

certainly has some sort of industrial function, most likely involving copper-alloy working, whereas the evidence from the southern building was characterised by fine ware glass and ceramic vessels, and faunal remains. Whatever questions are left to resolve in post-excitation, these excavations have shown that there was some sort of formalised area for activity directly associated with the temple, which involved a number of different types of structures ('shops/workshops') as well as a range of constructed floor surfaces.

Trench 25

Trench 25, opened at the beginning of the 2005 season, is adjacent to the eastern edge of trench 18, 2 m wide and 30 m long, with the long axis on an E-W alignment, Figure 5. The focus of this trench was to investigate a cobbled area to the east of Trench 18, which was first discovered in 2004, and to establish the function of the cobbling (e.g. street or courtyard) and its relationship to the workshops west of it.

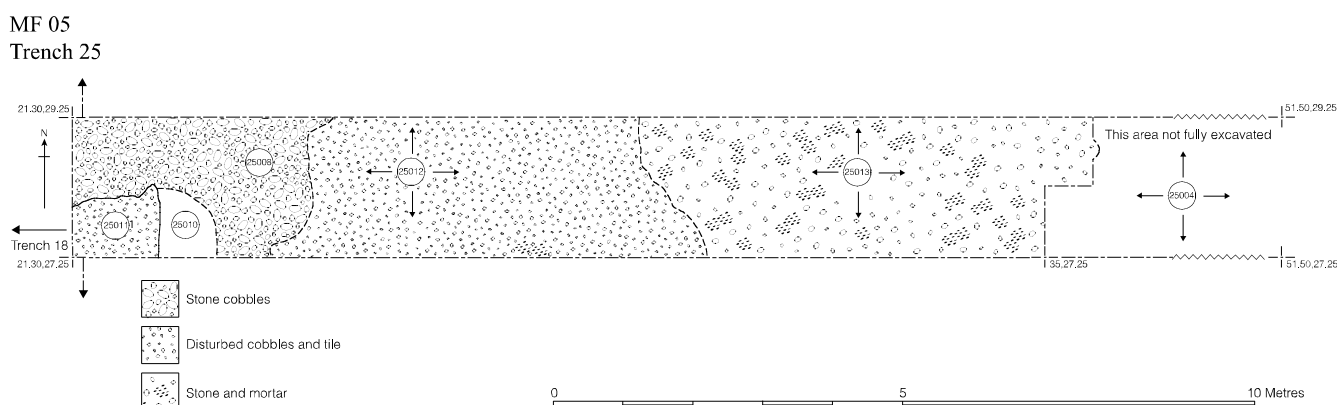


Figure 5. Trench 25, an eastern continuation of Trench 18 to explore the cobbled surface.

Continuing east from Trench 18 [18161] the cobbles [25008] were well laid for three metres and then disturbed, probably by ploughing, for another seven metres or so [25012]. This cobbling seems to be aligned with the gate through the *temenos* wall, discovered late in the season, and could, therefore, be a roadway or path leading from it. Beyond the cobbling an area of mortar and tile was uncovered [25013], initially interpreted as the remains of a building but probably a path running north-south across Trench 25. The path consisted of several layers of different materials laid on top of each other which seem to represent two stages, each consisting of a layer of cobbling covered with a mortar surface. It seems that the cobbled path leading from the *temenos* entrance reached a T-junction here offering different routes into the rest of the complex.

East of this junction little more was found, a loose soil [25004] with some Romano-British artefacts, but no structural remains. Towards the eastern end of the trench there was an increase in the density of artefacts recovered, a range of material with much oyster shell, although it is likely that this is associated with the large structure excavated previously in Trench 2 just to the east.

To the east of the large rectilinear building (Trench 24)

Extensive excavations during the previous three seasons have almost completely exposed the layout and floor plan of a large rectilinear building in Trench 2. The function of this structure remains unclear although there is considerable evidence that at least one phase of its use was late in the site's history, late 4th century. A well laid cobbled surface extended from the eastern end of this building and this was partially explored in 2004 with the trench being extended in 2005. One focus of interest here is the relationship between the large building and the rear of the bank of the circular structure which lies just to the east, the two possibly being connected by the cobbled surface. The area of excavation was extended in 2005 to create Trench 24 which goes from the cobbled surface adjacent to the large

building in Trench 2 across to the edge of the ‘amphitheatre’ bank, and includes structures associated with a well-made wall [23001/24011] found in 2004 (Trench 23), Figure 6..

