

Excavation Summary for Extra-Housepit Excavation 32

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Extra-Housepit Excavation 32 (EHPE 32) was partially excavated in 1998 as part of a roasting pit testing program at Keatley. It is small in terms of diameter and depth in comparison to other roasting pits identified at the site to date (**Fig. 1**). It measures approximately 2 m in diameter across the high points of the rim, while other roasting pits at the site have measured up to 8 m in diameter. It is located on a terrace approximately 50 m northeast of HP 115, an historic housepit (Vol. III, Preface, **Fig. 1**). The surface depression of EHPE 32 is approximately 18 cm deep in the center, which is shallower than most other roasting pits measured to date which have ranged from 15-40 cm in depth. The shape of EHPE 36 is roughly circular. The "debris flow" is pronounced along the southwestern edge of the pit and the soil on its surface is darkened and ashy. The rim is poorly defined. The ash and FCR, along with a general lack of lithics on the surface provided a fairly clear indicator that EHPE 32 was a roasting pit. EHPE is the only recognizable feature on this small terrace. Other roasting pits are located about 100-150 m downslope (southwest) of HP 115, however.

Charcoal samples from EHPE 32 have since been dated to 90 and 120 BP. It was expected during excavation that EHPE 32 would fall somewhere in the middle to recent range of the dates of other pits at the site. These range from less than 100 to 1500 years in age. The oldest pits have been large, while the middle range and youngest have been small to medium in size.

The sub-surface characteristics of EHPE 32 also identified it as a plant roasting pit. The pit is approximately 65 cm deep and contains a central group of cobbles about 25 cm below the surface, typical of a roasting pit at

Keatley Creek. The quantity of FCR (up to 90% of the fill), charred plant material and fire-blackening also suggest that it was a plant roasting pit that was used on more than one occasion, as does the hump or “debris flow”.

A trachydacite biface and a core were recovered approximately 10 m southwest of EHPE 32. The surface deposits of EHPE were about 6 cm thick and were quite black and ashy. Subsquares 5 and 9 of Square A were tested (**Fig. 1**). A trachydacite flake was recovered from the surface deposits of Subsquare 9. Occasional charcoal flecks and small FCR were replaced by an almost solid “pavement” of fire-cracked, reddened and blackened cobbles, making up 80-90% of the matrix. They appeared to be more blackened on the bottom and extended downwards for at least 10 cm. The soil was very black under the FCR and several soil samples were taken, as were samples of a few pieces of charred plant material that did not appear to be woody.

At 25 cm below the surface, a group of large, fire-cracked cobbles emerged (**Fig. 2**). The cobbles in Square 5, in fact, appear to be reddened on the inside of the “circle”. The cobbles seem to be in two rings, perhaps indicating re-use of the pit. The dates may also suggest this, although they are not separated enough to be sure, given the margin of error.

Below the cobbles in Subsquare 5 there was an area of compact, very carbonized soil. After a few centimetres of charcoal-rich matrix, there was about 15 cm of less-charcoal-rich matrix and then another “pavement” of small, fire-cracked cobbles at 50 cm BS. A probable hammerstone, perhaps used for processing roots, was recovered within the “pavement” in Subsquare 9. This was the only smooth stone in the entire pit. It was fist-sized and pitted at one end. Several pieces of charcoal were set aside for identification and several flotation samples were taken below this layer of fire-cracked cobbles.

At 60 cm below surface, in the southwest corner of Subsquare 5, glacial till began to appear, sloping down to the northeast and into Subsquare 9 at 70 cm. Large pieces of charcoal were removed from the bottom for dating. Till was encountered across both units, and there was an absence of fire-cracked rock in the till.

Use

“Root” plants that may have been cooked in this pit include Wild Onion (*Allium cernuum*), Mariposa Lily (*Calochortus macrcarpus*) and Desert Parsley (*Lomatium spp.*), all of which grow on the site today. Other plants that may have been available and which do not require a lot of cooking to make them palatable, according to Turner (1997) and Pokotylo and Froese (1983), include Yellowbells (*Fritillaria pudica*), Wild Carrot (*Lomatium macrocarpum*), Chocolate Tips (*Lomatium dissectum*), Bitter-root (*Lewisia rediviva*), and Wild Thistle (*Cirsium edule*). Prickly Pear (*Opuntia fragilis*), lichens and various berry species were also occasionally pit-cooked (Pokotylo and Froese 1983:131). Remains of two bulbs (unidentified as to species) were recovered from flotation samples as well as 6 unidentifiable seeds (1 probable *Ericaceae*), and conifer needles.

