

4.0 ABORIGINAL TEST PITS A - D: RESERVES AND THOMPSON SQUARE

4.1 Introduction

The research design for the testing program proposed the excavation of a third test pit at the extreme southern end of the project area near the present intersection of George Street and Old Bridge Street. It was intended to test the profile to the depth of 0.5 metres required for the project. This was in the area of several buildings from the first years of development. This was also the site of one pit that was to be excavated to test for the presence or absence of Aboriginal archeology.

This first Aboriginal test pit (referred in this report as Test Pit A and 057E 60N in the excavation report for the work⁵) was excavated while work was being undertaken on European archaeology Test Trench 1 in Bridge Street. The evidence from both excavations indicated that further excavation in the southern portion of the project area was highly unlikely to provide more evidence than could be acquired from the existing Aboriginal and historical archaeological pits. This was due to evidence in both of extensive excavation undertaken here in the nineteenth century and additional works in the twentieth century. For this reason the proposed third test pit was not excavated here; however, the evidence recovered from the Aboriginal archaeological test pit is discussed here as well as three others excavated throughout Thompson Square. Refer to **Error! Reference source not found.** for the location of the Aboriginal test pits in context with all the test trenches in Windsor.



Plate 55: Location of Aboriginal archaeology test pits A-D. The yellow squares are the test pits. Refer also to Figure 1.

⁵ Kelleher Nightingale Consulting Pty Ltd (2012); Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Cultural Heritage Assessment Report)

4.2 ATP A (Aboriginal Test Pit 057E 560N)

Located in the proposed area of the European Test Trench 3 within the upper parkland area and close to the corner of Bridge Street, the excavation revealed that the top 300 mm of the deposit comprised dark grey-brown humic loam considerably disturbed by tree roots and including a small sample of European artefacts with a wide chronological spread including a fragment of a later nineteenth century clay smoking pipe and c. 1950s tiles. Below this material from 300 mm downwards was the upper portion of the ancient sand dune including substantial quantities of Aboriginal artefacts (Plate 55). This is below the anticipated base of the project excavation.



Plate 56: North section of ATP A showing the small European horizon above the remnant sand dune identified in the image as the artefact laden sandy layer; scale one metre⁶

4.3 ATP B (Aboriginal Test Pit 050E 591N)

This pit was located in the traffic island between Old Bridge Street and Bridge Street. The surface was covered with paving bricks removed to reveal 80 mm of bedding sand, above 230 mm of blue metal. Below this was 250 mm of concrete. Below this was sticky red clay, likely to have been fill (Plate 57). The base of the trench is below the anticipated excavation zone for the proposed bridge.

⁶ Image from Kelleher Nightingale Consulting Pty Ltd (2012); Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Cultural Heritage Assessment Report: 23



Plate 57: Section in ATP B; scale one metre.

4.4 ATP C (Aboriginal Test Pit 024E 617N)

The third test pit excavated for Aboriginal archaeological assessment was placed in the middle of the southern end of the northern reserve. The excavation here ceased at 250mm due to the high rate of disturbance. The fill material included plastic, blue metal, glass and tile from the later part of the twentieth century.

4.5 ATP D (Aboriginal Test Pit 017E 630N)

This test pit was excavated at the northern end of the northern reserve close to the car park and the site of European Test Trench 2. This test pit revealed dark brown sandy loam with numerous lenses and cuts. It included European artefacts with the same wide chronological range found in ATP A; a 1945-penny was found at the surface of the excavation and nineteenth century artefacts (clay smoking pipes) and twentieth century material (including glass and ceramics). Mixed with this European material was shell and Aboriginal artefacts assessed to have been taken at least in part from middens and brought to the site.⁷

At 600 – 700 mm the deposit changed to become yellow sandy clay loam; this was also seen in European Test Trench 2. This deposit continued to the base of the excavation, a depth of one metre; this soil contained some bottle glass and a small quantity of brick.