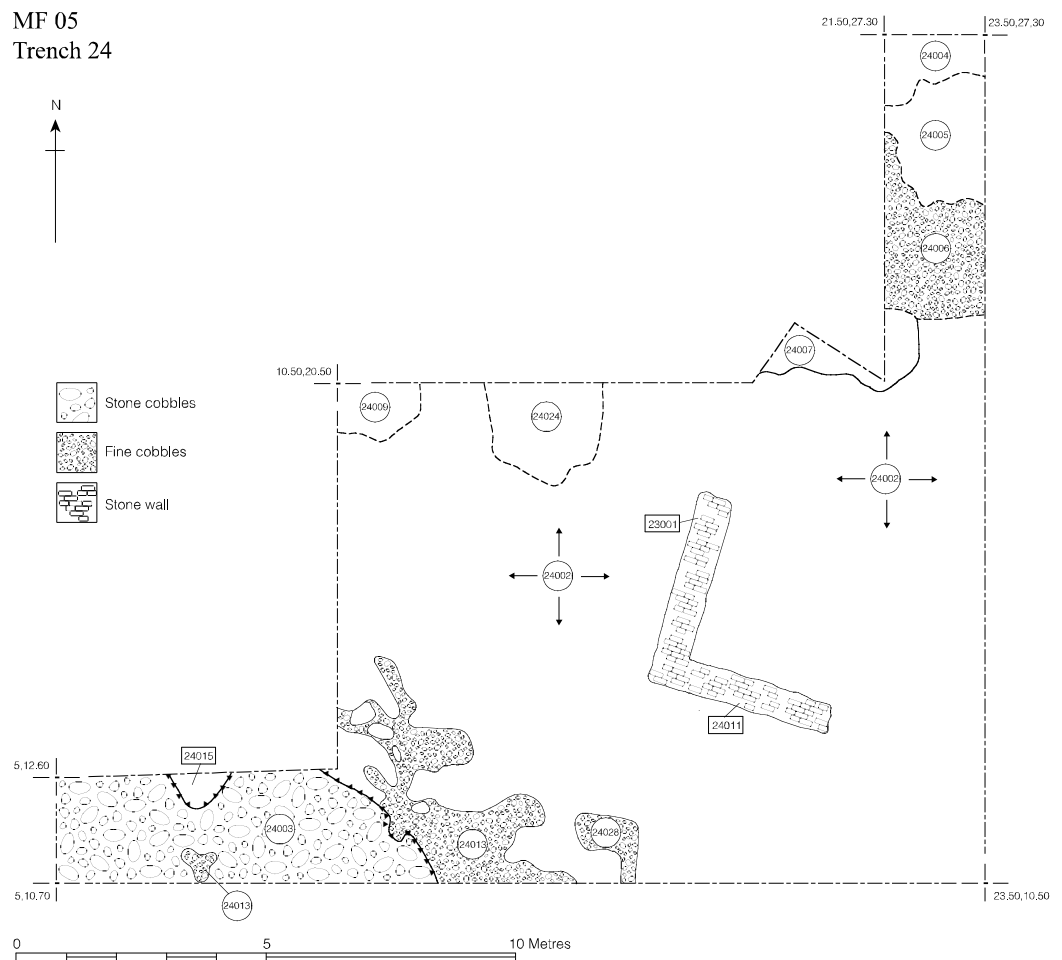


Figure 6. A schematic plan of Trench 24, the cobbled area linking the eastern end of the large rectangular building with the rear of the bank around the circular structure.

The excavations revealed more of the cobbled surface next to the Trench 2 structure (24003), found the edge of the amphitheatre bank (24004) with an adjacent finely cobbled surface (24006), and began to expose the larger structure associated with the well-made wall uncovered in 2004 [23001/24011]. The cobbled surface next to the Trench 2 structure (24003) overlay an earlier layer of finer cobbling (24013), and both layers respected a pit feature [24015]. The two finely cobbled surfaces at opposite ends of the trench (24013 and 24006) were similar in appearance and possibly part of the same original surface, though this remains uncertain.

Further excavation will be necessary to determine stratigraphic relationships between the various buildings and laid surfaces, and thus we cannot yet discuss use or function of this part of the site in any particular phase. However, it is clear that the area contained formalised open space during the phase(s) when the ‘amphitheatre’ and the large Trench 2 building were in use. In between these two large structures, there was at least one further well made formal structure [23001/24011], the date of which is unclear. It is possible that the structure was robbed for building materials for other structures on the site, or that it was open-fronted. In addition to this building, there is evidence for less well-built wooden or pillar-supported structures, e.g. in the areas of [24024] and [24009].

All parts of the trench, but particularly around the central building and the amphitheatre, contained many 'votive' small finds, including coins and jewellery, as well as several significant faunal remains, suggesting offering/eating in the area. There is an impression that the 'votives' cluster around structures [23001/24011], [24024] and [24009] which suggests the possibility, given the proximity of the large circular structure's bank, that these were small shrines or iconostases; this possibility will be investigated further in 2006. Coins from the topsoil and contexts across the trench have seen preliminary identification, and show a range from AD 69-79 through to AD 388-402, although the majority date from the late 3rd century and the 4th century (Iain Leins, pers. comm.).

The Circular Structure/Arena (Trenches 1, 9 and 17)

This large and enigmatic feature was first discovered by aerial photography in 1976 and claimed to be an amphitheatre by Hingley (1985) based on a small excavation. Each season since 2001 we have been excavating various parts of this structure which consists of an 'arena' wall c.40m diameter with surrounding low earthen bank. The wall itself survives in remarkably good condition, to its original height of c.1.75m, well mortared with plaster and painting on its inner surface. At each of the cardinal points is some kind of feature, obvious from the aerial photography and later geophysical survey. Trench 9 includes the box-like feature to the south, Trench 1 the gap through the bank to the east and Trench 17 the wall and plinth to the north. Excavation continued on all of these in 2005 together with a large L-shaped trench in the interior of the arena joining the southern and eastern cardinal points. Interpretation of this structure remains problematic (Gosden and Lock 2003) and is discussed in more detail below.

Trench 1

Trench 1 is located on the eastern cardinal point of the arena, extending eastward behind a lowered 'step' in the arena wall to beyond the back of the bank, Figure 7 is a schematic interpretative plan of this area. Work in 2001 to 2004 focused on the area around the 'step' [1136] including the northern bank. Investigation of the character of the bank continued in 2004; the search for evidence of any activity behind the bank was delayed by the discovery of six near complete skeletons. Much of Trench 1 was reopened in 2005. The season's aims included: finishing excavation of the easternmost sector of the original 2004 trench and driving a slot east to confirm that the limit of bank-related activity had been reached. The trench was also extended south to determine whether the burials were a discrete group. Further work was carried out in the original trench: at the front of the bank to explore the relationship between the banks and an access passageway, to pursue evidence for timber revetment and to link the banks with possible surfaces; and at the back of the bank to investigate hints of rear ditches and gullies revealed in long east-west slots opened in 2004.

