Trench MF15 narrative

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Introduction

Trench 15 was opened in 2004 and was situated to the west of the Marcham site, the most northerly of a group of trenches concentrating on the entrance of the *temenos*: with trenches 32 and 18 abutting trench 15's southern boundary. Geophysical survey and excavations in previous seasons had demonstrated the presence of several Romano-British structures lying near the east of the temple as well as several segments of the *temenos* wall, which demarcates the area of the temple compound. Investigations in this area during the 2004 season focussed upon further understanding the nature of these structures around the temple establishing their relationship with the temple and finding the formal entrance to the temple complex.

Initially trench 15 was opened as a slot trench designed to cut across the *temenos* wall. While an area of cobbling was encountered the wall itself was not found. The trench was extended to the south, increasing its size to 15m x 13m, and linking it to trench 18. In the extension the remains of the robbed out *temenos* boundary wall was found measuring approximately 1.2 m wide.

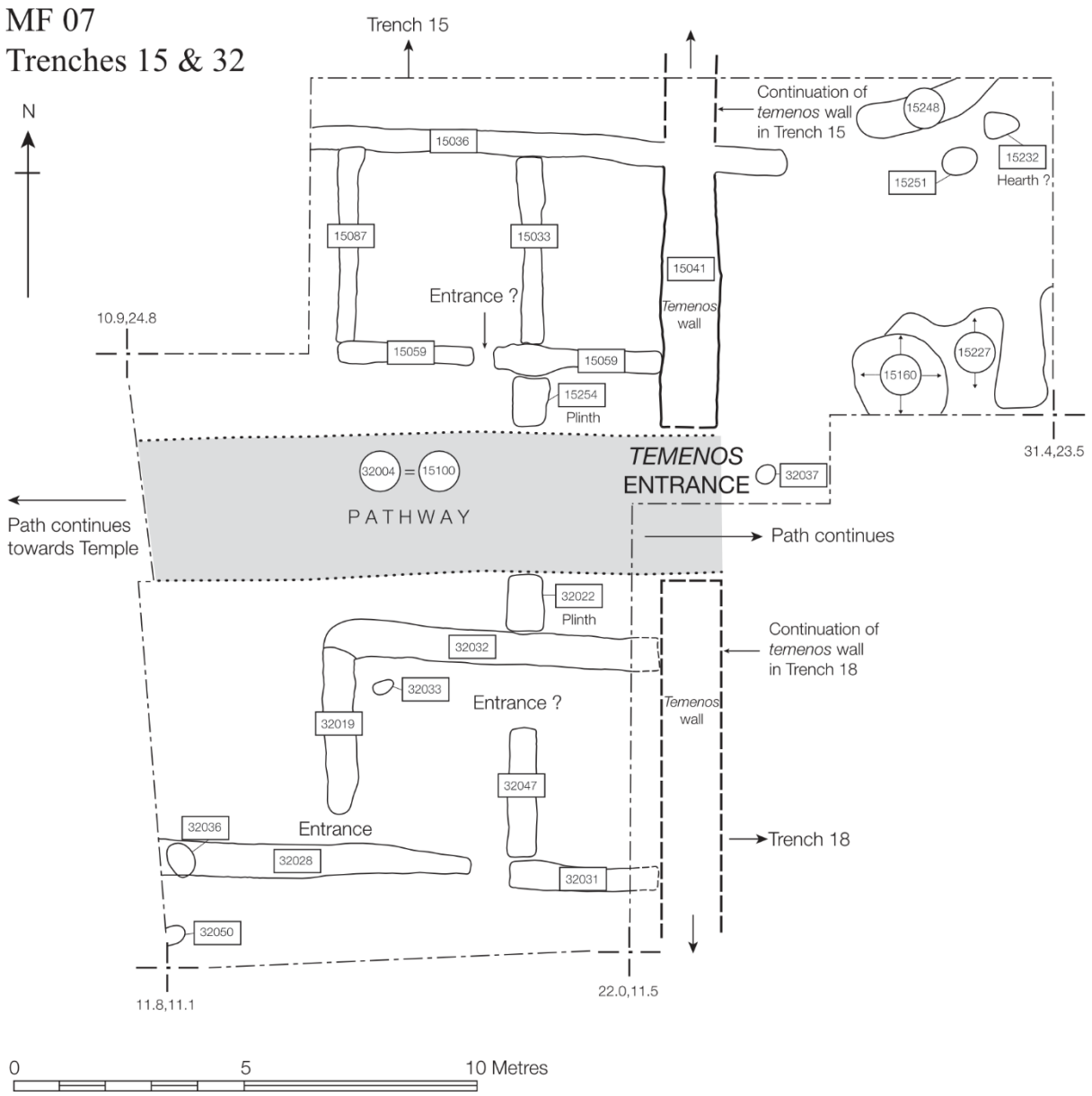
Just inside the temple precinct was evidence of a room joining the *temenos* wall, the purpose of which is unknown. Outside the temple enclosure a single wall extended to the east possibly indicating that there had been a structure on this side of the entrance.

