brick fragments; v occasional ferrous objects; glass fragments and v occasional slag.</p>	 <p>Looking south</p>
<p>102</p>	<p>Topsoil: as 101 to depth of 0.23m below surface. Damp and increasingly clay, with occasional lenses of clay. Inclusions: 3% rounded pebbles max size 0.03m; 1% charcoal fragments and flecks, more than 101.</p>	<p>Same as 101, increasingly clay with more charcoal and very few finds.</p>
<p>103 (dug in July 2011)</p>	<p>Lower topsoil: damp heavy friable-compact silty clay. Heavily disturbed by roots, dug by hand and all material sieved. To depth of 0.34m above natural greenish grey clay with occasional yellow clay lenses and fossil shell. Inclusions: charcoal flecks and fragments c. 3%; limestone flecks 1%; v occasional gravel and occasional angular flint fragments. Finds: occasional v abraded pottery sherds; CBM 1%; one fragment slag; occasional glass and shell; piece of clay pipe; ferrous nail head and washer.</p>	<p>Increasingly clayey with depth but well-worked and organic topsoil without subsoil; gradually merges into natural clay.</p>  <p>Looking south-east</p>