The furthest eastern 5m of the main trench were excavated down to an undisturbed clayey B horizon above bedrock, removing a deep layer of sandy silt. Stratigraphical relationships and phasing were difficult to unravel. Cuts and negative features, even buried surfaces, survive poorly in the biologically active sandy context. At the rear of the bank the movement of soil down-slope from the east, and the gradual levelling of the land by ploughing, has further obscured relationships. Finds were concentrated in the eastern part of the area and included nearly thirty Late Roman coins (some in mint condition and some temple 'forgeries'), sherds of Roman pottery, animal bones, vessel glass, hair pins, rings, and decorative metal studs and fittings. In the less disturbed lower spits of the sand [1277] there was a definite clustering of finds, as if they had been buried together in small pits, their cuts subsequently obscured by soil processes. For example: a hair pin was grouped with white stones, pottery sherds and animal bones in an otherwise find-free area. All the datable finds were Late Roman, but cannot confidently be linked to any phasing of the bank as neither tumble associated with eroded bank, nor the patchy gravel surface, had any clear stratigraphical relationship with the clustering of finds. The principal activity in this area was, therefore, the placing of votive offerings in small pits in the Late

Roman period, similar to that discovered south of the arena in 2003. The scattered offerings suggest relatively informal religious activity; perhaps as part of a later form of ceremonial.

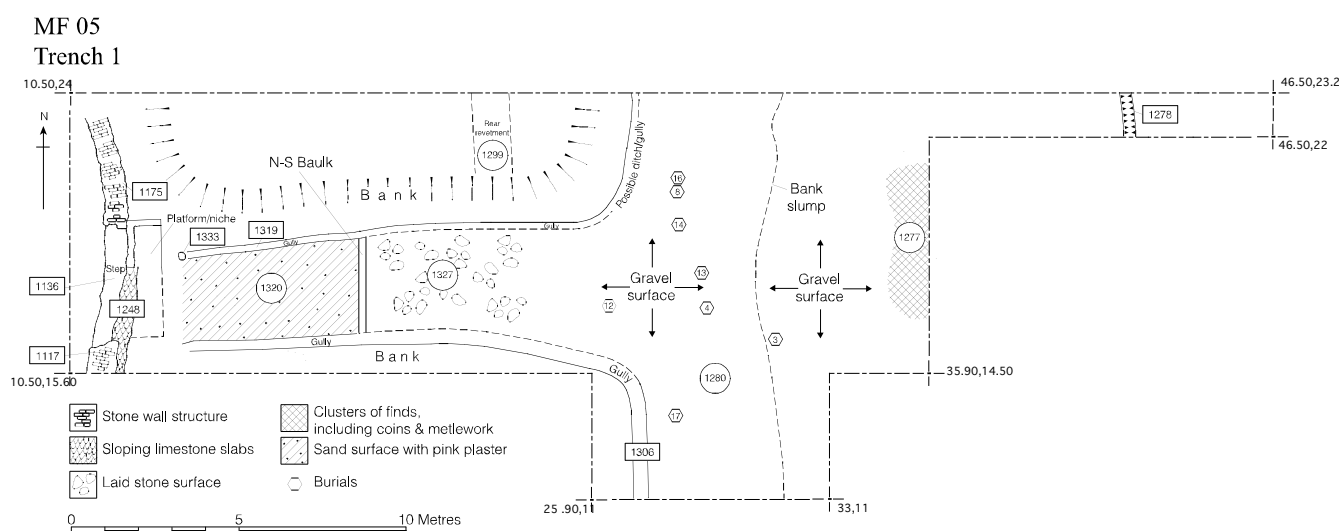


Figure 7. A schematic interpretative plan of Trench 1, the eastern cardinal point area of the circular structure.

The Eastern extension: A small ditch [1278] was discovered running north-south across the 1.5m (north-south) by 10m slot at c.6m east. The ditch seemed to curve to reflect the arena's shape. Snails and Roman pottery were found in its fill, and a layer of hill-wash came to an end above the ditch suggesting it had supported a palisade. Neither bank material nor the depositional activity described above continued further east.

The Southern extension: three north-south slots were cut down to bedrock in this 7m by 4m extension: two to confirm that the lower B horizon was undisturbed and a third to investigate a ditch revealed in the north-facing section of a 2004 section. The v-shaped ditch was found to extend south behind the rear of the bank [1306]. East of the ditch re-deposited natural sandy soil and eroded bank material were found above a patchy gravel surface. Two disturbed burials, SK 17 and 18, were discovered.

The gravel surface [1280] marks an important horizon. Below it no Roman finds were made and in 2004 only one or two possible Iron Age pottery sherds. Where it has been found, behind the banks and in the fan-shaped approach to the slight break in the banks, this 'surface' is patchy and thin (c.1-2cm), suggesting a short-lived use. As *all* datable activity at the back of the bank is Late Roman, the long dip slope of the bank may have been part of a remodelling of the arena. Perhaps the gravel was laid to create a working surface during bank alteration? The quantity of brown sandy context found above patches of gravel in this area, and between the two bank tails in 2004, suggests deliberate infilling including the blocking of the break.

Excavation confirmed that, in its widened form, the southern bank was defined by a ditch, and probably a timber revetment, at least at its corner with the access-way. There were hints, in 2004 north-south sections, of a gully behind the northern bank but these were not substantiated in 2005. This area was particularly disturbed by ploughing, rabbits and burials. The MF04 graves had been dug into both eroded bank material and passageway infill; similarly, after the southern ditch had filled, and the bank eroded slightly across it, skeleton 17's grave was dug partly into ditch-fill and partly into the slump of turf, sand and clay bank material.