There was evidence of substantial gravel metalling to the south of the building in the temple enclosure. There was also evidence of extensive cobbled surfaces outside the enclosure. This surface might be part of a path that led from the gate. A range of small finds were recovered including a coin of Domitian (AD 81–96) which was sealed in the top of an earlier ground surface, below where the floor of the room would have been. Furthermore, the remains of an almost complete Savernake-ware pot of the first to early second century AD was found sealed within the cobbling outside the temple entrance. Therefore, it would be reasonable to place the construction of the temple precinct somewhere between AD 81 to about AD 120.

Excavations have determined that the buildings in trench 15 mirror those in trench 32 in alignment, layout and dimensions and form a suite of rooms either side of what was determined as the formal path to and from the temple. Both buildings have an internal division to create two rooms each with one being 4.2m x 2.5m and a second 4.2m x 3.3m. In trench 15 the north-south dividing wall [15033] was created after those running east-west, although it is not possible to determine whether this arrangement was contemporary with the original construction or created later. These structures were recorded as building BU4. The east wall of these structures being formed by the temenos wall.

Directly to the south and adjoining the central wall [15033] of the suite of rooms in trench 15 a rectangular feature measuring 1.45m x 0.8m and constructed of flat tabular pieces of limestone bonded with mortar forming a single layer of stones set at 45 degrees (herring bone style) was excavated. A similar feature [32022] of approximately the same size was located in trench 32. The trench 15 feature was marked by a rather ephemeral cut into the subsoil [15001] and did not contain any stones. These two features were directly in line and appeared to define the width of the path to and from the temple precinct. At the time of excavation theses features were interpreted as possible plinths that may have supported an arch or columns that provided a formal

ceremonial entrance into the temple precinct. However, there is very little evidence to support this interpretation. A more detailed analysis of these features is provided in the cuts and structures analysis of this narrative.



Trenches MF15 and MF32

Very little investigation of the structure and layout of the formal path between trenches 15 and 32 has been carried out within the remit of trench 15 analysis, therefore this will be covered in detail within the trench 32 analysis.

An extensive area of cobbling (15005) and (15081) was located to the east side of the *temenos* wall (outside of the temple precinct) that provided a formal cobbled area to the entrance of the temple precinct. Context (15081) was sited to the north-east of the trench and covered an area of extensive cobbling within which a large hearth [15121] was recorded. Within this area of cobbling a number of small finds were recovered many of which were personal items that may have been votive deposits.

On the west side of the temenos wall an extensive area of gravelling (15006) was excavated and similar gravelling on the east side of the temenos wall that were inline appeared to form the surface of the path into the precinct.

