JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

KELLOGG COLLEGE, 62-64 BANBURY ROAD, OXFORD.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

(NGR SP 51170 07511)

On behalf of

The University of Oxford

OCTOBER 2015

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Summary

John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological watching brief and archaeological evaluation on behalf of The University of Oxford in advance of a proposed planning application for the erection of a "Hub" building at land to the rear of Kellogg College, 62-64 Banbury Road, Oxford.

The Oxford City Archaeological Officer has advised that an archaeological evaluation of the site is undertaken as part of the consideration of the application.

The watching brief was carried out on the 27th August 2015, and the evaluation on the 3rd September 2015. The watching brief involved the monitoring of four small, shallow hand excavated test pits. The evaluation comprised a single trench, measuring 7.6m in length, and targeted a test pit excavated in 2005. A Watching Brief carried out during the excavation of the 2005 test pit recovered human remains and Bronze Age pottery from the spoil. A feature identified in section was interpreted as a grave, although unconfirmed.

The evaluation identified a single undated feature containing the fragmented remains of a small mammal. Two narrow, shallow features possibly represented plough scars were recorded. No other significant archaeological deposits or features were identified during the watching brief or evaluation.

The evaluation successfully located the 2005 Test Pit, although did not identify the feature interpreted as a grave. In addition a probable geological feature was investigated. A layer representing a garden soil dated to the late 19th-early 20th century was also identified.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Site Location and Geology *(Fig.1)*

The site is located at Kellogg College, 62-64 Banbury Road, Oxford (NGR SP 51170 07511). Currently the land is a garden with utility buildings, gravel paths and parking areas. The underlying geology is Summertown-Radley Second Terrace Gravels. The site lies on relatively level ground at *c*. 63m AOD.

1.2 Planning Background

The University of Oxford is considering submitting a planning application for the construction of a "Hub" building on land to the rear of 62-64 Banbury Road, Oxford. The Oxford City Archaeological Officer has advised that an archaeological evaluation of the site is undertaken as part of the consideration of the application. A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was produced, and approved by the Oxford City Archaeological Officer, which outlined the method by which the archaeological work would be carried out in order to identify whether any significant archaeological remains exist on the proposed site; in particular to investigate a test pit excavated in 2005 which recovered human remains and identified a possible grave.

1.3 Archaeological Background

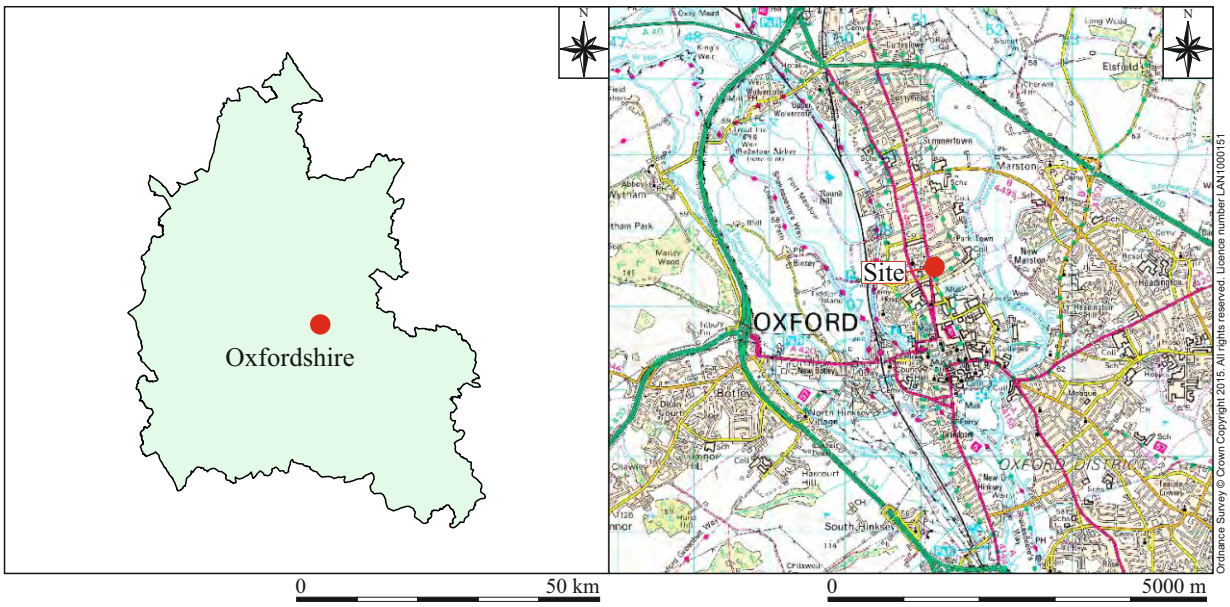
Evidence from aerial photographs and archaeological excavations indicates the presence of an extensive prehistoric ritual and agricultural landscape across this part of the Oxford gravel terrace, involving Middle Neolithic – Early Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments, Iron Age /Roman agricultural field systems and subsequent Saxon rural settlement. An extensive cropmark complex recorded in the University Parks to the south incorporates a possible Neolithic/Bronze Age linear barrow cemetery and later Iron Age/Roman agricultural enclosures. A Neolithic/Bronze Age henge monument and three Bronze Age ring ditches belonging to this complex have recently been excavated at Queen Elizabeth House, St Giles and at the Radcliffe Infirmary site.

