Trench MF11 narrative

Trevor Greer

Introduction

Trenches MF10 and MF11 were opened in 2002 and were part of a series of trenches that continued a prehistoric focus on the Marcham site following on from Trenches MF3 and MF12 opened in 2001. Whereas Trenches MF3 and MF12 were placed to investigate distinct features visible from the geophysical survey, Trenches MF10 and MF11 were not based upon the presence of geophysical survey anomalies but rather provided a test of an area that did not show anomalies. In Trench MF3 for example a small sub circular enclosure and part of a larger rectangular enclosure that identified a complex of ditches and pits ranging in date from the Middle Bronze Age to Romano British, whilst Trench MF12 was excavated to verify that both sections of the larger enclosure ditch were part of the same feature. These four trenches were situated in the south-central part of the site and with Trenches 10 and 11 approximately 25 metres to the east of Trenches MF3 and MF12. Trenches MF10 and MF11 each of 10m x 20m were in line with Trench MF11 set below Trench MF10, spaced 10 metres apart and each on an east-west axis. Both trenches were stripped down to the natural to remove plough soil. The natural was an awkward mixture of sand and badly decayed limestone. In both trenches a number of features were visible cut into the natural, and all excavated in section. All of the features in Trench MF11 turned out to be, following excavation, natural, with most of them being tree throws. No positive archaeological evidence was recovered from this trench.

Cuts and fills

(11000). Top Soil. Loamy mid brown silt with considerable evidence of ploughing. This contained pieces of limestone and sherds of abraded pottery.

(11001) Bedrock.

[11013] Slot A small rectangular slot 0.38m wide x 0.2m deep. Phased with a small sherd of Roman pottery.

(11003) Top Fill Compact mid brown fine sandy loam.

(11014) Mid Fill Limestone and pebbles within a mid-brown sandy loam.

(11020) Bottom Fill Mixed mid brown and dark yellowish sandy loam.

[11019] Tree Throw A possible pit or tree throw 1.8m in diameter x 1.9m deep, with sloping sides and a flat base.

(11006) Top Fill. Brown sandy loam, containing a sherd of Roman pottery.

(11017) Mid Fill. Mid brown loam, with pieces of limestone and a sherd of pottery.

(11018) Bottom Fill Limestone pieces in a sandy matrix.

[11021] Tree Throw. Probable tree throw seen as a bean shaped feature 1.5m long x 0.55m

wide.

(11007) Single fill. Pinkish brown sandy loam with pieces of limestone and three sherds of Roman pottery.

[11022] Tree Throw A U-shaped tree throw 0.4 to 0.5m wide x 0.11m deep.

(11008) Single Fill Friable brown sandy loam with limestone inclusions and two sherds of Roman pottery.

[11026] Tree Throw Probable Tree Throw. Irregular shaped feature continuing under the baulk of the trench 0.73m wide x 0.72m deep.

(11015) Single Fill. Mid brown sandy loam with two small pieces of abraded pottery.

[11027] Pit Large irregular shaped shallow pit. Possibly a natural feature.

(11010) Top fill. Loose dark brown soil with animal bone and Roman pottery sherds.

(11011) Mid Fill. Mid brown sandy loam with Roman pottery sherds.

(11028) Mid Fill. Mid Brown loamy soil with Roman pottery sherds.

(11029) Bottom Fill Mid brown sandy loam. No inclusions.

[11030] Natural Feature Irregular linear feature, approximately 2m long x 0.7m wide at its widest point x 0.25m deep.

(11009) Single Fill Mid brown sandy loam with flecks of charcoal and inclusions of Roman Pottery sherds, animal bone and flint.

[11032] Large Slab A large limestone slab approximately 0.3mx0.2m, roughly oval in shape and 4cm thick. There was clear evidence of burning on the top face of the slab with the stone discoloured by intense heat. This stone was possibly used as a hearth base.

Layers

(11004) Layer. A natural accumulation of material within an erosion hollow in the bedrock (11001). This material was made up of mid brown sandy loam with small limestone pieces and inclusions of Roman pottery sherds, animal bone and pieces of charcoal.

(11005) Layer. A natural accumulation of soil within a hollow in the bedrock filled with friable sandy loam with inclusions of Roman pottery sherds and a single Copper-Alloy 3rd/4th century Roman coin.

(11012) Layer. Area of burning over a limestone slab [11032] with inclusions of flint and charcoal.

(11025) Layer. A layer of angular limestone fragments within a sandy red/brown matrix,

approximately 18cm in thickness. This area lies on the edge of shattered limestone bedrock in an erosion hollow. This layer had Roman pottery sherd inclusions.

Small Finds

There were only four small finds recovered from this trench and all from within archaeological levels. These finds included three 3rd/4th century Copper-Alloy Roman coins from contexts (11005), (11009) and (11031). Context (11005) highlighted above was the fill of a hollow in the bedrock whilst the remaining contexts were general layers. From Context (11025), a general layer, an iron Ox Goad was recovered.

Pottery Analysis

In total 203 pottery sherds were excavated in Trench 11, the group was made up of four sherds of Iron Age pottery all of type PCW (Prehistoric Coarse Ware), and 199 sherds of Roman pottery representing a range of pottery types.

Three contexts were provided large quantities of pottery, context (11000) topsoil with 72 sherds (36.1%), context (11004) with 48 sherds (24.1%) and context (11010) with 24 sherds (12%). Context (11004) is noted in Layers above. The remaining pottery sherds were fairly evenly distributed across 11 contexts. The Table below lists six of these pottery types in order of magnitude. This Group also reflects on the major pottery types found elsewhere on the site.

1. RCWR Roman Coarse Ware Reduced. 54 sherds. 27.1%.
2. RFWOX Roman Fine Ware Oxidised. 52 sherds. 26.1%.
3. RFWR. Roman Fine Ware Reduced. 26 sherds. 13.0%.
4. RFWR. Roman Coarse Ware Oxidised. 25 sherds. 12.5%.
5. SM. Samian Ware. 10 sherds. 5.0%.
6. D. Decorated Ware. 8 sherds. 4.0%.