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ABSTRACT

Excavation of eleven trenches at the old Butterkist factory, Dagenham revealed eight phases of natural and archaeological activity dating from the Pleistocene to the

present day. The probable archaeological evidence revealed during excavation, however remains undateable.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The Passmore Edwards Museum undertook a twenty-nine day excavation at the recently demolished Butterkist Factory on Blackbourne Road, Dagenham (see Figure 1 for the site location plan), for Unicoin (New Homes) Plc who kindly provided the funding. Eleven trenches were excavated and positioned within the foundations of housing plots to minimise building disruption (see Figure 2 for the location of trenches). The trenches were excavated by Hymac, under archaeological supervision to a maximum depth of 0.80m. Trenches 2, 5 and 6 also had sondages which gave the trenches where they occurred a maximum depth of 1.10m. The site was negotiated and directed by Ken McGowan and supervised by Chris Jarrett with an additional work force of Mark Bell, Alice Hodgins, Paula McCarrol, Joe Partridge and Chris Tripp.

There were two methods of excavation. Firstly the removal of material by machine to a maximum depth of 1.40m. Secondly, the sections and the base of the trenches were cleaned by trowel and shovel in order to reveal the existence of features, which were subsequently excavated and recorded. Information taken from the sections did not always allow the contexts complete shape and dimensions to be recorded and this is indicated within the text.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS: TRENCH 1

Trench Matrix: Trench 1

Group 1.1	45

Group 1.2

|
48
|

Context

(48) - layer, pale grey sand clay silt.

7.91m - 7.59m

This layer probably represents a market garden soil associated with landscape use previous to Butterkist but in Trench 3 due to human disturbance it appears in a contaminated form above Butterkist associated features.

Section: 3

B/W:5.32-39

C/S:4.12-18 5.6,7,13-15

Plan :3

Phase: VII

Group 1.3

|
49
|

Context

(49) - layer, pale grey brown sand silt.

7.72m - 7.46m

This layer probably represents an agricultural soil but included nothing to date it.

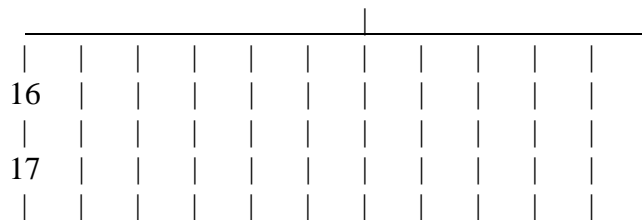
Section: 3

B/W:5.32-29

C/S:4.12-18 5.6,7,13-15

Phase: V

Group 1.4



Contexts

(16) - fill, grey brown sand silt

7.54m - 7.23m

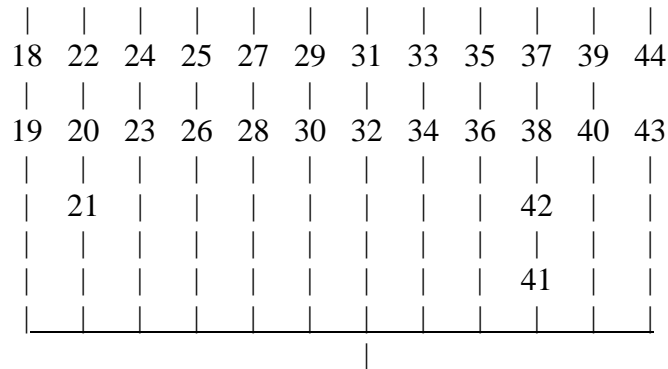
(17) - cut, linear ditch with concave sides into flat base

7.54m - 7.23m

This cut and fill represent a north-south running linear ditch whose probable function was drainage but whose date is uncertain.