⁷ Kelleher Nightingale Consulting Pty Ltd (2012); Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Cultural Heritage Assessment Report: 24



Plate 58: View south of section in ATP D; scale one metre⁸

4.6 Interpretation of Results

The southernmost of these pits, (ATP A) close to the corner of Bridge and George Streets in the upper parkland area, demonstrates that the land in and around the excavation has been substantially truncated, apparently in the twentieth century; the material in the fill used to level the site included artefacts from as late as the 1950s. The Windsor Town Improvement Society may have initiated some of the work in the 1930s but the later chronological spread suggests that there has been later cutting and filling at the southern end of the reserve. The deposit above the intact dune sand was homogenous and suggests that anything from the nineteenth century or earlier has been removed in this area.

The second Aboriginal test pit (ATP B), in the traffic island in Bridge Street also demonstrated extensive cutting and filling during the twentieth century, here more likely from the later part of the century. Nothing from the nineteenth century was found in this pit.

The third test pit (ATP C) in the lower parkland area provided more evidence of twentieth century land forming here exclusively from the later part of the twentieth century.

The fourth test pit (ATP D) located close to the car park also demonstrated the impact of twentieth century work but here there was also evidence of nineteenth century fill and Aboriginal midden material. The small sample suggests that fill has been brought from another site and used to reshape the surface of the reserve; the presence of the 1945 coin in the fill gives an approximate mid-twentieth century date for the work. This is consistent with the artefacts found in the other test pits. The yellow sandy clay found at the base of this test pit appears to be the same as that found in the small extension made to European Test Trench 2 into the reserve. This soil was relatively free of artefacts except for a very small number of glass sherds. This is more likely to be a nineteenth century level.

In total the evidence from these four small pits indicates that the southern boundary of the project area has been extensively disturbed both within the road and the park. The road works appear to be from the later part of the twentieth century and the changes to the park around the mid-twentieth century. The evidence recorded in the other two test pits placed in the park supports the latter

⁸ Ibid: 25

conclusion. It suggests that a substantial program of reshaping the park was carried out in the c. 1950s and it entailed bringing fill from elsewhere that encompassed both nineteenth century European material and Aboriginal midden material. This was used to shape the northern part of the lower reserve. At this time there is no archival evidence to support this conclusion. There is some evidence to suggest that intact nineteenth century levels might survive under this fill; this is the consistent deposit found in both the Aboriginal test pit excavated at the northern end of the reserve and the small extension made to European Test Trench 2.

5.0 TEST PITS 4-9: THE NORTHERN RIVER BANK

5.1 Introduction

For the purposes of the project geo-technical investigations were required on the northern river bank to examine the soil; a total of six pits measuring approximately 3.0 x 0.5 metres were excavated to a depth of approximately three metres. These pits were placed throughout the northern project area (Figure 2). The archival analysis had not identified any specific sites or targets within the project area so it was decided to use these pits as a sample study of the soil profile for archaeological purposes. Because of the depths the pits were entirely excavated by machine in association with an archaeologist.

5.2 Test Pit 4

This was the most easterly placed pit and was located on the southern road verge abutting the turf farm. The surface of the pit was just above the level of the road.

The surface of the pit was covered with grass [080] and immediately below this was soft, dark loam to a depth of approximately 600mm [081]. The soil included wastes such as plastic, soft drink cans and part of a car bumper. Below this soil was a thin, sandy deposit [082] in which there was part of a fence post [083]. Below the sand to the three metre depth of the excavation was dark brown, silty clay [084]. The clay in this deposit increased as the trench became deeper; there were also some orange clay inclusions and organic matter. At 1.8 metres the clay matrix became lighter in colour.



Plate 59: View east of the area of test pit 4.




Legend

- Geotechnical Borehole
- Geoarchaeological Borehole
- Geotechnical Test Pit
- Construction Work Zone

Figure 2: Location of the archaeologically monitored geotechnical test pits, Aboriginal test pits and geoarchaeological test pits (for the Aboriginal test pit program)


0 8 16 24 32 40
Metres
Scale: 1:800 @ A3
Coordinate System: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 56



BIOSIS
RESEARCH

Biosis Research Pty. Ltd.
18-20 Mandible Street
Alexandria
NEW SOUTH WALES
2015

Offices also in: Ballarat, Melbourne,
Wollongong, Canberra, Wangaratta



Date: 13 September 2012, File number: 14020
Checked by: PBK, Drawn by: JMS
Location: P:\14000s\14020\Mapping\14020_Ex_F2_Excavation_Nth.mxd



Plate 60: View west showing the position of a fence post [063] within the soil matrix [061]; scale one metre.