During the excavation of geotechnical test pit in 2005 human remains and Bronze Age pottery was recovered. The remains were suggested to be in a crouched position. A feature identified in the section of the test pit was interpreted as a grave, although unconfirmed. The test pit was located within the footprint of the development under consideration (JMHS 2005).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- to establish the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within those areas affected



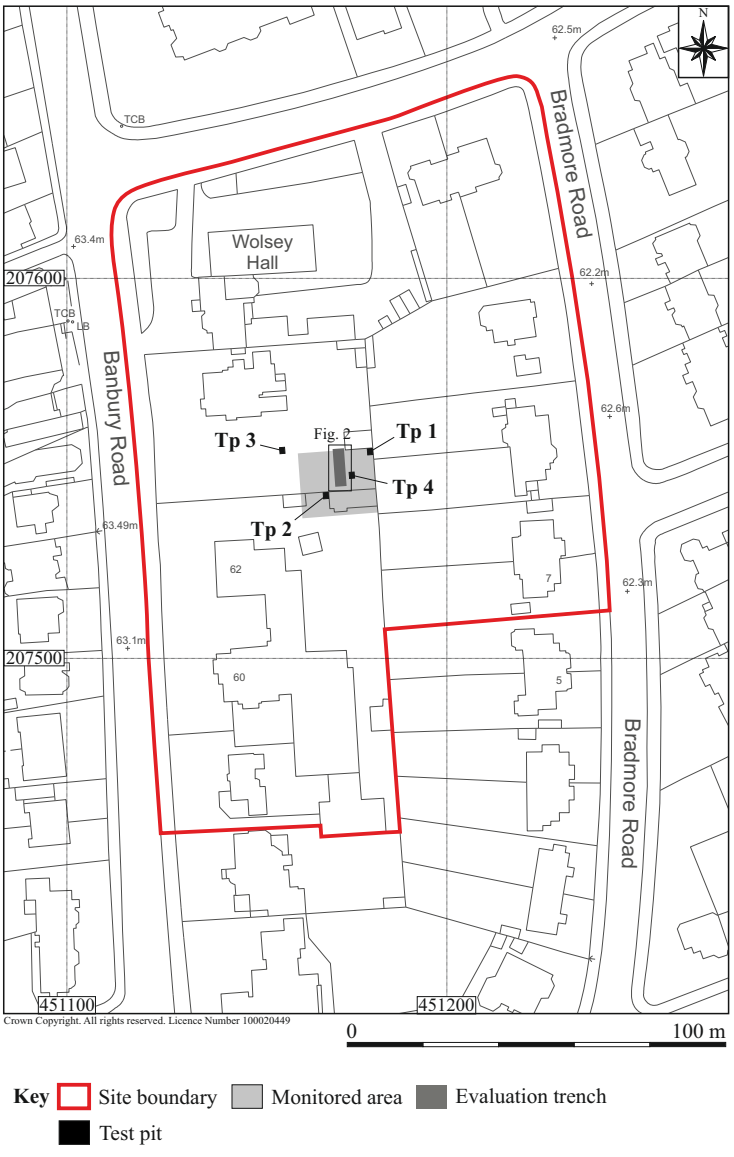


Figure 1: Site location

- to produce an evaluation report presenting a digest of information on the character and significance of the deposits under review and to form the basis of any proposals for appropriate further action

- the evaluation should also aim to define any research priorities that may be relevant should further field investigation be required

3 STRATEGY

3.1 Research Design

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation (JMHS 2015) agreed with the Oxford City Archaeological Officer.

