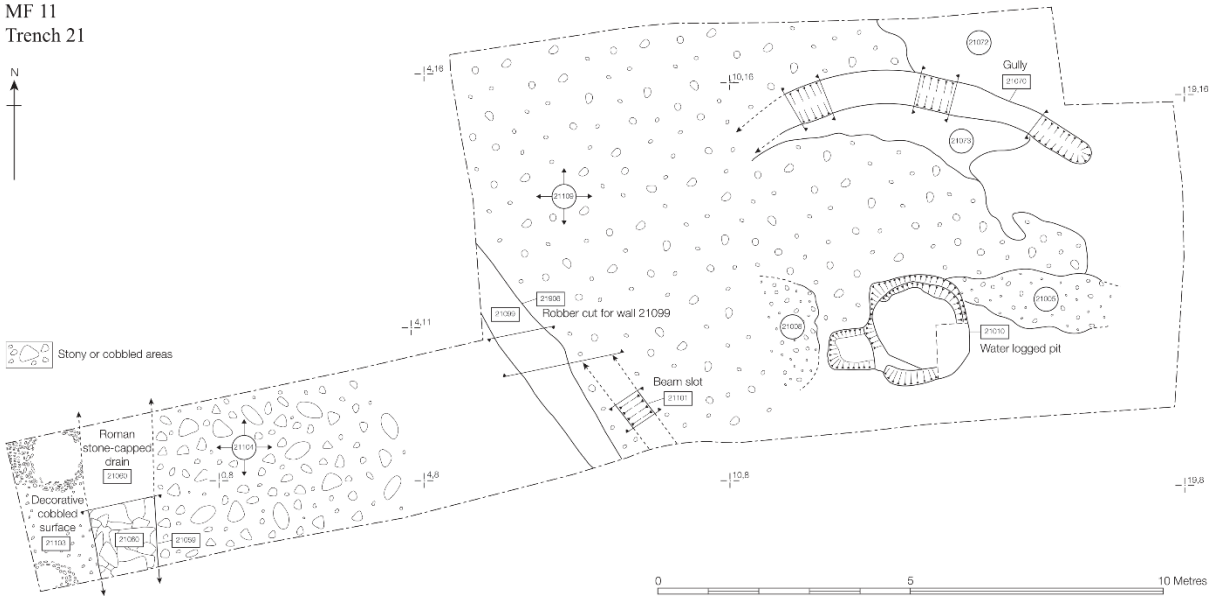
Trench MF21 narrative

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Introduction

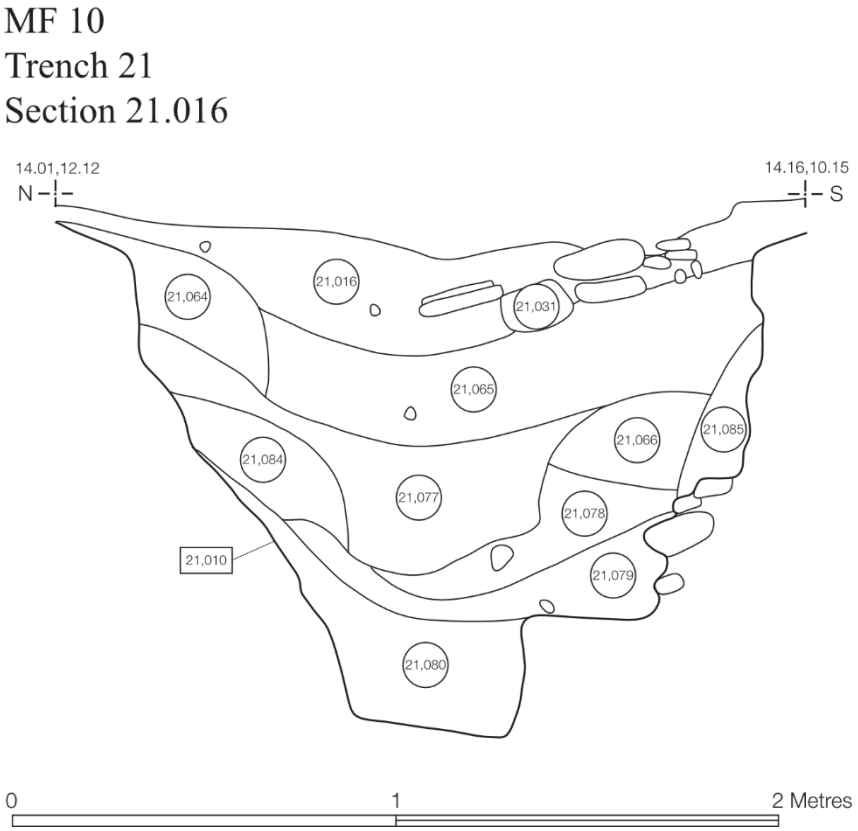
Trench 21 was situated at the southern end of the site in the middle of a paleochannel running south from the arena towards the River Ock. It was initially opened in 2004 to explore the paleochannel deposits and trace the route of the Roman stone drain as it headed southwards from the circular arena. Excavations soon revealed a number of cobbled surfaces close to a large water-logged pit which yielded various finds including a leather shoe and an almost complete Roman pot in the upper fills. Flooding in subsequent years resulted in excavation continuing only sporadically for some seasons but in 2010 the trench area was extended to the east and north to further explore the water-logged pit and see if there were any related structures. A ring ditch/gully [21,070] was found in the northern extension and in 2011 the trench was extended westwards by 5m to see if this ring ditch continued. The final dimensions of this irregular shaped trench was length 22.5m, width *c.* 3m at the west end and *c.* 8.5m at the east end.



Trench MF21

The main feature in this trench was the large water-logged pit [21,010] which due to the anaerobic conditions being below the water table, preserved several rare organic finds including a leather shoe, a wicker basket, a small wooden writing tablet, as well as two large 'stabbed' Roman pots and other ritually deposited objects. All of these dated to the late Roman period (see the separate report on this website). The pit was probably widened and remodelled at some point and a large weathering cone suggests it was left open for some time. There appears to be a deliberately constructed access route to the watery pit via three large horizontal slabs laid into the side of the pit on the west edge in the manner of a staircase. It would allow safe access to the lower levels of the pit, deep under water. The upper faces of the slabs seem to be worn from use. Similar steps were recorded in a water-