Plate 61: View east of the completed section in test pit 4; scale one metre.



Plate 62: View of south section test pit 4, the thin sandy layer [082] is more visible here; scale one metre.

5.3 Test Pit 5

This test pit was located on Wilberforce Road where it turns south to proceed over the existing bridge. The excavation revealed that the area had many services in it that have disturbed the profile.



Plate 63: View east across the area, in the foreground, of Test Pit 5.

At the top of the profile was the grass cover [086]. Below it was dark loam with silty clay and sand mixed into the matrix as well as a small amount of blue metal [087]. This loam extended to a depth of approximately 500 mm. Below this soil was a deposit [088] of road base. It was mixed with clay and silt and the surface was uneven; it appeared to be redeposited from elsewhere. There were inclusions of broken bitumen and contemporary beer bottle glass confirming that this was introduced material. This deposit was approximately 200 mm deep.



Plate 64: View east showing deposits to gravel mixed with sand [088]; scale one metre.

Below this material was a thin layer of clayey sand [089] between 30-50 mm in depth. The next deposit was thin, dark clay that contained rusted fragments of nails, probably twentieth century in origin [090]. This deposit was approximately 50 mm deep. Lying under this was a sandy clay layer or lens [091] approximately 10 – 20 mm deep and a similar layer with more clay [092] under it.



Plate 65: View east of thin, sandy deposit [089]; scale one metre.

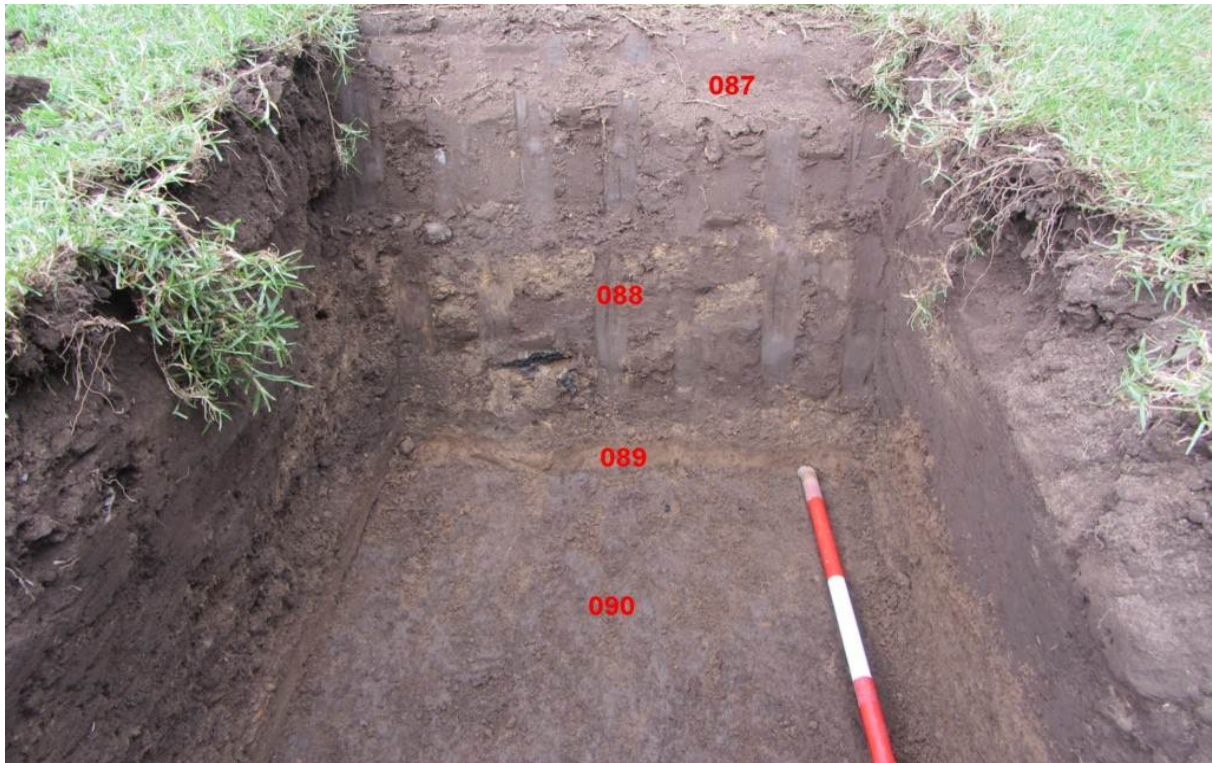


Plate 66: View south showing clay deposit with nail fragments; scale 200 millimetre increments.