3.2 Methodology

A trenching sample equivalent to one 7.6m x 1.6m trench (Trench 1) was excavated within the footprint of the proposed development and targeted on the location of Test Pit 2 excavated in 2005. The northern end of the trench was shortened by 2.4m to avoid underground services identified with a cable location device.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Trench 1 (Figure 2)

An upper geological horizon (1/04) was encountered at a general depth of 0.7m (62.27m AOD) and consisted of compact, mid yellow brown silty sand with 15% gravel inclusions, between 0.1m and 0.2m thick. This deposit had an irregular contact with the lower geological deposit (1/03. Fig. 3, Sect 1.2) and was interpreted as a deposit of loess. The lower geological horizon (1/03) comprised compact, mid yellow/brown poorly sorted gravels in a sandy matrix, and represented the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace Gravels.

Towards the northern end of the trench the geological horizon (1/03) was cut by a shallow, sub-rectangular pit (1/08). This measured 0.9m in width (N-S), 0.94m (E-W) and was 0.28m in depth. The eastern extent of this feature was beyond the limit of the excavation. The sides of the pit were regular and generally 45°, smoothly breaking to a flattish base (Fig. 3, Sect 1.1). The pit was filled by moderately compact/friable light brown sandy silt (1/07) with less than 1% gravels. The pit contained the fragmentary remains of a small mammal of the general size of a large dog, sheep or goat, including fragments of a scapula (Sharon Clough, Archaeological Burials Company, *PersCom*).

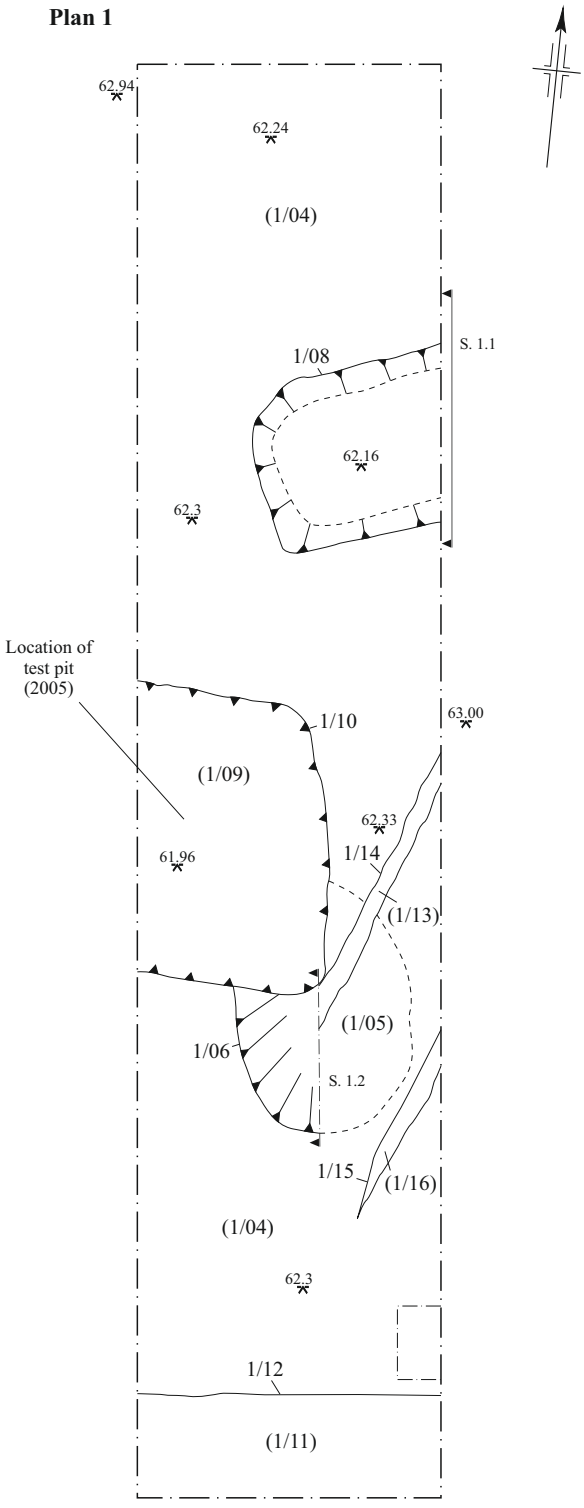


Figure 2: Trench 1

Trench 1. View to N.