Section: 3
 B/W:1.20, 22
 C/S:-
 Plan: 17
 Phase: V

Group 1.5



Contexts

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| (18) - fill, orange brown sand silt. | 7.29m - 7.22m |
| (19) - cut, linear running E - W, shallow sloping sides into concave bottom. | 7.29m - 7.22m |
| (22) - fill, orange brown sand clay. | 7.28m - 7.11m |
| (20) - fill, grey brown silt sand. | 7.28m - 7.01m |
| (21) - cut, sub-rectangular with steeply sloping sides into concave base | 7.28m - 7.01m |
| (24) - fill, dark grey brown clay sand. | 7.26m - 7.23m |
| (23) - cut, probable animal burrow. | 7.26m - 7.23m |
| (25) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.23m - 7.11m |
| (26) - cut, sub rectangular with sloping sides into concave base. | 7.23m - 7.11m |
| (27) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.63m - 7.21m |
| (28) - cut, sub-rectangular with sloping sides into concave base. | 7.63m - 7.21m |
| (29) - fill, orange brown silt sand. | 7.25m - 7.08m |
| (30) - cut, sub circular with sloping sides into concave base. | 7.25m - 7.08m |
| (31) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.23m - 7.05m |
| (32) - cut, sub-rounded steeply sloping sides into flat base. | 7.23m - 7.05m |
| (33) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.24m - 7.04m. |
| (34) - cut, sub-rounded with steeply sloping sides into flat base. | 7.24m - 7.04m |
| (35) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.20m - 7.08m |
| (36) - cut, sub rectangular comprised of two concave depressions the northern of which was deeper. | 7.20m - 7.08m |
| (37) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.21m - 7.01m |
| (38) - cut, sub-rectangular sloping sides into shallow concave base. | 7.21m - 7.01m |
| (42) - fill, light grey clay sand with yellow and orange mottles. | 7.25m - 7.14m |
| (41) - cut, sub-rectangular shallow with sloping sides into concave base. | 7.25m - 7.14m |
| (39) - fill, orange brown silt clay. | 7.24m - 7.14m |

- (40) - cut, sub-rectangular with sloping sides into concave base. 7.24m - 7.14m
- (44) - fill, light grey clay sand with yellow orange mottles. 7.26m - 7.19m
- (43) - cut, sub-rectangular and shallow with sloping sides into concave base. 7.26m - 7.19m

This group of cuts may provide evidence of structural activity as it is predominantly a mix of possible post holes and ditches. The trench contains five possible post holes which may form a structure although it is difficult to determine given the limited access, six possible pits and two ditches. Ditch (19), which could be a boundary or structural element to a building, is truncated by ditch (17) whose function may be drainage or another boundary. The lack of dating evidence in the form of finds means that not only the period of activity cannot be determined but also that it is possible that these features were naturally formed. Alternatively lack of material culture may reflect an aceramic social group or that activities within the structure did not require the use of artefacts.

B/W:1.24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35; 4.35, 36; 5.2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 26, 31.
 C/S:4.4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11; 3.25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37.
 Section: 3
 Plan: 19, 21, 23, 26, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 41, 43.
 Phase: V

Group 1.6

|
50
|

- (50) - layer, red brown clay silt. 7.62m - 7.28m

This group consisted of a brickearth probably deposited in the post-glacial period by fluvial or aeolian methods. A fluvial method of deposition involves a body of water transporting material; sand, silt, and clay, which will be deposited when the amount of material becomes too heavy for the water to continue to hold it in suspension, or when the velocity of the body of water is negated. Aeolian or wind blown deposits occur when, in dry conditions, high pressure weather cells build up around ice sheets and winds pick up sand, silt and clay particles from glacial erosion and transport them over wide areas, perhaps sorting, and finally depositing them when the wind velocity falls.

Section: 1
 B/W:1.14, 19.
 C/S:4.12, 17.
 Phase: III

Group 1.7

|
15

- (15) - layer, orange sand gravel. 7.41m - 7.29m

This is a layer of Thames river gravel, known as the Taplow terrace, that was deposited by fluvial action when the Thames had a different position than it has at present and probably occurred in an unknown glacial period.

Section: 1

B/W: All shots in Group 1.5.

C/S: All shots in Group 1.5.