Another twentieth century layer was next revealed [093]; it encompassed dark brown silty clay mixed with blue metal. It included plastic, ring pulls from drink cans and contemporary glass from beer bottles. This was approximately 100mm deep.

At this level, at the southern end of the test pit below the silty clay deposit [093] was a trench [094] with an iron water pipe in it [095]; the trench was packed with gravel. The presence of the pipe trench led to the test pit being extended further north to avoid the disturbance from this excavation. The extension revealed the same stratigraphy described to date. In both the original trench and its extension the pipe trench only appeared below all the levels above it [065-072]; this means that all these deposits were laid after the pipe had been excavated and the trench back-filled.

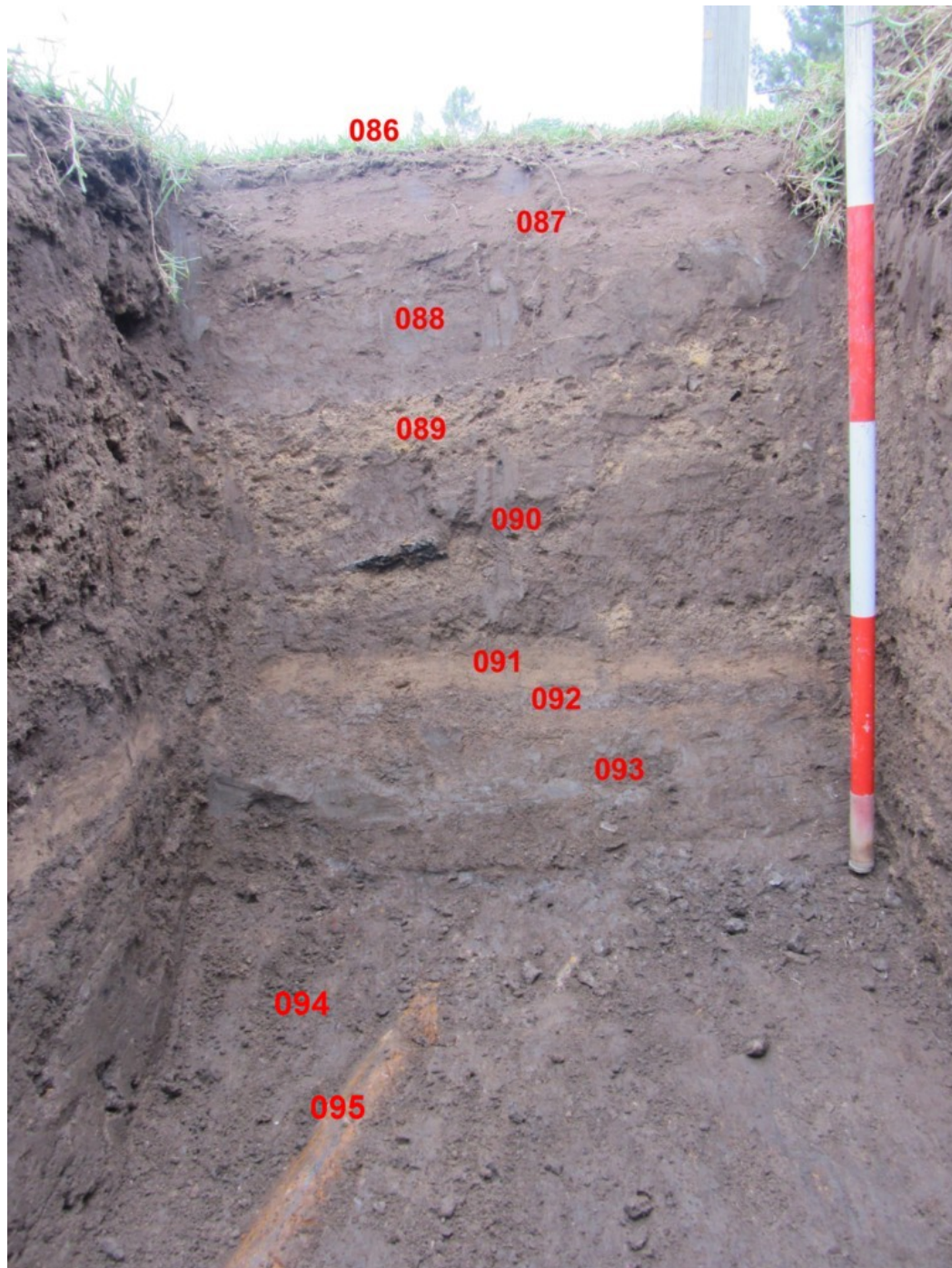


Plate 67: View east showing the iron water pipe and trench [094, 095]; scale 200 millimetre increments

At approximately one metre below the grass surface two concrete beams [096, 097], the same as those exposed in Test Trench 2 [014-020] were found in the test pit. Here the beams were not packed in gravel but were placed in dark brown silty clay [094]. They ran diagonally across the trench roughly north to south. The soil [094] contained a small number of artefacts; fragments of dark black bottle glass and light green coloured bottle glass that were later nineteenth or early nineteenth century in date. This soil was approximately 300mm deep. From here the trench was extended again to preserve the concrete beams [096, 097]. The extension was made to the west and was excavated down the side of the exposed beam. The extension was excavated stratigraphically and revealed the same deposits as the first two portions of this trench.



Plate 68: View east showing concrete beams [096, 097], scale 200 millimetre increments.

Below the silty brown soil [094] in which the beams were placed was a deposit of hard clay with some ironstone inclusions [098]; it was approximately 300 mm deep. Below this was soft light brown silty sand [099]. This was at the three-metre depth of the excavation.