Re-examination of main north-south baulk : a well-laid if patchy limestone surface was discovered

immediately east of the baulk between the banks [1327]. An intermittent gravel surface, found further east, seemed very similar to other patches between and beyond the banks, but the areas could not be linked. The shallow break between the banks, clearly visible in the baulk section, may have been original or created later for access; either way the limestone surface was part of the final look of the passageway before it was in-filled. The section hinted at a west-east gully [1319], filled with slumped bank material, paralleling a southern west-east gully found in 2001; small north-south sections from 2003 in disturbed areas further east also suggested a west-east gully. The hypothesis that a later configuration of the eastern area included timber revetment along the west portion of the 'access-way', and behind the bank terminals in the east, was supported by the observation that two fans of sand surface and collapsed pink plaster were clearly concentrated in the areas *between* these proposed revetments [1320]. In 2003 it was noted that the gravel surface was conspicuous in its absence *west* of the main north-south baulk. Final works around the wall break may have cut away this layer, perhaps after the infilling of part of the passageway, to replace it by a sand surface over natural soil re-deposited as infill material. The pink plaster covered the revetment then collapsed into the sand at the end of the arena's use.

Northern bank behind the wall and access-way: a distinct gully had been noticed in a small section west of the baulk near the northern bank front. Two small north-south slots were put through the remains of access-way material and into the bank to see whether there was a northern east-west gully to match the southern one found in 2001. A gully for a timber revetment was found cut into the lower more clayey natural sandy soil to the south of the northern bank [1319], ending in a post-hole [1333] cut into bedrock behind the steep approach to the 'step'. The posthole could have been a terminal post for the plaster-covered revetment.

Overall, this is a difficult trench to phase and date as apart from in the area of votive deposition diagnostic finds have been frustratingly few. The earliest phases - particularly near the 'step' - have been destroyed by later rebuilding; and the sandy context, forming the majority of the non-structural deposits, has failed to preserve evidence of cuts and negative features. However, the evidence does suggest the eastern cardinal point was reworked and that the activities associated with it changed over time. The wall break was probably at its lowest in an earlier phase, perhaps when the break between the clay and limestone front banks was paved with limestone. In the later stages the eastern break in the wall was built up, the wall ends monumentalised and a 'niche' created behind the wall. The access through the banks was no longer needed and may have been partially blocked, and at around this phase plastered timber revetments were added at the rear and front of the banks. The votive deposits - and perhaps the burials - represent the final phase of Romano-British religious activity associated with the arena.

Trench 9

Excavations in the interior of the arena during 2005 had two major aims: to elucidate the role of the drainage systems and to understand further the constructional phases and chronology.

The drainage systems

Excavation of the drain systems focused on the north-south leg of Trench 9, note that drain [9353] was excavated in 2004. At the far southern end of the trench *c* 0.5 m in front of the arena wall the capstones of a feeder drain from the west [9385] were revealed, Figure 8. Initially it was thought that this may be part of a drain that ran around the perimeter of the arena, but further excavation to the east of the main drain in front of the southern arena wall showed that this was not the case. Unfortunately due to heavy rain and flooding in Trench 9 in the last week of excavation it was not possible to excavate inside the drain to find out whether the base was made of stone or not. If the bottom of the drain was not stone, it is possible that the drain was designed to deal with the fluctuating water table. Working out how the drain system functioned will be a priority for excavation in 2006.