Phase: I

GROUP DISCUSSION: TRENCH 2

Group 2.1

1

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2

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3

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9

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10

Group 2.2

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6

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7

	8
Group 2.3	11
	12
Group 2.4	13
Group 2.5	4
	5
Group 2.6	14
Group 2.7	15
Group 2.1	1
	2
	3
	9
	10

Context

(1) - fill, mid brown sandy silt	7.40m - 6.66m
(2) - cut, sides gently then steeply sloping, bottom slopes from south down to north.	7.40m - 6.66m
(3) - layer, grey brown sandy silt.	7.50m - 7.27m
(9) - layer, orange brown clay sand.	7.41m - 7.11m
(10) - layer, black crushed asphalt.	7.50m - 7.23m

This group represents a cut of uncertain purpose (2). However its fill (1) contained frequent modern building materials, such as brick and clinker, which suggests an association with recent construction on site, probably contemporary with the Butterkist building. Layer (3) is probably a make-up layer for the building of the factory. Layer (9) consisted of mixed clay sand gravel and modern concrete. Layer (10) contained crushed asphalt which covers a large part of the site, it was also visible in Trench 4). Both layers are modern dumps associated with the building of the factory.

Section: 2

B/W:1.5, 10; 4.14, 15; 6.13, 15, 26, 34.

C/S:3.10, 11; 4.26, 27, 30, 35.

Plan: 2

Phase: VII

Group 2.2

|
6
|
7
|
8
|

Contexts

(6) - wall, bricks.

7.24m - 7.14m

(7) - fill, light grey sandy powdered concrete.

7.22m - 6.95m

(8) - cut, sides gently then steeply sloping, bottom flat.

7.30m - 6.95m

This group represents cut (8) which is filled with silty sand and concrete which was then levelled off and supports the base of the wall (6). These features are probably contemporary with the Butterkist factory.

Section: 2

B/W:4.14, 16.

C/S:3.10, 11.

Plan:-

Phase: VII

Group 2.3

|
11
|
12
|

Context

(11) - layer, light brown sandy silt.

7.30m - 7.15m

(12) - layer, crushed red brick, black asphalt and mortar.

7.30m - 7.21m

This group represents two modern demolition dump layers.

Section: 2

B/W:4.14, 15.

C/S:3.10, 11.

Phase: VI

Group 2.4

|
13
|

Context

(13) - layer, white grey gravel.

7.26m - 7.00m

This group represents a single sand and gravel layer which was probably a natural deposit and part of the sequence of Thames River Gravel (possibly derived from layer (15)).

Section: 2

B/W:4.14, 15.

C/S:3.10, 11.

Phase: III

Group 2.5

|
4
|
5
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(4) - fill, light grey brown sandy silt.

7.37m - 6.94m

(5) - cut, sloping sides into slightly rounded base.

7.37m - 6.94m

This group of fill and cut probably represent a frost crack, a naturally formed periglacial feature.

Section: 2

B/W:6.10, 12.

C/S:4.24, 25.

Plan: 5

Phase: II

Group 2.6

|
14
|

Contexts

(14) - layer, orange sand with patches of gravel.

7.33m - 6.96m

This group represents another layer of Thames River Gravel deposit.

Section: 2

B/W:4.14, 15.

C/S:3.10, 11.

Phase: I

Group 2.7

|
15

Contexts

(15) - layer, orange sandy gravel.

7.18m - 7.04m

The layer forming this group is also visible in trench one and is a layer of Thames River Gravel, probably the same as the Taplow terrace, deposited by fluvial action during the course of the shifting of the position of the river during a past Ice Age.

Section: 2

B/W:6.26, 34.

C/S:4.30, 35.

Phase: I

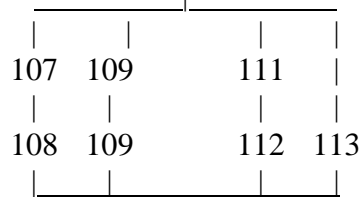
GROUP DISCUSSION: TRENCH 3

Trench Matrix: Trench 3

Group 3.1

48

Group 3.2



Group 3.3

50

Group 3.4

114

Group 3.1

48

Context

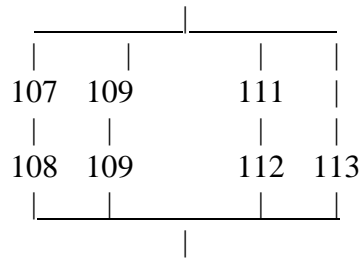
(48) - layer, mid grey sand clay silt.

7.91m - 7.43

Group 3.1 represents a layer of disturbed soil, probably originating from the market garden activity.