Plate 69: View east showing the profile below the concrete beams; scale one metre.

5.4 Test Pit 6

This test pit was located on the southern side of Wilberforce Road on the verge opposite its intersection with Freemans Reach Road.



Plate 70: View north of the area of test pit 6.

The top of the test pit was covered with exposed topsoil [100]; below it was dark brown silty clay [101]. It had some sand lenses and organic material within the soil but there were no artefacts within it. This reached a depth of approximately 900 mm.



Plate 71: The eastern section of test pit 6; scale 1 metre.

At this depth the soil became lighter with more sand [102] and this greater component of sand was noticeable to a depth of 1200 mm. At this point a new deposit [103] of clay/sand became apparent and this also became lighter as it got deeper. At 2.8 metres below the surface the soil changed to very wet sandy clay [104]. This continued to the three-metre depth of the excavation. No artefacts or features were found in any part of the excavation.

5.5 Test Pit 7

This was the most northerly of the test pits; it was located on the eastern road verge on Freemans Reach Road.



Plate 72: View south of the area of test pit 7 of Freemans Reach Road.

The area has been disturbed by excavation for a Telstra cable so the trench was placed close to the fence line to avoid the worst of this impact. The surface deposit [105] comprised a mixed deposit of loam, blue metal and gravel. This was no more than 30-50 mm in depth. Below this was dark brown silty clay with some sand lenses [106]. This same deposit extends to approximately 550 mm below the surface but as it deepens it has more clay in it. Below this is a similar soil but with much more sand [107]. This deposit continues to approximately 1200 mm below the surface. At this point the soil acquires more clay [108]. This same deposit continued to approximately two metres below the surface. At that point the excavation uncovered a twisted piece of strap metal approximately 350 mm in length [109]. At the base of the excavation from approximately 2.7 metres the sand content increased again [110].

