

## TEST PIT EOX TP27

North side of Long Lane, Littlemore Oxford OX4 3TN

**Area excavated:** 1m x 1m in lawn

**Date of excavation:** 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011

**Conditions:** Humid am and sunny intervals in afternoons, light rain showers overnight

**Excavators:** Julia Brocklesby, Emily Buma, Tara Love, Alan Delvis, Bob Whiteman. Neighbours: Claire, Dave, Amy and Alex Goodspeed, Pauline, Lauren and Niamh Rutter  
Littlemore Local History Society: Pat Good, Ann Moggridge, Kiera

**Report by:** The Team and JB

**GPS location and Height over sea level:** SP54103 03244; 75.09m OD

### Summary of Excavation



#### **View of test pit 27 from the north**

The white building is the back of no 27, access to the gardens is alongside it, and the path continues across to nos 29 (pink) and 31 (not shown). Shallows steps lead the paved path on the left up the half metre to the lawn

N

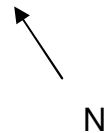
After deturfing, the garden topsoil (Context 101) was excavated by hand trowelling and sieving to a depth of 15-21 cms across the whole pit. It was loose, dry, mid greyish brown sandy silt containing 2% well sorted medium (6mm – 20mm) mixed shaped limestones and pebbles evenly spread, containing small charcoal flecks, fine roots, worms and 2 insect larvae

Finds (see photo below) included 1 small body sherd of Roman or possibly pre Roman pottery, 1 small oyster shell, clear and coloured glass fragments, including a deep blue fragment with moulded lettering. As well as small pieces of building material, ceramics included 4 pieces of pipeclay - 2 stem segments, and 2 possible bowl fragments, one finely modelled into a goldfish and one with a moulded foliage band, and a number of small sherds of patterned, coloured, glazed post medieval tableware. 20 or so small pieces of animal bone were found, and small pieces of brick/tile.

The base of Context 101 was uneven across the trench, the lawn level is similar to that of the other terrace back gardens, and levelling may have occurred after the circa 1880 build on land used as market gardens and orchards on both sides of Long Lane prior to the construction of the eastern by-pass road in 1957. Two tree throws, Context 102 in the NE corner, and Context 103 in the SE corner, cut into the ploughsoil layer (Context 104) below the topsoil layer (Context 101).



**A selection of Finds from the topsoil Context 101**



### **Tree throws Contexts 102 and 103 appearing as cuts into the ploughsoil layer Context 104**

Context 104 is visible as the paler irregular diagonal in the photo, smears and a lens of yellow sand spread across the surface. The pit was then half sectioned, and the southern half further excavated, leaving Contexts 102 (north east tree throw) and the rest of the surface of the ploughsoil layer (Context 104) unexcavated.

On the following day, the southern half only of the test pit was then excavated, having been given a different context number 105 for the top of the ploughsoil layer (Context 104 in the unexcavated northern half of the pit). The tree throw (context 103) in the SE corner showed up clearly, its surface looking the same as the topsoil layer (Context 101), although more ashy (up to 20%) down to its full 55cm depth, with 5% charcoal flecks and lumps up to 2cms. There had not been a clear boundary with the topsoil layer, and it was cut into and did not extend below the ploughsoil/garden soil layer (Context 105). Its very loose dry contents may well have filled an animal burrow. 1 iron nail, and a piece of glazed white pottery, and small pieces of brick and tile were present throughout.

This sloping ploughsoil layer (Context 105) was a loose dry, mid greyish brown silt, with 2% moderately sorted limestone, and part brick and tile ceramic building material inclusions up to half bricks in size towards the eastern side of the pit. The exposed section across the pit showed this apparent dumping, which would have levelled the surface of the context. Also present were occasional (1%) charcoal flecks and smears of mortar and rotted limestone. It was hand trowelled and sieved, the finds included a clay pipe stem fragment, small pieces of glazed decorated pottery, probably tableware, and broken pieces of a white porcelain small ornament or doll. Several small metal objects and nails were spread through the on average 40cms thick layer, which was on a slight (7cms) sw-se downward incline.



**The glazed brown sherd with a slightly textured surface may be of medieval date**

Below the ploughsoil/garden soil an unevenly spread colour change at a depth of on average 55cms below the turfline, and a loose, mid yellowish brown fine silty sand layer varying from 17cms to 20 cms thick was identified as Context 106, still a ploughsoil or garden soil but more compacted than the garden soil (Context 105) above it, although the change was not sharp. The layer included rounded and angular limestones 3mm to 6mm, small rounded gravel pebbles up to 3mm and charcoal flecks were present up to 5%, and several trays of pottery sherds, animal bone, abraded building material with a green painted surface, small pieces of broken clear glass, nails, and a corroded metal clockwork mechanism. Traces of the animal burrow or tree throw (Context 103) were present in the SE corner contained several worm holes and fine roots.