Pit 1/08. View to east.

Geological feature (1/06) and the test pit excavated in 2005 (1/10). View to south.

Towards the southern end of the trench an ill-defined ovoid feature (1/06) was identified cutting into the geological horizon (1/03). This measured 1.26m (N-S) x

0.94m (E-W), and was 0.2m in depth. This feature had an irregular profile, with the south side being shallow (20°) and the north side much steeper (50°). The base sloped gently to the north. The feature was filled with firm, mid orange brown sandy silt (1/05) with rare small stones. The northeast quarter of this feature had been truncated by the test pit (1/10) excavated in 2005. This feature appeared to be geological in origin.

Two narrow, parallel linear features (1/14 and 1/15), both aligned northeast-southwest, were identified. Both were just *c*. 0.2m wide and *c*. 0.2m deep, with a U-shaped profile. The northernmost (1/14) cut the upper fill (1/05) of pit 1/08. They were both filled (1/13, 1/16 respectively) with similar material – soft, mid grey brown sandy silt, with no notable inclusions. The features were characteristic of plough scars.

At the southern end of the trench a linear feature (1/12) aligned east-west was partially revealed. This was 0.54m wide, although the southern extent was beyond the limit of the excavation. It was filled with a loose/friable dark grey brown sandy silt (1/11) containing frequent 20th century material (brick and tile, china and corroded ferrous objects) which was not retained. The feature was not investigated in any great detail, although it was established the feature's north side was vertical. The function of the feature was not established, although probably represents a service trench.

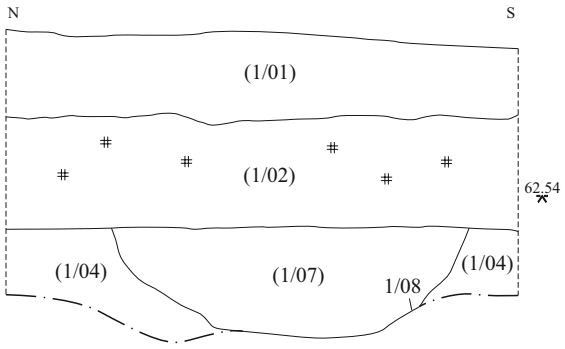
The archaeological horizon (1/04) was overlain by a layer (1/02) visible in all sections, with a consistent thickness of 0.3m. The layer was a dark grey brown, sandy silt with frequent stones and charcoal inclusions. Decayed roots and root matter was also noted. The deposit contained frequent 20th century finds, including brick and tile, glass, and corroded nails. This deposit was almost identical to the upper fill (1/11) of Pit 1/10 (2015 Test Pit). The service trench 1/12 clearly cut through this deposit and was backfilled in reverse order, although the relationship was not clearly visible due to the nature of the deposit. This deposit appeared to represent a worked garden soil of early 20th century date.

The test pit excavated in 2005 (TP 2) cut through deposit 1/02. The test pit (1/10) measured 1.6m (N-S) and 1m (E-W), although the western extent of the test pit was beyond the limits of excavation. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.35m, deep enough to reveal the geological deposits 1/03 and 1/04, and to establish the absence of features in its sections (apart from 1/06 above). The feature revealed in the 2005 watching brief (TP 2, 05) was located in the west section, and as such was not revealed in this stage of work. The test pit was filled with moderately compact, mixed deposit (1/09), obviously representing the backfilling of the test pit with the deposits described above shortly after excavation. This deposit was specifically searched for human remains although none were noted.

Overlay the backfill of 1/10 and 1/02 was the current gravel surface (1/01) and its make up layers. The surface was 0.22m thick.