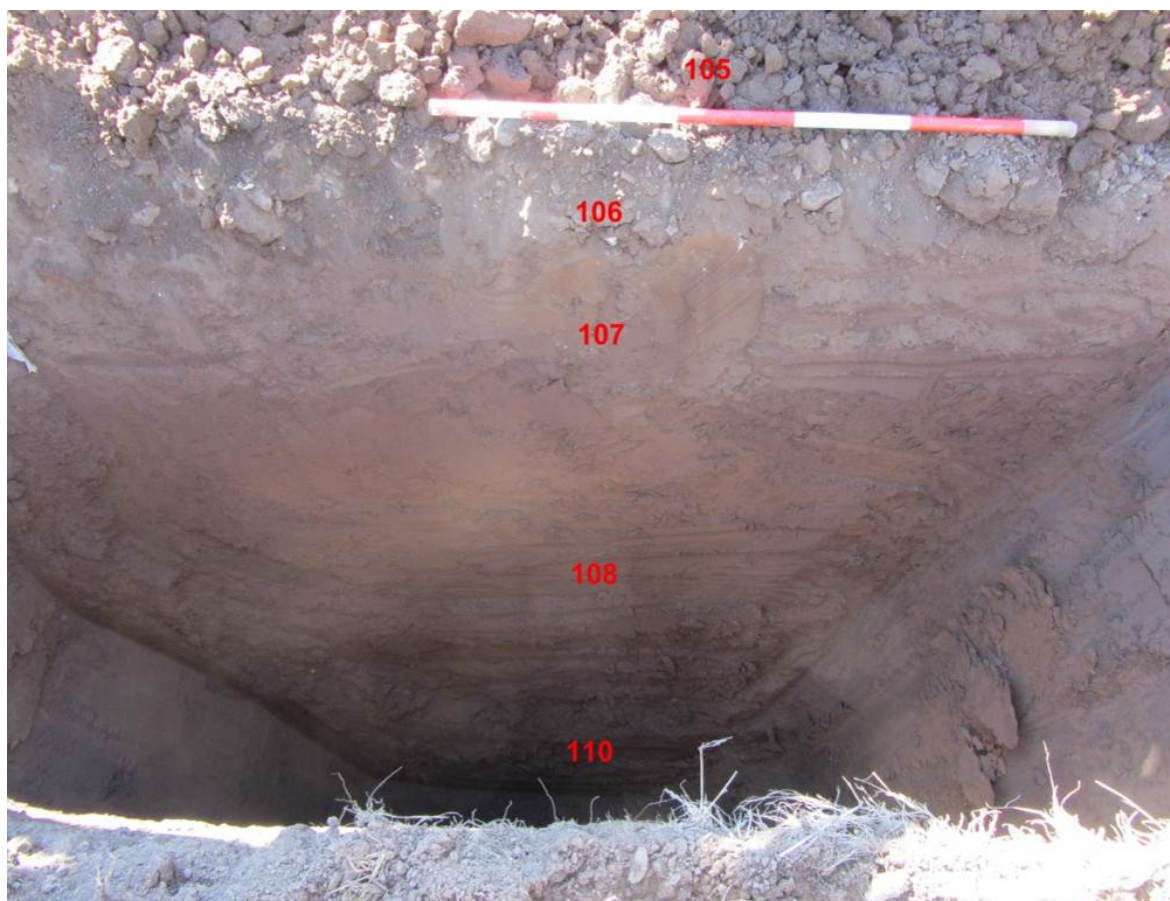


Plate 73: View east of test trench 7; scale one metre.



Plate 74: Strap metal [109] found at two metres depth in test trench 7

5.6 Test Pit 8

This test pit was located on the eastern side of Freemans Reach Road close to the entrance to the turf farm.



Plate 75: View south of the area of area of test trench 9

The surface of this trench was covered with gravel, blue metal, topsoil and grass [111]. Removal of this revealed more gravel road base, approximately 30 mm thick [112]. Beneath the road base was a deposit of compact silty clay [113]. It contained one fragment of a mid-later nineteenth century brick in it. The same deposit continued to approximately 2.2 metres depth. From that point the clay content increased [114]. This material continued to the base of the excavation.



Plate 76: Eastern section of test pit 8; scale one metre.