Meat and fish were also pit-cooked. No bones have been recovered from any of the roasting pits excavated at the Keatley site to date, but the flesh may have been removed from the bones prior to roasting (Peters 1999). Meat and fish were usually cooked with plant materials as well (Pokotylo and Froese 1983, Peters 1999).

The cooking time was probably not long, based on the size of the fire-cracked cobbles, so a species like Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*) which required days of cooking is not likely to have been cooked in this pit.

Conclusion

It appears that EHPE 32 was used, and probably re-used at least several times, for plant roasting. There has been no animal bone found so far and at least some of the charred material does not appear to be wood.

References

Peters, Desmond

1999 Personal Communication. Desmond Peters is an elder and past chief of the Ts'kw'aylaxw (Pavilion Band).

Pokotylo, David and Patricia Froese

1983 Archaeological Evidence for Prehistoric Root Gathering on the Southern Interior Plateau of British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Archaeology* 7(2): 127-158.

Turner, Nancy

1997 *Food Plants of the Interior First Peoples*. Royal British Columbia Museum Handbook, Victoria.

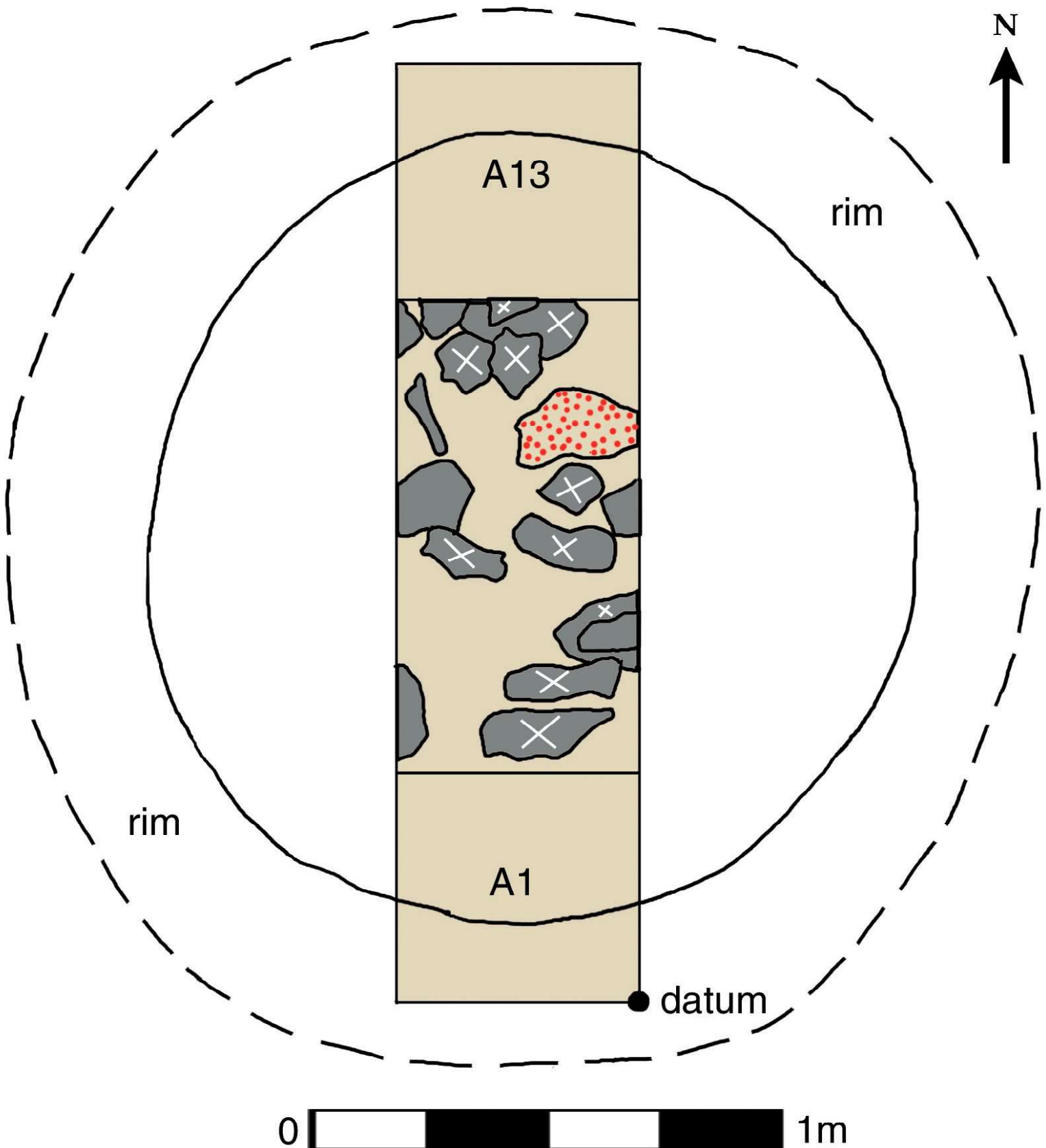
Figures

Figure 1: Extra-Housepit Excavation 32 general pre-excitation view, showing Square A, Subsqueres 5 and 9 and excavated floor plan.