logged pit at Wavendon, Bucks. (Hingley 2006, 234). To the north of this feature ran a 7m portion of a shallow curvilinear ditch or gully [21,070], originally thought to be associated with a roundhouse. However, the presence of only Roman pottery in this feature and its extreme shallowness may suggest it was some sort of Roman boundary ditch instead. The later trench extension to the east found another potential section of this gully [21087] with a 1m gap between. Underneath a floor surface (21,0670) extending across the northern part of the trench, was an earlier worn cobbled surface (21,109). Interestingly the waterlogged pit cut through this cobbled surface and the eastern edge of these cobbles showed signs of possible wheel ruts running in SE/NW direction. Perhaps this represents a path or road down to the river Ock? Clearly there had been various phases of activity in the area around the waterlogged pit.



Pit [21010]

Further west and just to the east of robbed wall [21099] was a limestone/gravel spread [21090] which may be demolition material. Cutting into this and running in a SE/NW direction was linear cut [21,098], which was the foundation cut for a heavily robbed stone wall [21,099]. On the east side of this wall was a beam slot [21,101] running parallel with the wall cut. At the far west of the trench the main Roman stone-capped drain [21,060] in drain cut [21,059] passed through the trench in a N/S direction. The drain cut though a decorative patch of pitched cobbles [21,103], showing that this decorative cobbled area preceded the cutting of the drain. This cobbled surface seemed to outline two blank circular areas, suggesting they originally defined some kind of features, perhaps statues, altars, or garden features? The theory that this area may have some sort of ornamental garden in the Roman