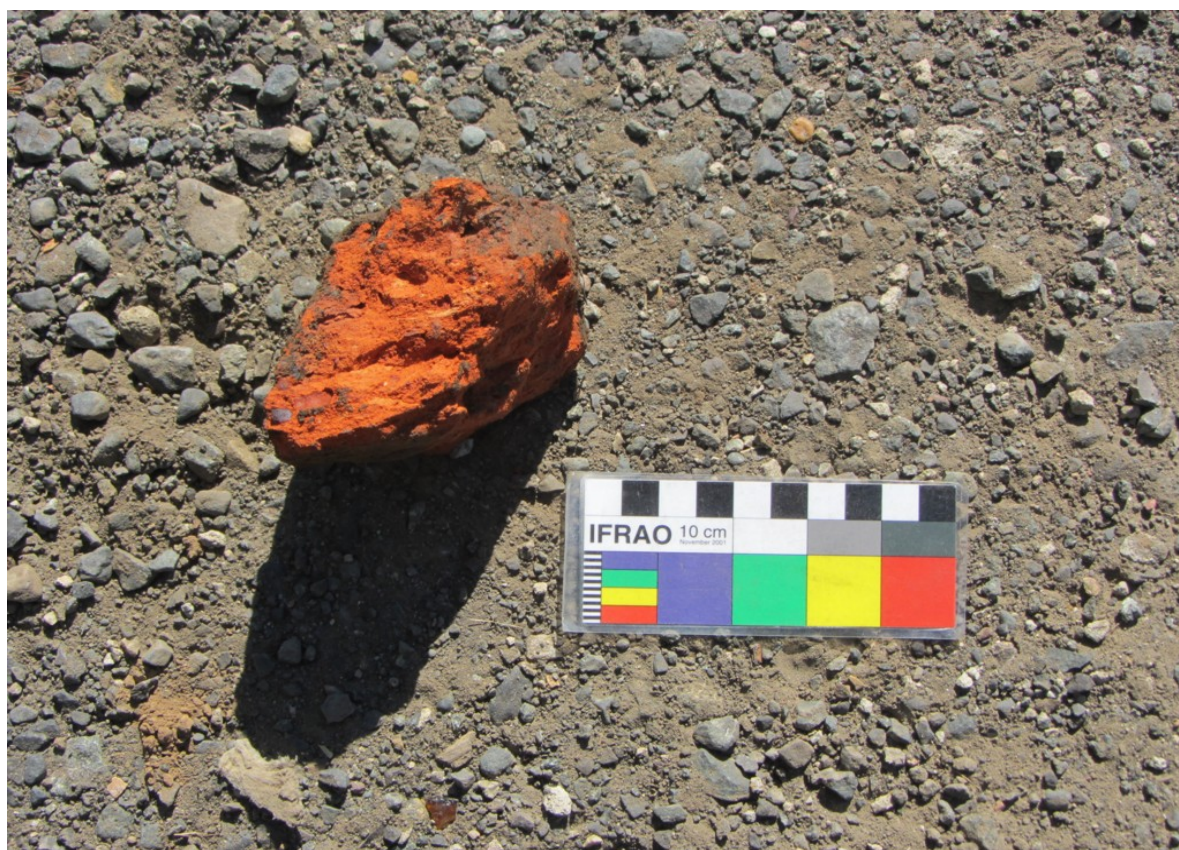


Plate 77: Small fragment of mid-nineteenth century brick found in test pit 8.

5.7 Test Pit 9

This test pit was located in one of the fields of the turf farm on the southern side of Wilberforce Road between it and the river.



Plate 78: View north showing the location of test trench 9.

The surface deposit in this test pit was the turf being grown on the farm in brown silty loam [115]. This soil continued with very little variation to a depth of 2.6 metres where the sand content increases [116]. This soil continued to the depth of the excavation.



Plate 79: View north of profile in test trench 9; scale one metre.

5.9 Interpretation of the Results

Geo-technical test pits 4-9, excavated on the northern side of the river, reveal little evidence of European occupation or works. There were no clear surfaces with the possible exception of one in test pit 4, no evidence of agricultural works, the impacts of pastoralism and no structural evidence at all. The majority of the evidence demonstrates the processes of siltation from floods and soil added for specific activities such as the turf farm and road surfaces. Almost all of these can be identified as twentieth century activities.

There were a few exceptions. Test pit 4 had a single fence post buried nearly one metre below the present ground surface; the rubbish in the soil that buried it was clearly twentieth century in origin suggesting that the post also was from the same period. It appears to have been constructed on an older twentieth century land surface. Test pit 7 revealed strap iron at 1.2 metres depth demonstrating how much soil has accumulated or been deposited within the northern part of the project area.