Trench dimensions.
Excavations in 2005 further extended the trench northward and east to further examine the *temenos* wall. The final dimensions of trench 15 were 21m north-south and 18m east-west, with the southern boundary of trench 15 bisecting the east-west path into the temple compound at its centre point. Trench 32's northern boundary abutted trench 15's southern boundary.

Roman Phase Structures
Structures that make up building BU4. This group of walls formed two rooms on the west side of the Temenos wall within the temple precinct. The rooms were set east-west and north of a corresponding suite of two rooms directly to the south (Trench 32) being separated by the entrance path into the temple precinct.

Note. During excavation several context numbers were used as various parts of the structures were excavated, however, to help simplify reference to the structure a single context number has been allotted to each wall.

North wall [15036].

[15036]. [15099]. [15073]. **Wall.** Foundation cuts of wall **[15036].** The wall had been robbed out in antiquity. This is the north wall of two rooms, running east-west from the temenos wall inside the temple precinct. This wall was approximately 3.6 m in length and 0.7m in width**.**

(15035). (15069). (15072). (15086). (15231). (15238). (15240). **Fill.** Compacted hard gravelly silt with small stones. The later layers of the fill (15231) to (15240), provided a gravelly fill of the robbed out wall that included large pieces of Roman pottery and CBM together with pebbles. Layer (15240) appears to be redeposited soil from the surrounding area.

West wall [15039].

[15039]. [15087]. [15090]. **Wall.** Foundation cut of wall [15039]. This wall had been robbed out in antiquity. This wall formed the west wall of the suite of rooms and was set on a north-south orientation. The wall measured approximately 5.4m in length and 1m at its widest point.

(15058). (15088). (15091). **Fill.** Loose light brown sandy loam co-mingled with Roman pottery sherds, CBM, animal bone and a Cu-Alloy late 3rd/4th century Roman coin, providing dating material.

South wall [15059].

[15059]. **Wall.** Foundation cut of wall [15059]. This wall had been robbed out in antiquity.

[15039]. This wall formed the southern wall of the suite of two rooms and was set on an east-west orientation. This wall measured approximately 4.3m in length and 1m in width with a depth of 0.6m. Note. The re-use of context number [15039] was necessary at the time of excavation as it denoted the corner of the wall.

(15038). Fill. Sandy loam with limestone inclusions together with CBM and a copper-alloy
(15058). 3rd/4th century Roman coin. Context (15246) appeared as mortared cobbles
(15246). but could be an area of unrobbed foundation of the wall.

Dividing wall [15034].

[15034]. Wall. Foundation cut of wall [15034]. This wall had been robbed out in antiquity. The wall formed the dividing wall in BU4 forming the two rooms. The wall was set on a north-south orientation at a proximately the centre point of the north and south walls of the structure. This wall measured approximately 3.7m in length and 0.5m in width.

(15033). Fill. A fill of rough rubble, limestone pieces and CBM together with loose mortar. This may have been the original foundation material of the wall that had become disturbed.

The East wall (Temenos Wall) [15041].

[15040]. Wall. Several cut contexts were used during the excavation of this section of the
[15041]. temenos wall in trench 15. However, a single cut number has been used
[15052]. [15041] as a reference to the east wall of BU4. This part of the Temenos wall
[15125]. had been robbed out in antiquity. The temenos wall set on a north-south orientation formed the east wall of the suite of rooms. This section of the temenos measured approximately 5m in length and 1.4m in width and had depth of 0.3m.

(15008). Fill. Top fill of gravelly soil.
(15015).
(15050). Mid. The mid contexts (x4) largely consisted of CBM with inclusions of Roman glass.
(15051).
(15053).
(15098).
(15101). Bot. The bottom three contexts consisted of layer of rubble set over a layer of gravelly
(15103). soil below which lay bedrock.
(15109). NB. The temenos trench continued south into Trench 18 being recorded as [18037].

Other cuts and fills. A continuation of the Temenos wall beyond BU4.