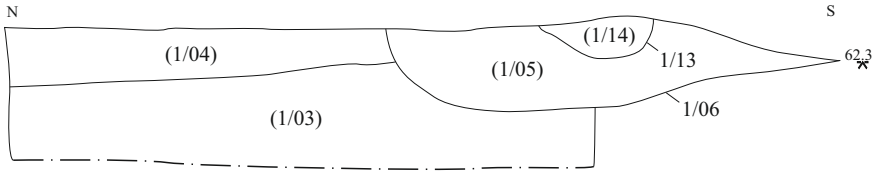
Trench 1

Section 1.1



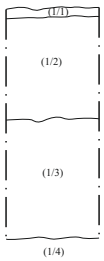
Trench 1

Section 1.2



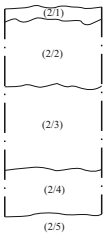
Test pit 1

Section 1.1



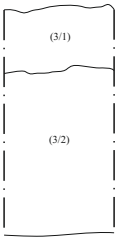
Test pit 2

Section 2.1



Test pit 3

Section 3.1



Test pit 4

Section 4.1

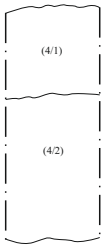


Figure 3: Sections and test pits

4.2 Watching Brief (Figures 1 and 3)

4.2.1 Introduction

A total of four test pits were hand excavated. Test Pits 1 and 2 were excavated to establish depth of disturbance by the construction of two 19th century outbuildings. Test Pit 3 was excavated to retrieve a soil sample for a Californian Bearing Ratio test (CBR). Test Pit 4 was excavated to carry out a soakage test. The average dimensions of the test pits was 0.25m x 0.25m, with Test Pit 4 being 0.4m x 0.4m. The average depth of the test pits was 0.62m.

4.2.2 Test Pit 1

Test Pit One measured 0.25m x 0.25m and was excavated to a depth of 0.75m. The test pit was located in the corner formed by a garden wall and outbuilding. The lowest deposit (1/04) comprised loose, mid grey sandy loam, and represented a 19th century garden soil (depth not established). This was overlain by a deposit of fragmented brick (1/03, 0.33m deep) associated with the construction of the outbuilding and wall. Overlaying the brick rubble was a 0.37m deep deposit of loose, mid grey loam (1/02) representing garden soils disturbed during construction of the outbuilding. This was overlain by 0.05m of loose pea grit forming the current surface (1/01).

4.2.3 Test Pit 2

Test Pit Two measured 0.4m x 0.4m and was excavated to a depth of 0.59m. The test pit was located in the corner formed by a garden wall and outbuilding. The lowest deposit identified (2/05) comprised moderately tenacious, mid brown silt with occasional flint and probably representing a deposit of loess. This was overlain by 0.13m of grey loam (2/04) representing a 19th century garden soil. The garden soil was overlain by 0.23m of brick rubble associated with the construction of the wall and outbuilding. Two layers of loose gravel (2/1, 2/2), 0.23m in depth, overlaid the brick rubble and formed the current surface.

4.2.4 Test Pit 3

Test Pit Three measured 0.4m x 0.2m and was excavated to a depth of 0.51m. The test pit was located on a grassed area towards the north east of the development area. The lowest deposit identified was a loose, mid brown loam (3/02, 0.48m thick) representing a 19th or 20th century garden soil. This was overlain by 0.3m of the current turf and topsoil (3/1).

4.2.5 Test Pit 4

Test Pit Four measured 0.25m x 0.25m and was excavated to a depth of 0.63m. The test pit was located central to the development area and excavated to carry out a soakage test. The lowest deposit identified (4/03) comprised moderately compact, mid reddish brown silt with 5% mixed gravels, possibly representing a loess deposit. This was overlain by 0.39m of loose, mid grey loam (4/02) representing a garden soil. This was overlain by the current gravel surface (4/01, 0.24m thick).

5 FINDS

Finds dating to the 19th / early 20th century were noted from the garden soils (1/4, 2/4, 3/02 and 4/2) during monitoring of Test Pits 1-4, and features/layers 1/12, 1/10 and 1/02 in the evaluation, although not retained.

A small assemblage of fragmentary bone recovered from Pit 1/08 was retained for analysis by an osteo-archaeologist, although subsequently identified as belonging to a small mammal.

6 DISCUSSION

The evaluation established what appeared to be a deposit of loess overlying the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace Gravels at a generally consistent height of *c.* 62.3m AOD. Similar deposits, probably representing the loess, were identified in the base of Test Pits 2 and 4 at a similar datum, indicating a generally flat geological horizon.

The sub-rectangular pit (1/08) produced only fragmented remains of an unidentifiable small mammal. The pit appeared sub-rectangular in plan (although extended to the east beyond the limit of excavation) and certainly represented a cut feature. It was filled with a well settled, pale brown silt, suggesting it had not been deposited relatively recently. Animal burials, or so called "special deposits", are known from the Neolithic and early Bronze Age and seem to increase in later prehistory (OA, 2009. pp.283). Dogs are perhaps the most represented in the Iron Age. The size of the remains would fit with them being from a large dog, sheep or goat (or an animal of that general size), although one cannot speculate further. Given its proximity to University Parks, where parch marks of Bronze Age ring ditches and Iron Age-Roman settlements have been identified, it could be tentatively speculated that this feature may represent such a "special deposit".