Test pit 8 provided the only nineteenth century artefact; a fragment of one mid-nineteenth century brick. The site of the nineteenth century Squatters Arms inn is likely to be in this area but one fragment is insufficient to provide a certain indication of the location of this place.

Test pit 5 provided the most substantial evidence of European activity in the form of two concrete beams similar to those found in Test trench 2 on the southern side of the river. There the beams were interpreted as part of the infrastructure created in 1896 to improve the roads and approaches leading to the newly raised bridge. Almost certainly the beams on the northern side of the river are part of the same work. This means that the metre of soil above them was deposited largely in the twentieth century.

The excavation for the project on the northern side of the river would reach to depths of up to three metres. On the basis of the evidence found in the test pits excavated here most of the impact would be on deposits of soil laid down in the twentieth century or through floods. However, in the immediate area of the approach to the proposed bridge it could be anticipated that the work would impact on infrastructure associated with raising the bridge in 1896 specifically the roads and approach to the bridge. This might preserve older evidence although the test pit did not reveal any material predating the beams.

The almost complete absence of artefacts suggests, as the archival evidence does, that the land here was sparsely occupied apart from farming; evidence of pastoralism or agriculture was also not obvious in the test pit profiles.

6.0 RESPONSE TO THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The test excavation was framed within a research design of several questions that were designed to address the potential impacts of the proposed work on the archaeological resource. The evidence acquired from the work is discussed here in relation to those questions.

- ***Will the depths of excavation required for the several components of the new bridge impact on levels that encompass intact archaeological resources?***

Yes, particularly on the southern side of the river within Thompson Square. At the southern end of the square the evidence suggests that the 0.5 metre depth of required excavation would only encompass levels that have been created in the twentieth century (as well as levels of Aboriginal archaeology). However, the overall profile of the square is that the scope of works in the past cannot be determined from previews afforded by test trenches and the potential for significant features and relics here cannot be ruled out. Further the impact of these twentieth century works is likely to have profound implications for interpreting remnant nineteenth or eighteenth century material; the full scope of those later works must be understood to enable the older material to be interpreted particularly with respect to dates.

- ***Can the test pits provide a sample that can be used to establish a profile that generally characterises each part of the construction area and, thus, establish what the impacts of the proposed works will be on the integrity and significance of the archaeological resource?***

No; overall the test pits suggest that a deeper archaeological profile is likely to exist at the northern end of Thompson Square than at the southern end and that the northern side of the river is unlikely to have a complex profile. However, the excavations have also demonstrated that the processes of flooding, erosion and European land-forming are largely undocumented and unpredictable. The test trenches have demonstrated that the depths of excavation required for the construction of the proposed bridge would impact archaeological evidence of varying types along the full length of works.

- ***Will the profiles provide sufficient evidence to establish dates or specific associations for archaeological evidence revealed in them?***

It is possible to establish some dates or general parameters for when most of the features found in the excavations have been created but undertaking larger excavations to establish the extent of features and their relationship could establish a better dating profile. At this time the evidence recovered from the trenches and pits encompasses a chronological span from c. 1800 to the c. 1970s.

- ***Is it possible to determine whether the impacts of land forming and the provision of infrastructure have combined to effectively remove a substantial and significant archaeological resource?***

At the southern end of the project area the developed profile does appear at least in part to have been substantially damaged and this might also be true to some extent in the parks although the processes that have removed earlier twentieth and nineteenth century levels here are part of the development history of the square.

The principal outcome of the investigation is that archaeological evidence will survive at least in some areas to c.1800, possibly earlier. Both nineteenth and twentieth century works have removed some of this very early profile but the extent of that removal is impossible to predict.

On the northern river bank there is likely to be a less complex profile but it appears to have been relatively little impacted by more recent changes. Both here and within Thompson Square the processes themselves have value in describing how those places have evolved in response to their respective historical uses. Understanding the scope of the processes of change is also critical to

interpreting the elements that remain in the square with respect to what they were, when they were made and how they relate to each other.

At all places within the project area the excavations required for the project would impact on an archaeological profile.