MF 05
Trench 9

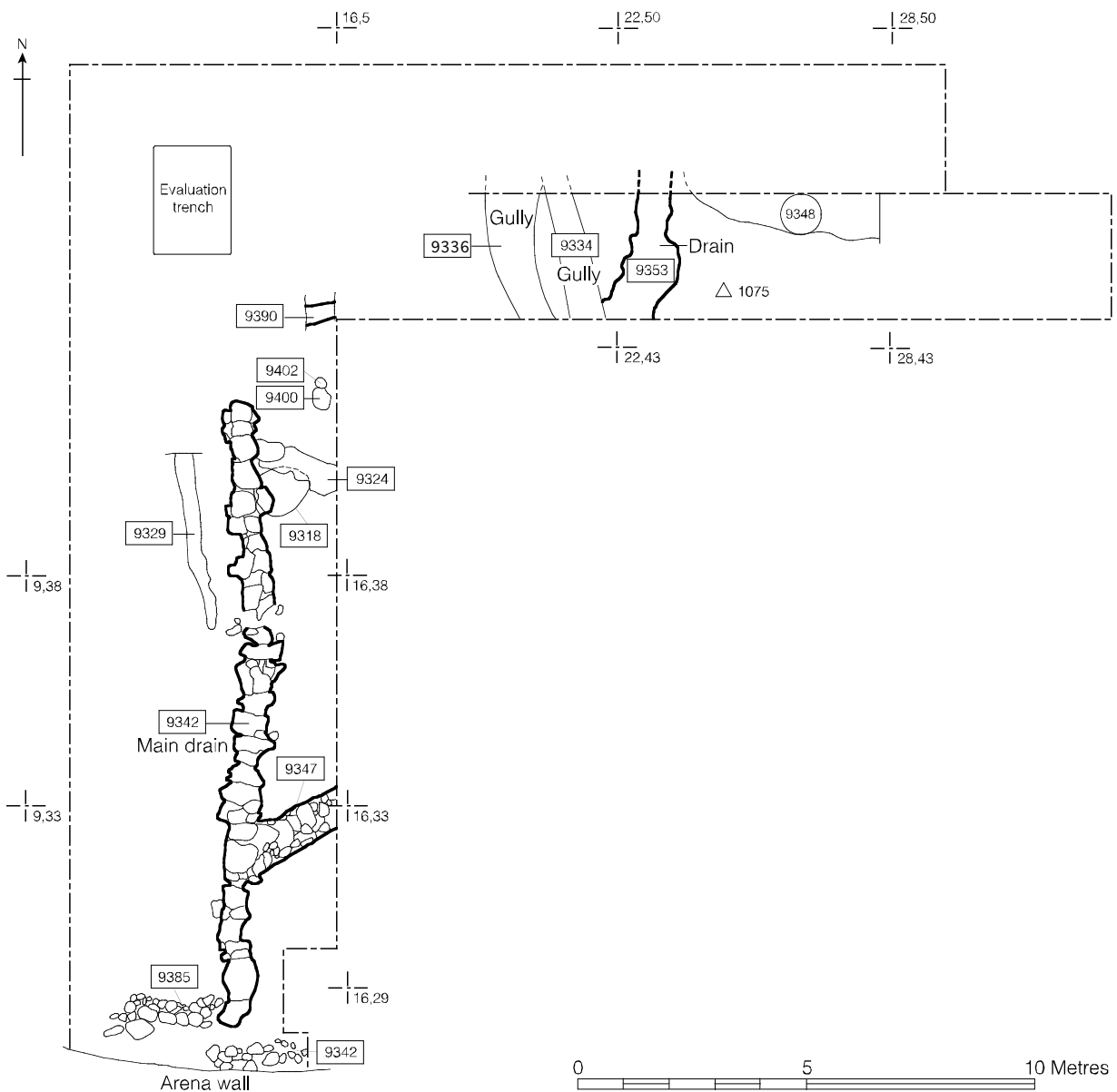


Figure 8. A schematic plan of the interior of the arena showing part of the drainage system, Trench 9.

Chronology

The work this season suggests three main phases of construction, remodelling and disuse. The initial phase of construction saw the insertion of the arena walls and central drain [9342]. Targeted excavation of the area where the drain exits through the southern cardinal point of the arena wall in front of the built box structure has proved that the drain was part of the primary construction; contrary to earlier hypotheses, the rebuild in the arena wall (see below) was not connected with the insertion of the central drain, Figure 9. Excavation inside the drain network in 2006 should help clarify whether the whole network was part of this primary phase of construction. In the east-west 'leg' of the trench it would appear that the natural land surface was consolidated by deliberate deposits of limestone rubble [9348]. An inverted stake [SF 1075] was found in the clay deposit underlying these rubble deposits. A c. 0.20 m thick deposit of sand overlay the drain network and rubble deposits. The sand probably formed the arena surface; it was a very clean deposit and must have been replaced on a regular basis. The sand did

not extend into the central area of the arena; the reason for this omission is not clear and will be explored in 2006.

MF 05 Trench 9

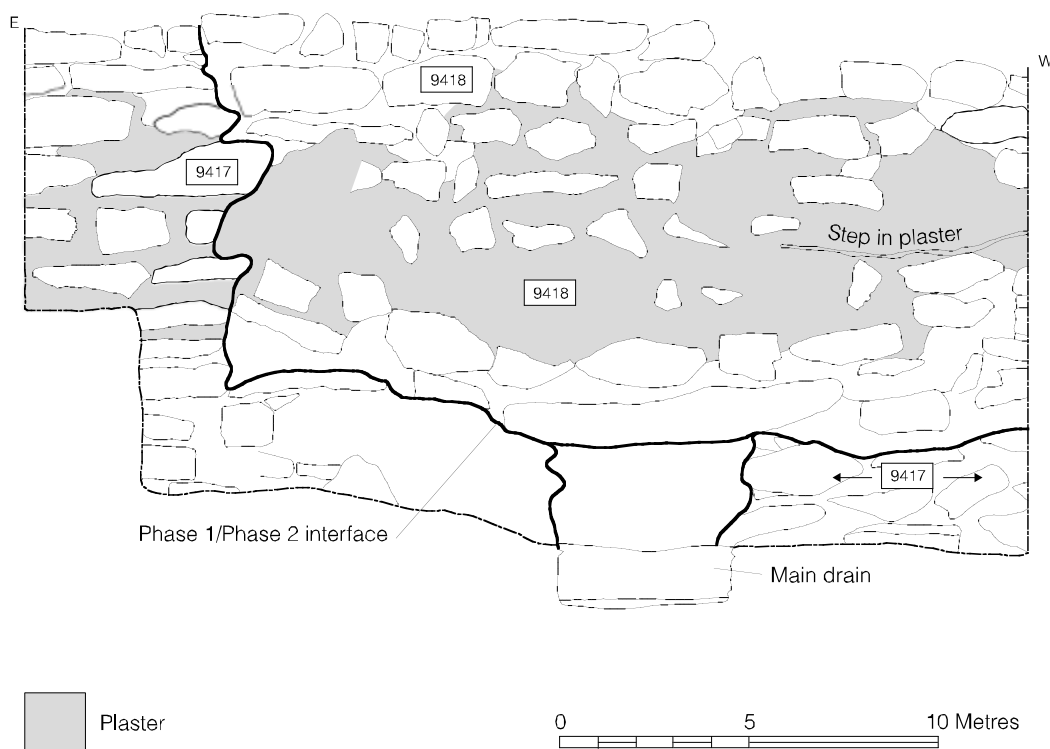


Figure 9. A section showing part of the internal face of the arena wall at the southern cardinal point, note the main north-south drain and the Phase 2 blocking.

A secondary phase of use in the amphitheatre, which may be associated with the remodelling of the arena walls (the blocking [9418] in Figure 9) was identified to the south of the central area in the north-south leg. Here two postholes [9402 and 9400] and an east-west aligned linear feature, possibly a beam slot [9390] were excavated. These features post-date the arena sand floor and pre-date the 4th-century clay layers which are the final activity within the arena. This suggests a secondary phase of activity inside the arena before it went out of use completely in the 4th century AD. These features may be contemporary with pit [9318] and natural gullies [9329], [9336] and [9334]. This phase of activity may also have seen the floor levels raised directly inside the arena walls with gravel-rich deposits, as excavated in 2002/3.

