

Work continues at the site at Ian Avenue and further progress has been made on Test Pit 7, the focus of our efforts.



Test pit 7 core auger hole showing gradient of original soil layer

The image above shows the south-west corner of the test pit with the measuring rod (half metre intervals) in the core auger hole. The red line against the west side of the test pit shows the gradient of the original field surface, which we have at last reached in the dig, everything above that is builder's rubble and dumped clay. The gradient is important to us as it confirms how the original field rose from its lowest point on the north side. In the test pit this gradient is at 40%, that is to say it rose at 1 in 25. Significantly, this current work gets us below all the rubble, so the purpose of putting the core auger in was to identify the depth of the original field surface. Now, for a moment, let's rewind to Test Pit 1, right at the start of this work, which was put in, away from the suspected archaeological feature, to determine what there should be if the field was undisturbed.

Test Pit 1 contained Victorian field soil layer of a depth of 25cm which was a fairly dark friable soil. This was on top of a medieval field soil layer of a depth of 20cm which was much the same only not such a dark grey colour, it was a bit lighter. Below that was the natural substrate of light brown (fawn) sandy clay, which is common in this part of Wirksworth. This total depth of field soil in Test Pit 1 is very similar to that in the Meadows, where the clay substrate is also quite near the surface at about 40 cm down, it then changes gradually to shale a further 40cm beyond that.

In the current Test Pit, we put the core auger in to see if we could find the substrate, but at the moment, the total depth of the soil layer in this test pit (darker on top and lighter below) is 80cm and we can't find the substrate so far. In short, there's a much greater depth of soil here than elsewhere.

Finally, although the soil layer is free from finds of any kind, above it, in removing the last of the bulldozed rubble, is yet more stone:



Building stone from Test Pit

Although there have been no finds so far from the soil layer, the lower lighter soil contains charcoal flecks, which is to be expected. Work will continue at the next dig day to try and find the horizon between the soil layer and the expected substrate of light brown clay, or another context.

Wirksworth Place-name

Separately, our organisation was asked by the English Place-name Society (EPNS) to prepare a paper about the Wirksworth place-name, for publication in their academic journal. The research for this has thrown up the origins of the current understanding of our place-name “Work’s Enclosure” as being a Victorian vicar. I have no high opinions about the linguistic abilities of Victorian vicars, but a lack of linguistic ability on the part of the said vicar may have given us a 128 year old problem with our place-name. I equally observe that the 1939 interpretation of our place-name as being “Fortified Enclosure” appears to be the result of the correct knowledge. Indeed, our much loved Abbess, Cynewaru, has also something to say to us about this from 1,190 years ago. We will circulate the paper once the research is complete.