Section: 3
 B/W:1.14, 19.
 C/S:4.12, 17.
 Phase: VII

Group 3.2



Context

(107) - fill, mid brown sand silt.	7.56m - 7.13m
(108) - cut, sides steeply sloping into flat base.	7.56m - 7.13m
(109) - fill, mid brown sand silt.	7.51m - 7.44m
(110) - cut, rounded sides into concave base.	7.51m - 7.44m
(111) - fill, mid brown sand silt.	7.49m - 7.10m
(112) - cut, very steep sides, base unexcavated.	7.49m - 7.10m
(113) - layer, orange sand grey silt.	7.50m - 7.33m

This group represents three cuts (108), (110) and (112) all of which are modern probably associated with the Butterkist building. They were all recorded from the north facing section of Trench 3 which was excavated to its final depth solely by machine. This trench was not explored more fully due to lack of time and archaeological priority. Extensive modern disturbance was noted. Layer (113) is probably a dump layer of the same period.

Section: 3
 B/W:-
 C/S:5.8, 9, 10, 11, 12.
 Plans:-
 Phase: VII

Group 3.2

Context

Group 3.4

|
50

(50) - layer, red brown clay silt.

7.54m - 7.12m

This group of brickearth (50) was probably deposited in the post glacial period by fluvial or aeolian methods. Layer (50) is also visible in trench 1 and 4. For further discussion of aeolian and fluvial methods of deposition see Trench 1 Group discussion 1.7 of layer (50).

Section: 3

B/W:-

C/S:5.8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Phase: III

Group 3.3

|
114

Context

(114) - layer, orange silt sand.

7.35m - 7.10m

This group represents a layer of Thames river gravel, forming the Taplow terrace, deposited by fluvial action.