[15040]. Wall. Context cut [15040] continued south beyond building BU4 to define the entrance to the temple precinct through the temenos wall.
(15008). Fill. Top fill. Friable sandy loam with CBM.
(15050). Fill. Mid fill. Within temenos wall fill with CBM, charcoal, stone and Roman pottery sherds.

(15053). Fill. Bottom fill. Sandy gravel with animal bone Roman pottery sherds, mortar and stone.

Floor cut [15064]. An area 4m x3 m originally thought to be the remains of a cobbled surface, or possibly an area of demolition rubble. However, later excavations indicated that this was most probably an ad-hoc surface within a work area as several possible hearths and a possible post pad lay within this context. Single fill (15063) consisting of dark brown sandy loam with gravel and limestone pieces. Found within this layer was a Copper-Alloy 3rd/4th century Roman coin and Copper-Alloy pins.

Post pad [15070]. A possible pad for a large post. Single fill (15068) of grey/brown sandy loam with pieces of limestone, CBM and patches of mortar.

Foundation cut [15097] and [15021] A rectangular cut against the north side of the north wall [15036] approximately 1.4m wide x 0.5m deep which ran from wall [15036] directly north to the northern baulk of the trench. Although its purpose is not understood it has been recorded as a possible foundation cut. Top fill (15085) of loose silty sand with CBM, stone and bone inclusions. Variable in depth of 5 to 30 cm. Bottom fill (15098) like top fill (possibly the same fill).

Hearth [15121]. Possible hearth, U-shaped. Constructed of limestone blocks bonded with grey/yellowish clay, with a narrow entrance on its east side. Many stones showed evidence of burning. The structure was 1.4m long x 1.1m wide and 0.5m in depth. This feature was situated to the northern section of trench 15 on the outside and against the temenos wall. The structure had collapsed inward. Top fill (15152) of the narrow entrance consisted of hard yellow clay soil with small charcoal inclusions. Bottom fill (15106) inner fill of the hearth. Dark reddish clay loam over bedrock. This layer was 32cm in depth with the fill being co-mingled with CBM, mostly tile and with a concentration of charcoal in the top third of this fill.

Post pad [15122]. Cut of a possible post pad. Oval in shape, measuring 1m x 0.67m and 6cm in depth. Single fill (15112). A mixture of gravel with irregular limestone pieces set in mortar.

Hearth [15123]. Cut for possible hearth. Shallow scoop or pit. Circular in shape 1.2m in diameter and approximately 0.4m in depth containing evidence of burning. Top fill (15116) dark brown silty clay soil together with small stones. Approximately 30% of this fill was made up of charcoal pieces. Mid fill (15124) of dark brown sandy soil with approximately 70% charcoal. A 3rd/4th century copper-alloy coin found in this fill. Bottom fill (15085) of mid brown sandy soil with traces of charcoal and small stones.

[15137] Cut. Circular cut, approximately 0.5 m in diameter. Purpose not determined.
(15138) Fill. Single fill of red brown sandy loam.

Pit [15157]. Cut of an oval feature, possibly a pit, 1.4m x 1m x 0.2m deep with gently sloping sides with bedrock at the base. Single fill (15158) of brown sandy loam. A single sherd of Roman pottery found in fill.

Hearth [15162]. A possible hearth. A group of stones forming a semicircle (no dimensions recorded). Top fill (15165) a layer of mortar associated with this group of stones. A 3rd/4th century Roman coin was found in this layer. Bottom fill (15233) a deposit of charcoal beneath the mortar layer.

Hearth cut [15163]. Cut of structure [15162] measuring 0.4m x 0.2m Single fill (15164) of clay/loam.

Hearth [15192]. Stone hearth, oblong in shape 58cm x 83cm and set beneath contexts (15181) and (15173). A piece of Roman pottery with animal bone burnt stone and shell found within this hearth. Single fill (15261).