The area around the southern box structure: excavations continued to the south of the box-like structure along the line of the main drainage channel out of the circular structure with the goal of better establishing the chronological relationships between the drain, bank and the stone-built box. Two extensions were made, consisting of 2m x2m squares to the east and west of the drain as it extends south. This created a long, east-west section extending across the drain and bank, and provides the basis for the interpretation outlined here.

To the west of the drain, a cut was identified through one, and possibly both phases of bank material identified indicating that the construction of the drain post-dates the construction of the bank. No cut was found which corresponds to the box structure, and given that the drain underlies this it is likely that both were laid down at the same time. This may suggest that the box was part of the drainage system,

possibly a cistern to handle overflow from the drain. No clear cut was found in the bank in the eastern extension, however, and the character of material is quite different from that found to the west of the bank. Unlike the western section, which appears to contain alternating clay and soil deposits consistent with bank material found throughout previous excavation in Trench 9, deposits near the surface to the eastern side of the drain contain much larger deposits of clay, in some cases in deposits over 30cm thick. Given the lower soils around the drain itself consist of similar material, it seems likely that the large deposits of clay to the east of the drain represent redeposited material from its construction. The slope of the drain cut at lower levels also appears shallower on the eastern side, and it is possible that the extent of the cut has not yet been found. A key issue, however, is why the material on either side of the drain should differ so considerably from one another, and this may suggest that the character of the bank extending southeast of the circular structure is quite different from the classic profile from Trench 9.

Trench 17

Trench 17 is located on the northern cardinal point of the arena within the area of the bank. It was started in 2004 and extended in 2005 with the goal of establishing the function of the structural remains uncovered in the first year, these were a length of wall foundation [17005] and a square post-pad like feature [17014/17004]. The trench was extended eastward in a square of approximately 6m with a 2m wide exploratory trench extending 15m northwards of the main trench. This was to establish the presence of any bank material and to determine whether the pebble surface found in 2004 extends further east. Figure 10 is a schematic plan of the main features.

The length of straight wall was found to extend east for a distance of approximately 8m. Construction was similar along the length of the wall, consisting of a dry-stone foundation of angular stones laid in familiar herring-bone pattern. A single course of facing stones, placed along both wall facings, still remains above the foundation stones. These have been placed with mortar, while the interior of the wall is packed with a mixture of smaller stones and mortar. It appears that nearly all of the wall above this point has been lost to ploughing.

A further two post-pad like structures were discovered [17042 and 17046], which when considered alongside that from the 2004 trench, appear to represent three evenly spaced and in a line parallel to the wall and starting about 1m in front of it. Both structures uncovered in 2005 consist of small angular stones placed vertically into the ground, arranged in the form of a 1m x 1m (approximate) square. On the whole, both are poorly made in relation to the western-most example from 2004, in particular the easternmost one which appears to be partially destroyed. Found extending south from the wall and abutting the two newly discovered structures is a patchy surface consisting of a mixture of small pebbles and flecks of chalk [17058/17066]. The surface extends southward, sloping downwards as it approaches the arena wall. Laid down on top of the eastern half of the straight wall, the pebble surface and the easternmost pad-like structure is a deposit of greenish yellow clay-soil mixture [17043] extending along the length of the northern side of the wall, where it contains larger rubble and bits of mortar [17075]. A small extension was made beyond the eastern end of the wall, which uncovered thin patches of mixed clay and soil just below the ploughsoil [17056]. Finally, the long northern extension successfully uncovered the remains of a pebble surface [17064] similar to that from 2004, containing a mix of pebbles, occasional pottery and considerable amounts red mortar.

The large area approach to excavation undertaken this season has provided considerable insight into activity on the northern side of the circular structure. The wall and post pads would appear to represent either: (1) the foundations of a wooden platform or colonnade, or (2) a formalised area for the display of statuary, pillars or other objects. Given the presence of the prepared pebble and chalk surface, the latter may be more appropriate, the post pads representing flat surfaces from which larger objects could have been placed. There are almost no finds in association with these features, which suggests that this