Section: 3

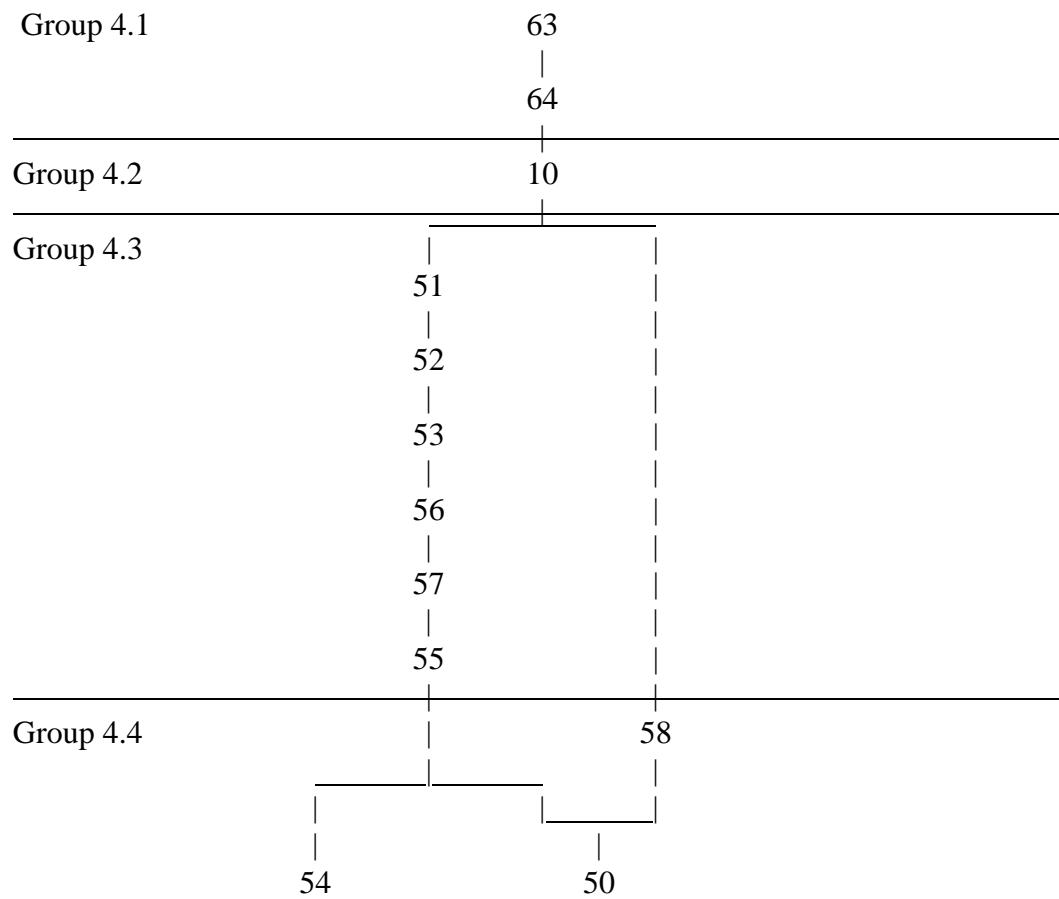
B/W:-

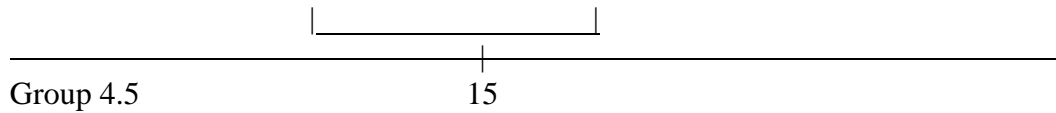
C/S:5.8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Phase: I

GROUP DISCUSSION: TRENCH 4

Trench Matrix: Trench 4





Group 4.5

15

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group 4.1

63

|

64

|

Contexts

(63) - fill, mid grey sand silt.

7.36m unknown

(64) - cut, sub rectangular.

7.36m unknown

This group represents a very modern pier trench sunk after the Butterkist factory was built. This trench remained unexcavated after identification.

Section:-

B/W:-

C/S:-

Phase VIII

Group 4.2

Context

|

10

|

(10) - layer, black asphalt.

7.41m - 7.14m

This group represents a modern black asphalt dump layer which covers a large area of the site (also present in trenches 1 and 2).

Section: 4

B/W:4.8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

C/S:3.6, 7, 8, 9.

Phase: VII

Group 4.3

|

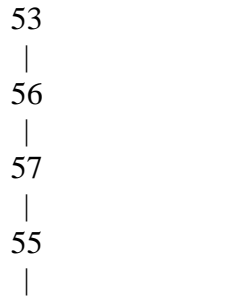
51

|

52

|

|

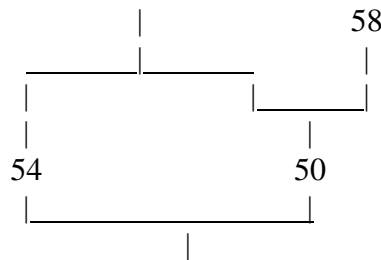


Contexts

51 - fill, dark mid grey sand clay silt.	7.31m - 7.16m
52 - fill, pale grey sand clay silt.	7.26m - 7.08m
53 - fill, pale grey brown sand clay silt.	7.28m - 6.93m
56 - fill, yellow orange brown sand clay silt.	6.98m - 6.66m
57 - fill, orange brown sand clay silt.	6.98m - 6.66m
55 - cut, top linear, sides gently sloping into flat base.	6.98m - 6.66m

This group represents cut number (55) and its five different fills (51), (52), (53), (56), and (57), a linear ditch running North - South across trench 4, whose probable function was as a field boundary, and was seen on a 1887 O.S. map. Fill (57) is the primary fill of cut (55) which would have accumulated over the first winter that the trench was open after its digging as a result of weather erosion. Fill (56) is a secondary fill which again accumulated as a result of natural silting up over a period of time. Fills (53), (52), and (51) are probably tertiary fills distinct in that they were probably formed as a result of human action.

Section: 4
 B/W:4.2, 13.
 C/S:3.2, 9.
 Plan: 55
 Phase: VI
 Group 4.4



Contexts

58 - layer, grey brown silt	7.46m - 7.10m
54 - layer, grey sand clay silt.	7.31m - 6.96m
50 - layer, red brown clay silt.	7.23m - 7.06m

This group represents three layers of probable natural, water borne deposition. Layers (58), (54) and (50) are a grey brown silt, a grey clay silt and red brown clay respectively. They are ball variations on a brickearth probably deposited in the post glacial period by fluvial or aeolian methods.(See Trench 1 Group discussion 1.7 of layer (50) for further explanation of aeolian and fluvial methods of deposition.) Layer (50) also visible in trench 1 and 3.