Hearth [15205]. Cut through (15190). Possibly part of a small hearth subsequently filled with rubbish, some of which was burnt. Single fill (15209) of black granular soil with burnt mortar. A piece of tesserae and animal bone within this fill.

Possible hearth [15211]. Elongated cut into bedrock 1.5m long x 30 – 50cm wide and 20cm deep. Possibly intended to be a hearth. This feature lies directly in front of hearth [15121] and under fill (15152). Single fill (15208) of yellow brown friable soil with charcoal inclusions.

Burial Pit [15213]. Cut of pit for the ritual burial of a sheep or goat. Oval in shape, 70cm x 40cm wide and 13cm deep (clearly at the time of burial this would have been deeper). Fill (15212) of loose mid grey sandy loam within which lay the complete articulated skeleton of a sheep or goat <4774> together with two broken Roman black ware ceramic pots, one inside the other, <4841> and <4851>, together with a small intact Roman red ware pot <4775>. This ritual deposition of a sacrifice took place within the temple precinct.

Path [15214]. L-shaped ditch 6m long x 0.4m wide. This ditch follows the shape and area of the pedestrian pathway (15160) and may have been cut to provide the foundation for it. Single fill (15202) of compacted brown loam co-mingled with small stones and broken tile suggesting a possible path foundation. Several sherds of Roman pottery, animal bone, pieces of metal and CBM were recovered from this fill.

Hearth [15217]. Possible hearth. Elongated in shape approximately 1.05 m long x 0.6m wide and 0.2m in depth, with bedrock as the base. The sides of the pit were red caused by burning. Single fill (15216) of soft black earth with pieces of charcoal, Roman pottery sherds, animal bone and small stones.

Hearth [15221]. Line of burnt stones, possibly the remains of a hearth or tumble of stones. This feature was not excavated beyond the baulk of the trench. Pieces of Roman pottery, animal bone and pieces of metal were found within these stones. No fill recorded.

Pit [15224]. Shallow pit measuring 1m long x 0.5m wide and 0.2m in depth. Single fill (15222) of loose soil containing Roman pottery sherds, animal bone, flint, metal fragments, plaster and CBM.

Plinth [15223]. Cut of what was thought to be a possible plinth made up of three courses of well laid tabular stone. However there does not appear to be any recorded measurement or fill data. This feature was positioned outside the temenos wall.

Pit [15225]. Possible fire pit, 1m in diameter with irregular sides and approximately 18cm in depth. Single fill (15201) of brown sandy loam within which were various pockets of burnt material together charcoal. Three 3rd/4th century copper-alloy Roman coin**s** were recovered.

Unphased cuts and features

Posthole [15056]. Possible posthole. Circular in shape, measuring 0.23m in diameter and 0.m in depth. Single fill (15057) of greyish brown loam.

Cut [15066]. Circular cut approximately 1.1m in diameter and 6cm deep. Single fill (15067) of compacted sandy loam.

Cut [15080]. A 1.15m x 1m cut forming an angled corner that extended under the baulk of trench. This feature was not excavated beyond the trench baulk. Possibly an extended floor surface or remains of an area of robbed out cobbling. This feature was situated next to an area of cobbling to the east of the temenos wall. Single fill (15004) of compacted sandy loam with limestone inclusions and flecks of charcoal.

Cut [15089]. An irregular cut approximately 1.3m in length x 0.8m in width and 0.12m in depth, forming a delta shape. This feature extends from walls [15059] [15039] into the most westerly room. This is probably part of the foundation of the floor surface. Single fill (15065) of compacted sandy loam, co-mingled with gravel and limestone pieces in places up to 15cm deep.

Posthole [15172]. Possible posthole in the line of the possible wall foundation [15153]. Single fill (15171) of compacted sandy loam.

Hearth [15232]. A small hearth or oven cut down into bedrock. This structure was D-shaped, and clay lined with vertical sides. On the surface the clay was moulded to form a smooth rounded rim. This structure measured 0.5m x 0.3m x 0.25min depth.

