Extra Housepit Excavation 8 Excavation Results

Mike Rousseau and Kelly Bush

Location and Description

Extra Housepit Excavation (EHPE) 8 was dug into a somewhat rectangular ovoid depression on the edge of a prominent terrace bordering the western edge of the site. It is one of several pits of similar size located from 12-14 m south of the large HP 102 (Vol. III, Preface, **Fig. 1**). This feature measures 3.5 m north-south by 3.25 m east-west and approximately 0.75 m deep. Some pot hunting activity is seen in the center/bottom of the pit measuring 1 m north-south by 0.75 m east-west.

Excavation units A-C were placed through the depression in the eastern half of the feature, forming a north-south trench 3.0 m north-south by 0.75 m east-west. Square A intersects the northwest edge of the pit feature. These units allowed us to view the structure of the pit, rim around the pit, and pot hunting disturbance. Our goal was to view cache-type deposits, and to interpret the formation history of the depression. The unit was excavated in 10 cm arbitrary levels. Although the cachepit feature appeared large, it was not very deep. Five separate strata were identified (**Fig. 1**).

Stratigraphy

Stratum I

Loose, medium gray brown (10 YR 3/2) sandy silt with a large percentage of organics, including roots and grasses. The fill in the potters hole which Stratum I represents is only 8-10 cm deep at the deepest point and only extends one-third of the way across Square B. There is no fire

cracked rock or cultural material in this stratum and it probably represents gravity infilling.

Stratum II

Very loose, medium gray brown (10 YR 4/3) sandy silt with a high percentage of organics (roots and grasses). This layer represents the littermat and appears aeolian in origin. There was some pea gravel in this stratum and occasional pebbles. In Square B, the percentage of pea gravel is less and fewer cobbles or pebbles appear. This may be due to deposition of larger clasts on the sides of the depression due to use or simply due to gravity effects of infilling.

Stratum III

Fairly compact, medium gray brown (10 YR 3/2) sandy silt with some pea gravel, cobbles, and pebbles. The stratum varies in thickness from a few centimeter to 20 cm in Square A, but is 10-15 cm through the other two squares (B and C). It begins around 10 cm below surface at the northern end of the square. Three flakes were found at the southern end of Square A, which is the closest to the center of the pit, near the lower interface with Stratum V. Two pieces of marine shell were found in Square B where Stratum III meets Stratum V; one of the shell pieces was drilled/perforated. Large cobbles and pebbles were found in Square C in this stratum.

Stratum IV

Fairly compact, medium gray brown (10 YR 4/2) sandy silt with high numbers of pebbles and cobbles. This stratum probably represents slumping of sediments originating from within the pit.

Stratum V

Compact, yellowish brown (10 YR 4/3) sandy silt with occasional pebbles and cobbles. This appears to represent the lowest level of cultural material in the cachepit. Flakes and mammal bone were found in this stratum. An obsidian core, possibly a microblade core, was found in Square C near the Stratum IV level. Below this stratum is sterile till deposit.

Summary and Conclusions

There is nothing in the stratigraphy to indicate this feature was used more than once. There was little actual refuse or cultural material recovered. Stratum IV probably represents an initial deposit of material removed from lower in the pit. The feature is shallow compared to other cachepits. The reason for this appears to have been that the glacial till deposit that was encountered at about 70 cm below surface is extremely compact and difficult to penetrate.

Most of the artifacts were found from 15-25 cm below surface. There were only a few isolated pieces of charcoal, bone, and lithics. The perforated marine shell found in Square C and the obsidian core found below it were the most unusual finds in the excavation. There was no fire-cracked rock.

In conclusion, this pit appears to only have been used once as a shallow, saucer-shaped cachepit to store food and/or personal items, and then natural aeolian forces and gravity began filling it in. Its original volume is estimated to have been about 1.7 m^3. Some of the other cachepits in the vicinity may have been used more intensively.

Figures

Figure 1: West wall profile of EHPE 8, showing Squares A, B, and C.

Figure 1. West wall profile of EHPE 8, Squares A, B, and C Legend

Stratum	Munsell		Description
I	10 YR 3/2	Medium gray brown	Very loose, sandy silt with large % of organics. Recent potters hole.
II	10 YR 4/3	Medium brown	Very loose, sandy silt with high organic content. Surface litter, aeolian in origin.
III	10 YR 3/2	Medium gray brown	Fairly compact, sandy silt with some pea gravel and some cobble and pebble sized rocks. Reused area of cachepit and natural infill after disuse.
IV	10 YR 4/2	Medium gray brown	Fairly compact, sandy silt with very high % of pebbles, cobble, and gravel. Deposit by pit users or builders from lower down in pit.
V	10 YR 4/3	Yellowish brown	Compact, sandy silt with occasional cobble and pebble.

Figure 1. West wall profile of EHPE 8, showing Squares A, B, and C.