Section: 4
B/W:4.2, 13.
C/S:3.2, 9.
Phase: III

Group 4.5

|
15
|

Context

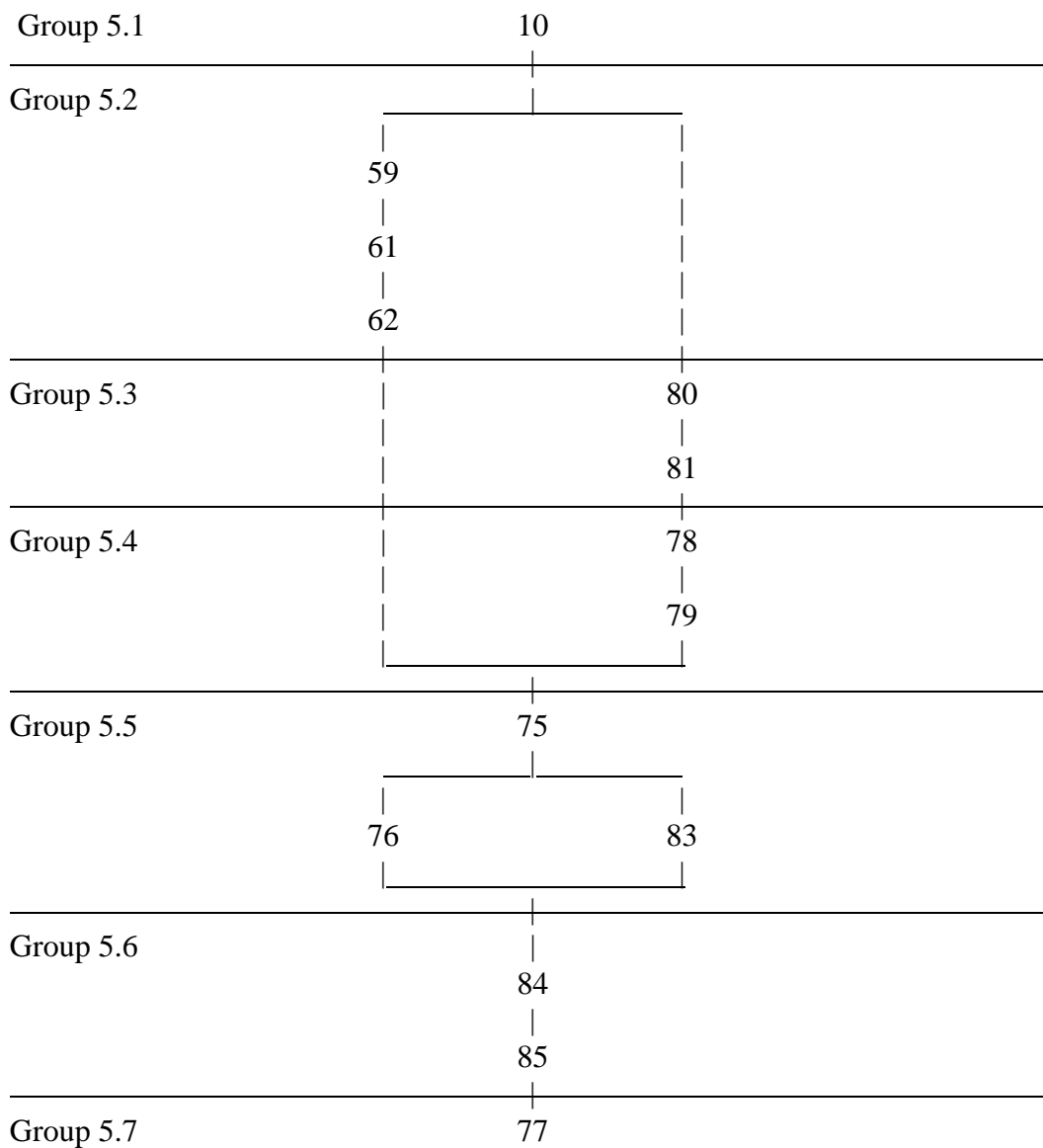
15 - layer, orange sand gravel

7.46m - 6.91m

Layer (15), also visible in trench 1 is a layer of Thames river gravel (known as the Taplow terrace) that was deposited by fluvial action during the shifting of the position of the river.