Pit [15251]. Approximately 0.9m in diameter and situated within the cobbled area (15227) and (15228). This pit had steep sloping sides to a depth of 0.22m. Top fill (15252) of loose sandy material with gravel approximately 4cm in depth. Bottom fill (15253) of fine gravel and mid brown soil.

Plinth (15254). Possible plinth or a continuation of wall [15033], or a separate structure the purpose for which is unclear. This structure measured 1.45m x 0.8m and was constructed of flat tabular pieces of limestone ranging up to 25cm in length each set into the ground at approximately 45 degrees (herring bone style) and bonded with mortar forming a single layer of stones. A section drawing show this structure to be positioned directly below topsoil (15000) and within subsoil (15001). There was no further excavation beneath this structure to look for evidence for a foundation.

Directly in line and to the south of this structure a corresponding feature in trench 32 [32022] consisting of a light cut into clayey soil and of similar dimensions to [15254] but without any structural material was observed. With the alignment of these two features that appear to demarcate the width of the pathway through the temenos wall into the temple precinct gave rise to the interpretation that these features may have been plinths that supported either columnsor statues or an arch forming a ceremonial entrance. However, there appears to be very little evidence to support this theory.

Note: The pathway that provided a pedestrian walkway into and from the temple precinct has not been dealt with in this narrative although certain features allude to it. This therefore will be fully examined in the narrative of Trench 32.

Extensive areas of cobbling/gravelling

Context (15005). This was a large area of cobbling situated on the mid-point of the trench and ran from the east side of the *temenos* wall to the east baulk of the trench. To the south-east corner of the trench a second area of cobbling (15181) and south of (15005) that would suggest a much greater area of cobbling may have existed along the *temenos* wall area.

An extensive area of gravelling context (15006) located within the temple precinct on the west side of the *temenos* wall. A second area of gravelling (15009) on the east side of the *temenos* wall and both approximately in line appear to form the formal pathway through the entrance to and from the temple precinct. These features should be further explored/explained in the trench 32 narrative.

Plough marks recorded.

Several plough marks were recorded and given context numbers. Whilst they do not add to the archaeology of the trench, they do serve to illustrate the fragility of the site and the level of disturbance to the underlying archaeology. Areas where soil depth is little more than 0.5m in depth over bedrock, which was the case in parts of trench 15. In total 8 plough marks were recorded in trench 15 and given cut context numbers, [15130] [15132] [15134] [15136] [15137] [15144] [15147] and [15150].

Small Finds

In total 469 small finds were recovered from trench 15, however 177 (37.7%) of these were in topsoil and sub soil contexts within which extensive ploughing activity was observed. Section drawings for seven of these contexts showed the depth of soil over bedrock to be less than 0.5m. These contexts are (15000) topsoil and (15001) (15002) (15008) (15082) (15083) (15084) (15063) (15092) (15173) and (15197). Therefore, the finds from these contexts should be disregarded although for the record the significant finds are as follows:

74	3rd/4th century Cu-alloy Roman coins	29	Vessel (glass) fragments.
2	Shale bracelets.	6	Cu-alloy bracelets/bracelet fragments.
4	Cu-alloy finger rings.	6	Cu-alloy pins
3	Bone/antler pins		

There were 44 contexts from which 292 (62.2%) archaeologically significant small finds were recovered. For the most part low levels of small finds were made from most contexts except for context (15081), from which 155 were recovered. This represents 53.8% of all small finds. In addition to these, this context also yielded 2,500 Roman pottery sherds.

Context (15081) was sited to the north-east of the trench and covered an area noted for extensive cobbling within which a large hearth [15121] was recorded. This area extended from the east baulk of the trench across to the Temenos wall in the west and north of the suite of two rooms. Significant amongst this group of finds were the high number of personal items which might indicate that these were possible votive objects perhaps from a pit that had been extensively disturbed by ploughing.