Below this layer a clear change to a dry mid yellowish brown sandy silt (Context 107) was hand trowelled and sieved, it was of uneven thickness, bowl shaped between 18 and 38 cms across the trench, and included



manganese spotting, two 10cm x 12 cm rounded limestones and 2% 2cm x 2 cm rounded limestones. Rotted limestone smears, and 5% poorly sorted angular and rounded quartzite pebbles were present across the context which was up to 25cm thick at the limit of our excavation across the full half section. Finds included animal bone, a clay pipe base and bowl, a few pieces of clear glass, small metal objects; the finds were clustered in the SE corner of the context, very similar to those from the layer above, there may have been some penetration of this lower sandy layer by the animal burrow in the SE corner (Context 103)

Time constraints indicated that a sondage 50 cms wide in the centre of the limit of excavation of context 107 would be needed to try and get down to the natural geology, a probe of 30 cms met with no resistance. Natural bedrock, a brownish sand was 118 cms below the pit surface, approximately two spade spits below the surface of context 107.



**The section between Context 104 and the base of the excavation of Context 105**

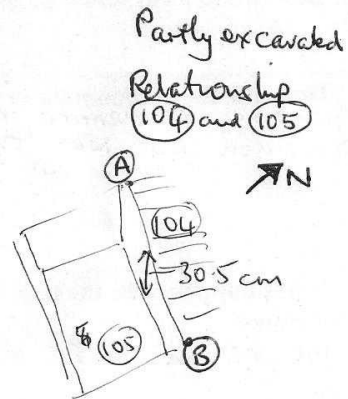
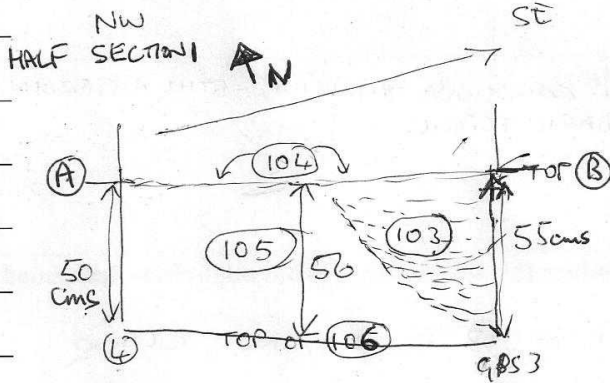
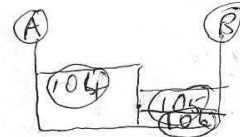
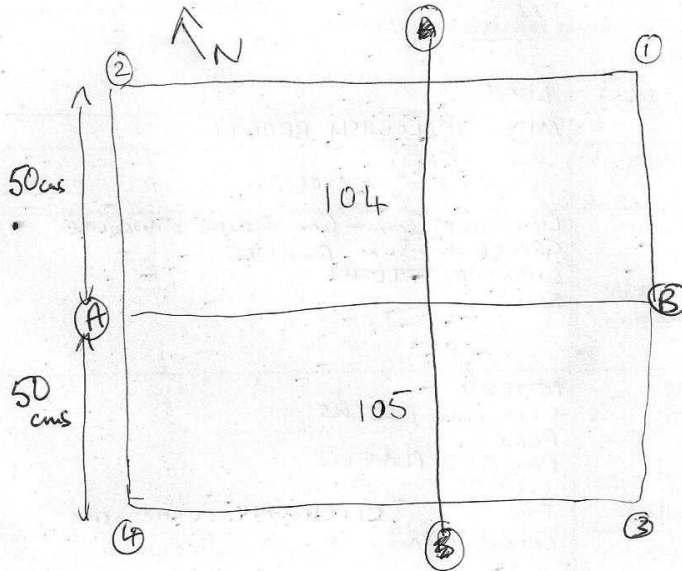
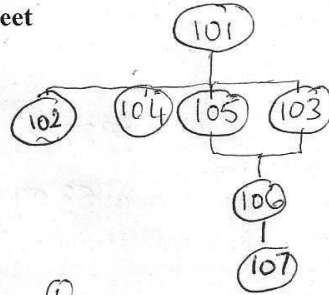
East Oxford Archaeology Project: Test-pit Recording Sheet

Test-pit Code: EOXT27 Context/spit no:

Sketch Plan or Section: PLAN 4

Put in North and measured dimensions

Title: HALF SECTION NW-SE



Any further description or interpretation?

105 GOES BELOW 101, ITS A HALF SECTION INCLINE NW UP TO SE. 5cms increase in its depth across the trench A → B