

Test Pit 21, 29 Abberbury Road, Iffley

Area excavated: 1m x 1m

Date of Excavation: 16th July 2011

Conditions: morning very wet, afternoon dry with sunny intervals

Method of excavation: spade and trowel. Sieving was not possible due to wet conditions, but spoil was checked thoroughly for finds and lumps broken up.

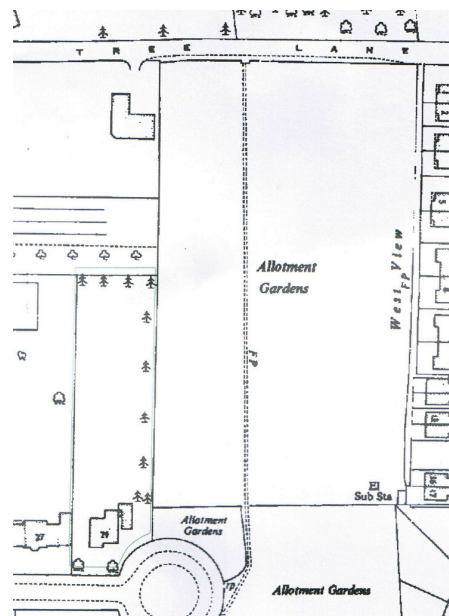
Excavators: Leigh Mellor (a.m.) Sue Cooke, Charlie Allen, Steve Nicholson, Alison Dale, Patrick Lawrence, Sheila Fairfield, Tricia Hallam

Report by: TH

GPS location and height over sea level: SP 5328 0370, 79.5m OD

This location was chosen with a view to adding further information about the archaeology of the area to that gained from two previous test pits excavated in Abberbury Road on 21st - 22nd June 2011 (TPS_11 and 12). Both these sites provided evidence of Roman activity in the area, which included a 3rd century Roman coin of Postumus and fragments of mortaria. The site slopes down to the north and at the top (southern) end clay is known to lie close to the surface. It was therefore decided to place the test pit towards the lower (northern) end of the site in the hope that a greater depth of archaeology would be encountered. To the east of the property a footpath runs from Iffley Turn through to Rose Hill, which may well be an older route-way. However, it appears from old OS maps that this footpath originally ran further to the east across allotment gardens until that land was developed. It was not possible to place the pit close to this boundary because of the mature trees. The site was farmland until Abberbury Road was built in the 1930s.

The test pit revealed activity on the site dating back to the prehistoric period. It contained several Roman and medieval artefacts as well as post-medieval material. The sloping nature of the site has resulted in hill-wash slipping down the hill towards the north, resulting in mixed deposits even at lower levels.



Historic map of site showing original route of footpath

Summary of Excavation



The test pit was dug overall to a depth of 0.26m, with a further 0.06m in Sondage 1 (the northern half of the pit) and a further 0.18m in Sondage 2 (the eastern half of Sondage 1). The natural geology was not reached but finds reduced considerably towards the bottom.

The first spit 0.2m (101) was very organic garden soil. It was very disturbed and produced finds from the Roman to post-medieval periods. The second spit (102) was less organic with more clay content and charcoal rich. Again, this layer was disturbed, producing a worked flint core, as well as pottery from a variety of periods. At a depth of 0.26m from the surface a gritty layer was reached which looked as though it might be natural. It was decided to dig a sondage in the northern half of the pit to check this hypothesis. The sondage revealed that the layer was not natural and that the gritty layer was a fairly thin deposit at the top of a layer of clayey silt (103). This layer produced finds including Roman pottery and three nails. Because of the adverse weather conditions time was running short and it was decided to dig a second sondage in the eastern half of sondage 1, in an attempt to reach the natural geology. This layer (104) produce finds from a wide range of periods from Roman to post-medieval and included a piece of glass, possibly Roman. This mix of finds at the lowest level confirms that the deposits were colluvial, with cultivation and hill-wash causing deposits to slide down the hill towards the north.



Looking north

Results

Spit/ context	Type of deposit	Description	Soil sample	Drawings
Spit (101)	Layer below turf (100)	<p>0.05m of turf and topsoil removed by hand; spit 0.2m deep.</p> <p>Mid brown highly organic sandy silt, becoming yellowish-brown and more clay-like at bottom of spit. Rounded pebbles, largest 50mm, c5%. A few angular limestone fragments, largest 30x20x10mm. Small shells and fossilised shell. Charcoal flecks throughout and some larger pieces, increasing with depth. The spit was much disturbed by roots and worm action.</p> <p>Finds: CBM, pottery (post-medieval and Roman), bone. Black object – carbon? Black cylinder – plastic?</p> <p>Garden soil, very organic and disturbed</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Looking west</p>	
Spit (102)	Layer: below (101)	<p>Diffuse boundaries with spit (101) above, but lighter colour less organic and more clay content. Some limestone and pebbles but fewer than (101). Clear boundaries with (103) below. 0.06m deep.</p> <p>Finds: charcoal (increasing at lower levels) CBM, pottery (some glazed), clay pipe. One worked flint core. Small black object with square profile in stone/bone – worked? Bone, claw.</p> <p>Disturbed garden soil</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Looking south</p>	
Context (103)	Layer: below (102) in Sondage 1	<p>Mid yellowish brown clayey silt containing gritty limestone gravel in small grains. Less gritty with depth and more clayey. Charcoal flecks throughout, but less than (102). Small shells, few pebbles, angular limestone fragments. 0.06m deep.</p> <p>Finds: pottery: Roman? Bone, shell, 3 iron nail frags with square profile. Red pebble: split or cut?</p> <p>Disturbed cultivated soil – hill-wash</p>		Sketch plan
Context (104)	Layer: below (103) in Sondage 2	<p>Mid yellowish-brown clayey silt containing a few rounded pebbles and small limestone fragments. Some shell fragments and several land snail shells. Charcoal flecks reducing at lower levels. A few flints. 0.18m deep.</p> <p>Finds: CBM, pottery (medieval and post-med) Glass – Roman? Iron nail head, bone, burnt flint?</p> <p>Disturbed cultivated soil – hill-wash</p>	1	Sketch plan and section sketch



Looking south