The finds from context (15081) included 62 Copper-alloy 3rd/4th century Roman coins, 11 bone/antler hair pins, two animal bone gaming counters, 11 Copper-alloy objects (including two finger rings, two specillum and two pins), seven Shale bracelets, 26 vessel fragments, 11 stone objects (flint tool, ore, coal) and 25 iron objects.

Shale bracelets.
The shale bracelets are particularly noteworthy as a significant imported exotic good to the Marcham site. In total 32 shale bracelets were recorded across the site, with trench 15 yielding the highest number. The following table lists the recovery of shale bracelets by trench.

Trench 2. 4 shale bracelets
Trench 9. 6 shale bracelets.
Trench 12. 1 shale bracelet.
Trench 14. 2 shale bracelets.
Trench 15. 12 shale bracelets.
Trench 18. 1 shale bracelet.
Trench 24. 2 shale bracelets.
Trench 29. 1 shale bracelet.
Trench 34. 1 shale bracelet.
Trench 40. 2 shale bracelets.

Trenches 2, 9, 14, 15 and 24 each have a possible religious dimension. Trenches 14 and 15 are associated with the temple precinct and the temenos wall enclosure, whereas trench 24 showed an extensive cobbled area within which a possible shrine was located. In trench 9 the majority of shale bracelets were found within the stone structure situated to the south of the arena, which may have been a possible Nemesium within which an altar and/or shrine may have been placed.

Pottery analysis
In total 6,923 pottery sherds were recovered from trench 15 made up of 6,774 (97.9%) Roman pottery and 148 (2.1%) (49.6%) Prehistoric pottery.

However, 4543 (65.6%) Roman pottery sherds and 54 (0.8%) Prehistoric pottery sherds 66.4% of the total find came from topsoil and sub soil contexts. The following table highlights the contexts within the topsoil and sub soil levels that yielded pottery sherds.

Context	Soil level	Prehistoric	Roman
15000	Topsoil	-	622
15001	Sub soil	-	85
15002	Sub soil	11	84
15008	Sub soil	-	72
15065	Sub soil	-	11
15081	Sub soil	13	2,490
15082	Sub soil	-	76
15083	Sub soil	5	394
15084	Sub soil	-	266
15173	Sub soil	6	142
15189	Sub soil		7
15197	Sub soil	18	281
15198	Sub soil		8

As previously pointed out context (15081) is of note yielding a total of 2,503 (36.15%) sherds of pottery. This context covered an area situated in the north-east quadrant of the trench and

spread over an extensive area of cobbling (15005), possibly the remains of a pedestrian precinct.

Of the archaeologically significant contexts 2,326 sherds of pottery were recovered (33.59%). This group was made up of 2,231 (32.22%) Roman pottery sherds and 94 (1.35%) prehistoric pottery sherds. Within this group the following table highlights contexts that yielded 30 or more pottery sherds.

Context	Prehistoric	Roman
15063	-	295
15117	3	37
15118	12	39
15141	3	42
15142	1	38
15148	6	46
15149	-	35
15161	-	53
15182	1	38
15186	-	60
15190	34	13
15195	5	185
15203.	5	260
15212	-	32
15227	-	59

Prehistoric pottery was largely made up of Prehistoric Course Ware (PCW) 134 (90.54%) and Prehistoric Fine Ware (PFW) 14 (9.4%).

Roman Pottery types were as follows.
RCWR 2433. RCWO 713. RFWR 590. Decorated 535. OXFRS 468. RFWW 420. RWW 406. OXFWS 420. GR 168. SM 151. RFWOX 132. ROBSH 107. OTHER 95. RFWDS 74. BWW 54.

Spot dates for the following contexts.
(15013) Mid to late 4th century.
(15022) Late 2nd century to the 3rd century.
(15063) Mid to late 4th century.
(15083) 4th century.
(15084) 4th century.
(15173) 4th century.
(15203) Mid to late 4th century