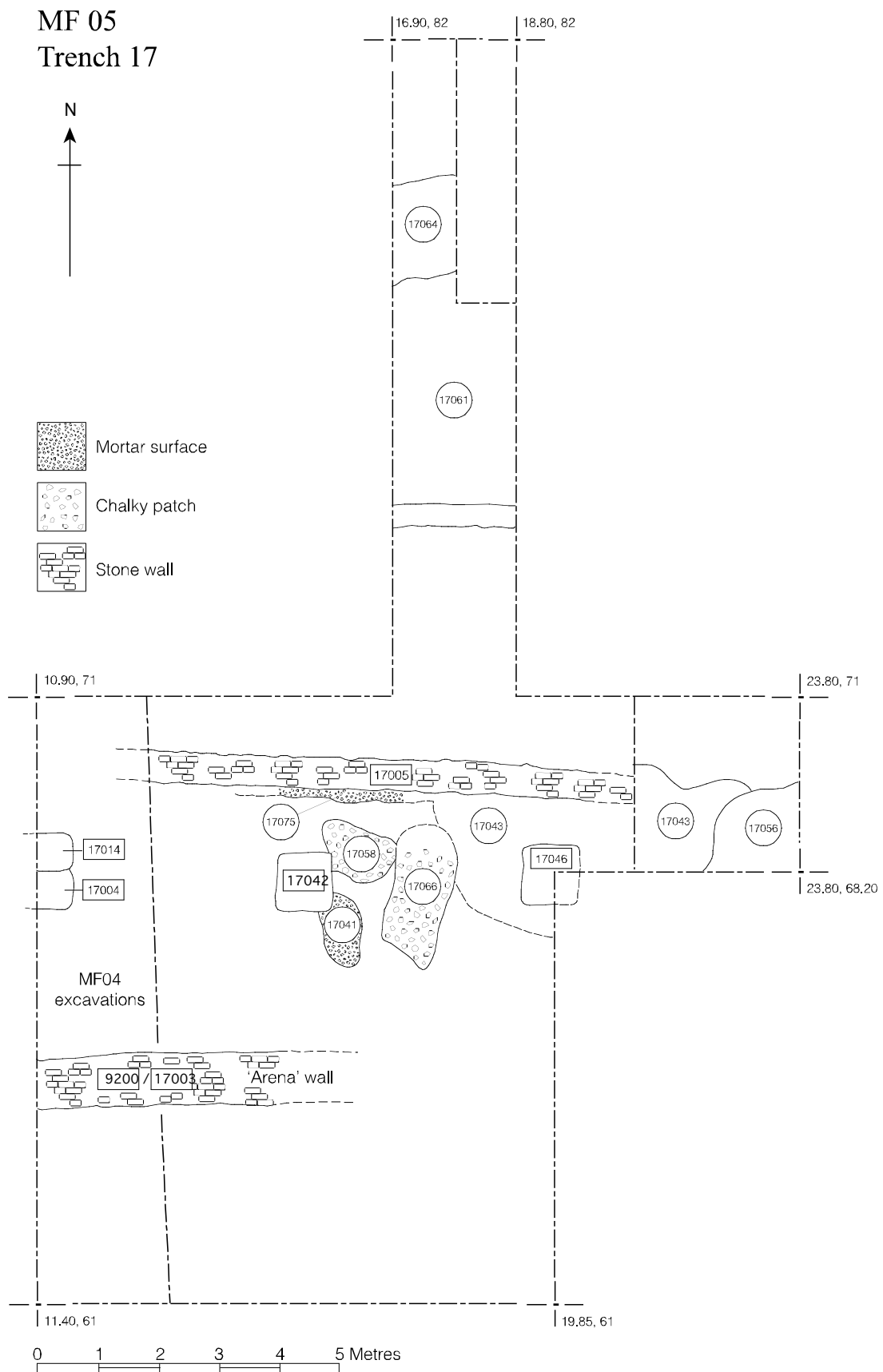


Figure 10. A schematic plan of Trench 17, at the northern cardinal point of the arena.

area was not frequented by those using the circular structure but instead intentionally left as a display area. The sloping pebble and chalk surface may indicate that whatever was constructed in this area was

intended for viewing from both the interior and bank around the circular structure. Much of the area then appears to have been covered in a clay surface which may represent the end of use of this part of the circular structure. Finally, the clay surfaces found east of the end of the back wall may in fact be the beginnings of the bank, which seems to begin again beyond the eastern end of the formal display area.

Discussion and the 2006 season

In 1985 Richard Hingley suggested that this Romano-British site was a rural religious complex based around a large temple with an associated amphitheatre and other public buildings. Our work over the last five seasons has provided a wealth of detail to fill out this interpretation which, generally speaking, we would support, although we would question labelling the circular structure 'amphitheatre' as being too simplistic. We are beginning to piece together this large and complex site both spatially and chronologically, but also in terms of how people during the first four centuries AD used and experienced this important religious place.

This season was successful in helping the understanding of the area around the entrance to the temple through the *temenos* wall. The entrance itself seems to be surprisingly small although it is elaborated by a range of rooms either side on the inside area of the *temenos* and, perhaps, a portico running around the inside of the wall. A distinctive gravel path leads through the entrance into the sacred area and towards the temple matching the description of the path leaving the eastern entrance of the temple as described by Bradford and Goodchild (1939). In one of our earlier trenches we found evidence for landscape gardening within the sacred precinct and in 2006 we will explore this area further to see whether there are structures such as shrines. We also need to establish the south eastern corner of the *temenos* wall to match the north eastern corner excavated in 2002 which will confirm that the overall size of this temple possibly makes it one of the biggest in Roman Britain.

Outside the entrance are the two structures to the south which are now fully excavated. To call these a pair of shops/workshops is an interpretation which suggests the level of engagement that people would have had with the temple during a visit. While the experience as a whole was probably deeply religious, and we can image the peace, tranquillity and reverence within the inner sanctum of the *temenos* and the temple itself, outside the entrance was a busy cobbled courtyard offering a variety of opportunities. There could have been a whole range of trading activities but what we have evidence for is eating and drinking in and around the southern building and the production of a variety of copper-alloy trinkets and tokens from the other building, some (or even all) of which were for depositing as offerings to the deities in other parts of the site. The other side of the entrance, to the north, there are more buildings, at least one with a well-built hearth, although we don't know the function of these yet. The other side of the cobbled piazza a wide pathway leads away from the temple towards the other main feature of the site, the so-called amphitheatre. Evidence from this year points towards there being a network of pathways around the site, intriguing because it suggests that people had choice in moving around the site and that other buildings and structures could have been attracting them, perhaps in locations that we haven't explored yet.

It is clear that for people leaving the temple and moving into the rest of the site, the arena within the circular structure, and any activities therein, would not have been visible. In fact, the whole structure may not have looked very impressive from this point and the low the earthen bank that surrounds the arena is quite different to the high, steep impressive banks of amphitheatres such as Silchester which are designed to draw people into positions of viewing the performances within the arena. It is possible that something may have been visible at the northern point perhaps positioned on the plinths excavated there this year, and, of course, we have yet to excavate the western point which is directly facing the temple itself. Three-dimensional soil resistivity tomography carried out there this year suggests considerable structures and this area will be a main focus of excavation in 2006.