Only the eastern extent of the test pit excavated in 2005 (T/P 2) was located. The feature interpreted as a grave, and where parts of a pair of human femurs, part of a human pelvis and a small fragment of Beaker pottery were interpreted as coming from (although recovered from the spoil) was not revealed. Whilst the evaluation did not recover further evidence of human remains the results of the 2005 watching brief are still significant. The remainder of the burial (upper torso) is almost certainly still within the ground. The 19th-20th century garden soil is likely to have truncated any surviving archaeological horizon to at least some extent and the possibility the human remains originated from this deposit should be considered.

7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Oxford Archaeology, 2009, *Thames Through Time, Late Prehistory 1500 BC-AD 50*.

APPENDIX A

Context Table

Trench 1								
Summary- Length: 7.6m. Average depth: 0.6m. Aligned: N-S.								
Cntxt	**Type**	**Description**	**Length**	**Width**	**Depth**	**Finds**	**Interpretation**	**Date**
1/01	Layer	Gravel			0.2m	None	Modern surface	20th C
1/02	Layer	Subsoil			0.28m	None	Garden soil	19th C
1/03	Layer	Silty sand				-	Loess?	-
1/04	Layer	Gravel				-	Terrace Gravels	-
1/05	Fill	Fill of 1/06				None	Fill	?
1/06	Cut	Filled by 1/07				-	Pit	?
1/07	Fill	Fill of 1/05				Animal Bone	Backfill	?
1/08	Cut	Filled by 1/07				-	Pit?	?
1/09	Fill	Fill of 1/10				Animal bone, CBM	Backfill	2005
1/10	Cut	Filled by 1/09				-	2005 Test Pit	2005
1/11	Fill	Fill of 1/12				Pot, CBM	Backfill	19th/20th C
1/12	Cut	Filled by 1/11				-	Service trench	19th/20th C
1/13	Cut	Filled by 1/14				-	Plough scare?	?
1/14	Fill	Fill of 1/13				None	Backfill	?
1/15	Cut	Filled by 1/16				-	Plough scare	?
1/16	Fill	Fill of 1/15				None	Backfill	?

Test Pit 1								
Summary- Dimensions 0.25m x 0.25m. Depth: 0.75m.								
Cntxt	**Type**	**Description**	**Length**	**Width**	**Depth**	**Finds**	**Interpretation**	**Date**
1/1	Layer	Gravel			0.05m	None	Modern surface	20th C
1/2	Layer	Layer			0.37m	None	Garden soil	19th C
1/3	Layer	Brick Rubble			0.33m	-	Construction layer	19th C
1/4	Layer	Gravel				-	Garden soil?	19th C?

Test Pit 2								
Summary- Dimensions 0.4m x 0.4m. Depth: 0.59m.								
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Length**	**Width**	**Depth**	**Finds**	**Interpretation**	**Date**
2/1	Layer	Gravel			0.05m	None	Modern surface	20th C
2/2	Layer	Gravel			0.18m	None	Make up for 1/01	20th C
2/3	Layer	Brick Rubble			0.23m	-	Lower geology	19th C
2/4	Layer	Loam			0.13m	-	Garden soil?	19th C
2/5	Layer	Sandy silt				None	Loess?	?

Test Pit 3								
Summary- Dimensions 0.4m x 0.2m. Depth: 0.51m.								
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Length**	**Width**	**Depth**	**Finds**	**Interpretation**	**Date**
3/1	Layer	Loam			0.3m	None	Turf & Topsoil	21st C
3/2	Layer	Loam			0.48m	None	Garden soil	20th C

Test Pit 4								
Summary- Dimensions 0.25m x 0.25m. Depth: 0.63m.								
Context	**Type**	**Description**	**Length**	**Width**	**Depth**	**Finds**	**Interpretation**	**Date**
4/1	Layer	Gravel			0.05m	None	Modern surface	20th C
4/2	Layer	Gravel			0.18m	None	Garden soil	19th C
4/3	Layer	Sandy silt			0.23m	-	Loess?	-