Figure 2: Extra-Housepit Excavation 32 stratigraphic cross-section showing large cobble feature at 25-30 cm BS.

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EHPE 32



EHPE 32 - West Wall Profile

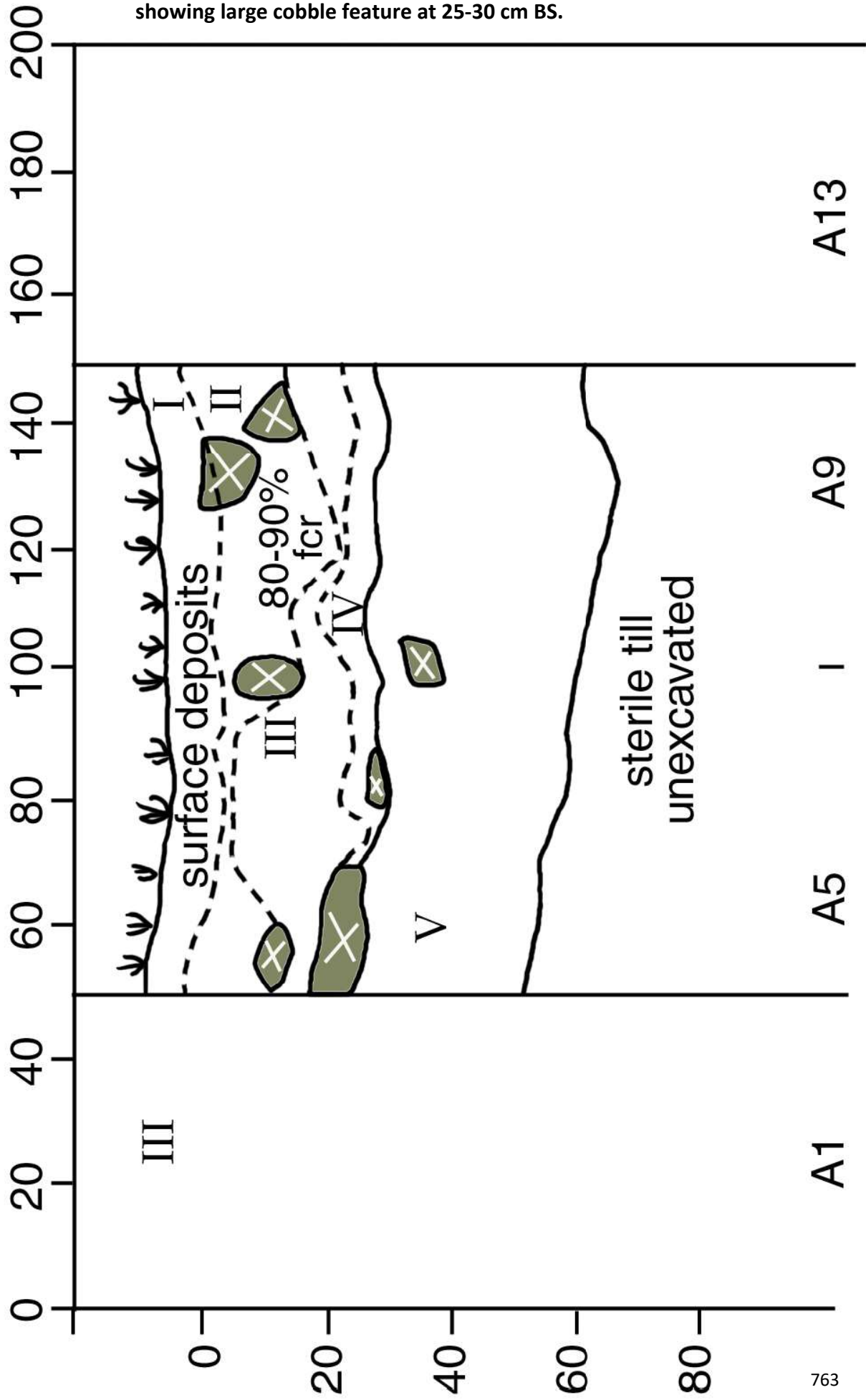


Figure 2: Extra-Housepit Excavation 32 stratigraphic cross-section showing large cobble feature at 25-30 cm BS.