The excavation of this western point will also provide an opportunity to explore another aspect of the religious practices carried out here in more detail, the votive deposition of a variety of objects in and around the rear of the circular structure's bank. We already have considerable evidence for this from the southern and south-western areas, and the eastern cardinal point, that have been excavated, with many hundreds of artefacts being found. This year there was also evidence for what could have been simple shrines or alters, settings of stones with artefacts around them together with a more substantial well-built wall foundation, all close to the rear of the bank. The objects themselves display a wide variation with most being copper-alloy although other materials such as bone pins are also present. Some of them were probably made within the nearby workshop, fairly crude tokens or coin copies, while others seem to be individual items brought from afar by people to be deposited here, very nice brooches for example. This range of material in terms of value and quality suggests that it was the act of deposition that was important and people gave what they could depending on their personal circumstances. Within this accepted form of religious practice the details were not strictly prescribed and also, probably not carried out within the public sphere but as a personal and private act of devotion.

It is interesting to think of the circular structure here as a banked enclosure, perhaps establishing links with a prehistoric past still represented within its design and use. The circular structure was constructed using techniques of creating banks of long antiquity within the British Isles and certainly key to the construction of hillforts. It is interesting in this regard that the amphitheatre at Maumbury Rings in Dorchester was constructed using a Neolithic henge. The henge itself was of a unique type, with a single entrance, that was remodelled early in the Roman period, possibly straight after the invasion through the construction of a wooden amphitheatre with a deeply excavated floor and a massive bridge over the original Neolithic entrance, as well as the construction of three rooms cut into the chalk (Bradley 1975). It was disused by the early second century AD and re-used again in the later Roman period. Bradley was working with the results of an excavation carried out between 1908-13 and his feeling was that the earliest Roman structure was a military one. If this is true it would not have been the local inhabitants re-using a site important for its antiquity, but the Roman army making convenient use of an existing structure. This maybe true but does not also explain the further use between AD 250-350. We would like to raise the possibility that both the amphitheatre at Maumbury Rings and the structure at Marcham/Frilford drew on either older structures or older traditions of construction, which maintained some significance in the then present. There has been a lot of discussion for prehistoric periods of the importance of past monuments (Bradley 2002, Gosden and Lock 1998). What we are looking at in the Romano-British period is something more complicated, with people embracing new forms of construction and action, but doing so within older idioms of building. This is a structure of fusion where new techniques such as plastered and painted stone walls are incorporated into long established traditions of artefact deposition and the significance and importance of watery places and banked enclosures.

While we don't have any evidence yet of prehistoric activity within the circular structure (although there is much more excavation to do, especially in the centre), there is the Iron Age settlement beneath the nearby temple and the middle Bronze Age antecedents excavated by us in 2001. Beneath the circular structure, soil resistivity tomography has shown a sub-surface circular wet area that goes several metres deeper than the stone arena wall although it is approximately the same size and shape. This suggests that the whole structure 'enclosed' an existing natural feature so that in the early Romano-British period by using newly introduced building techniques the place was in some way formalised and incorporated into the newly emerging religious practices that blended the old with the new. A large part of these changes can be seen as the formalisation of religious places, the move from a focus on natural locations to temples and other built structures. Alongside this change went the transformation of deities so that they no longer resided within rivers, bogs, woods and mountains but were accessible within prescribed and dedicated buildings. Of course this simplification needs to

incorporate considerable flexibility as people could have personal alters and conduct individual worship in a variety of situations but Roman temples, and certainly large religious complexes such as Marcham/Frilford, do demonstrate a massive change in the whole process of worshipping within a relatively short period of time.

Through this process of formalisation the focus for individuals at Marcham/Frilford seems to have partially settled on the rear of the bank. As yet we don't know what events took place inside the arena but there is a strong feeling of the bank area being for personal acts of worship and perhaps the arena itself being for more formal public events such as ceremonies, services and plays possibly conducted by the priests associated with the nearby temple. It may be that the pre-structure focus for all forms of worship was the boggy area itself but this then became split by the formal activities monopolising the central area, not least by building the wall around it, while the deposition around the outside represents the continuation of individual worship but now marginalised and, perhaps even subversive. Excavation in 2006 will continue within the arena, including the central area, to explore the drain systems and try and establish what sorts of activities could have taken place within there.

This season has also begun to clarify the chronology of the site although much detailed work is still to be done in this area. There seems little reason to argue with the accepted range of the temple from late 1st/early 2nd century AD to late 4th century and the buildings associated with the *temenos* wall are contemporary with this. Beneath the northern most of the two shop/workshops, however, was evidence of a pre-building structure and although this has yet to be dated it could represent late prehistoric activity. The arena wall and the complex archaeology of the eastern and southern cardinal points have provided evidence for the phasing of this structure. At least the main internal drain is contemporary with the initial building of the arena wall and this may have cut through an existing bank to the south. Two original breaks in the wall, to the east and south, were filled in a later phase suggesting a change in the spatial configuration of the arena and the possibility that its use, and what went on inside it, was not constant throughout its lifetime of three centuries or so.

The late fourth century is becoming increasingly interesting, not least because it marks the demise of the temple and the possibility of the introduction of Christianity at the site. There is evidence for a considerable increase in the deposition of artefacts at this time and the human burials within the bank at the eastern point are probably of this date. This could be interpreted as a reaction to a religion under stress, increased worship and offerings to ensure existing practices and beliefs with the burials being the ultimate expression of this. Alternatively, if the burials are Christian, and we have no way of knowing this, they could represent the 'closing' of a pagan monument at its point of abandonment. At this same time it appears that the arena is falling into disrepair with material accumulating on the arena floor and the bank beginning to erode into it. Nearby, the large rectangular building excavated in 2001-4, shows a great deal of activity within it at this time and although it is a building of unusual size and proportions, as yet without a parallel, we should not rule out the possibility that it was an early church in its last phase even if that was not its original purpose. What happened in the immediate post-Roman period we have little or no evidence for although we must bear in mind the nearby cemetery with Saxon burials and that the field is called 'trendles', Saxon for circle or circular, indicating that in some form the memory of this structure lived on.

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