Section: 4
B/W:4.2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.
C/S:3.2, 3, 4, 5.
Phase: I

GROUP DISCUSSION: TRENCH 5



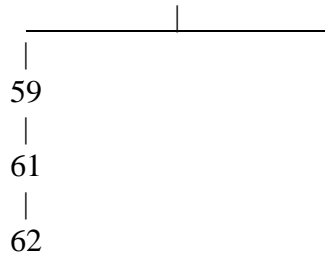
GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group 5.1	10	
Context		
(10) - layer, black asphalt layer.		7.49m - 7.47m

Group 5.1 represents a modern crushed asphalt dump layer which covers a large area of the site and was also visible in trenches 1 and 2.

Section: 5
 B/W:4.26, 27, 28.
 C/S:3.19, 20.
 Phase: VII

Group 5.2



Contexts

(59) - wooden stake.	7.00m - 6.90m
(61) - fill, light brown sand silt.	7.00m - 6.90m
(62) - cut, oval and shallow, sloping sides into shallow base.	7.00m 6.90m

This group represents a modern cut of uncertain date and purpose which has, at some later date, had a stake forced or hammered through it. The stake may not necessarily be related in either time or function to the earlier cut (62).

Section:-
 B/W:4.17, 22.
 C/S:3.12, 16.
 Plan: 62
 Phase: VII

Group 5.3



Contexts

(80) - fill, brown sand silt.	7.43m - 7.03m
(81) - cut, very steep sides into flat base.	7.43m - 7.03m

This group represents a cut with sand silt fill. As it was only visible in section and there were no finds present its function and more precise dating could not be ascertained.

Section: 5
 B/W:4.26, 27, 28.
 C/S:3.19, 20.

Phase: V

Group 5.4



Contexts

(78) - fill, mid brown silt sand.	7.44m	7.04m
(79) - cut, north side steeply sloping, south edge truncated by (81), flat base.	7.44m	7.04m

This group represents another fill and cut apparently earlier in date than the previous group but with little evidence of date or purpose. Only visible in section.

Section: 5

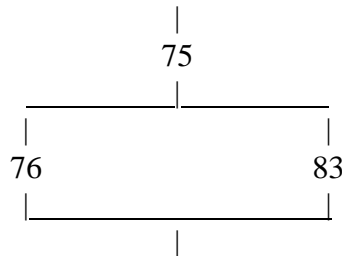
B/W:4.26, 27, 28.

C/S:3.19, 20.

Phase: V

Group 5.5

Group 5.5



Contexts

(75) - orange brown sand silt.	7.47m - 7.02m
(83) - orange sand silt.	7.28m - 7.04m

This group represents two natural layers, one of brickearth and one predominantly sand, both of which were deposited by fluvial or aeolian methods in the post glacial period. For further explanation of aeolian and fluvial methods of deposition see Trench 1 Group Discussion 1.7 of layer (50).

Section: 5

B/W:4.26, 27, 28.

C/S:3.19, 20.

Phase: III

Group 5.6



84

|

85

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Context

(84) - fill, white orange silt sand. 7.03m - 6.37m

(85) - cut, sloping into abrupt sides, base not visible. 7.03m - 6.37m

This group represents an "ice wedge" and is associated with a peri-glacial environment. In prolonged temperatures of -6 degrees centigrade, the frozen ground may contract and fissures, often polygonal in shape open up, water may then seep into the fissures, freeze, and the increased volume of the frozen water widen the cracks. The profile of these ice wedges are often tapered in shape. In a following milder climate, the ice melted and the wedges became "fossilised" by infilling with different material to the deposit the ice wedge intruded into (Evans. 1975).

Section: 5 of sondage.

B/W:4.23, 24, 25.

C/S:3.17, 18.

Phase: II

Group 5.7

|

77

Contexts

(77) - layer, orange sand. 7.00m - 6.33m

This group represents a natural layer deposited by fluvial or aeolian methods.

Section: 5 of sondage.

B/W:4.23, 24, 25.

C/S:3.17, 18.

Phase: I