period is supported by the finding of 15 box leaves and some ornamental flowers in an environmental sample from fill (21,078) in the water-logged pit (pers. comm. Erica Rowan). There may have been ornamental box hedges somewhere in this area, though exactly where and when is impossible to say. Three finds rich layers spreading across a large area to the west of the gully [21070], namely (21,001), (21,002) and (21,089), represent colluvial wash, resulting either from hillslope wash and/or flooding. There is a lot of re-deposited material, particularly late Roman pottery, in these deposits suggesting a lot of Roman activity in this part of the site. Unlike many other finds-rich parts of the temple site, the Roman activity does not appear to have been focused on a building, as there is no strong evidence for any specific building in this trench. It is possible that the robbed wall cut [21093] and adjacent beam slot [21101] may represent a lost building or they may be boundary features of some kind. What is interesting is that areas of cobbled surfaces in both the east and west parts of the trench, the wheel ruts that cut through the eastern edge of cobbling, and the evidence for a possible ornamental garden with hedges and statues/altars precedes what we would regard as the main features in this area. Namely the stone-lined drain and the water-logged pit. So, before these two ritual features were created, this area was already the focus of some kind of Roman activity. Whether this was ritual activity or domestic or a mixture of both is difficult to say, but perhaps it was linked to the close proximity of the River Ock in this part of the site.

In terms of finds, the total amount of pottery sherds found in this trench was 9,509. The majority of this was Roman, some 99%, with only 23 prehistoric sherds in the assemblage. This implies there was very little prehistoric activity in this area. The pottery is largely a mix of coarse and fine ware oxidised and reduced sherds with only small amounts of high status wares like Samian and imported continental wares. A sample of contexts was looked at for their pottery dating and in the majority of these the pottery was late Roman in date, much being mid to late 4th century. There were also however some contexts like layer (21067) and (21073) that produced large quantities of earlier pottery of the 2nd to 3rd centuries. Layer (21067) was a dark pottery-rich layer just to the north of the waterlogged pit, so this may suggest that votive activity in this area started before the deposition of 4th century material into the pit itself. Two other contexts with earlier Roman pottery, namely (21067) representing the only fill of the gully feature in the north of the trench, and (21073) which was a layer in the area of the gully, also imply activity (possibly votive activity) was already taking place in this area in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. However, as all the dating material in the water-logged pit iself is of 4th century date and the majority of the Roman pottery observed from the trench in general is late Roman, it does seem that the most active phase of Roman ctivity in this area was in the late Roman period. The presence of late Roman fabrics like ‘grog-tempered’ and ‘Roman shell-tempered ware’ perhaps supports this. There are some layers which are particularly finds rich and pot rich. This includes layers (21,001) with 369 pottery sherds, (21,002) with 1,058 pottery sherds and (21,089) with 523 pottery sherds. These are all below topsoil and have been identified as colluvial wash, resulting from hill-wash or flooding events. This is understandable in an area so close to the river and being downslope from the rest of the site. So this large assemblage of finds may represent successive flood-related dumps of material rather than *in-situ* deposition in this area. Layer (21,100) with 197 sherds as well as lots of oyster shell, animal bone and charcoal, is just

below colluvial wash (21,002) and may imply feasting activity in the area. The other pot rich contexts in this trench are (21,073) which is a layer near the gully feature and preceding it, containing 119 Roman sherds; layer (21,094) with 653 Roman sherds, a dark layer with lots of animal bone and pot in the area of water-logged pit [21,010] and cut by it. Cobbled floor surface (21,109) with a massive 4,747 sherds, was also cut by water-logged pit [21,010] and seems to represent a cobbled path or road (complete with wheel-ruts) potentially leading to the river. These two finds rich layers cut by the water-logged pit suggests there was feasting and ritual activity in the area of the pit, before the pit was even created.

Only 64 small finds were discovered in this trench, the vast majority being of Roman date apart from a few stray flints. The majority of these small finds were iron or copper alloy objects, including 32 Roman coins. Because this area clearly flooded regularly, many of the coins are eroded and unrecognisable. Out of the recognisable coins, one is 1st century (from topsoil), one is 2nd century, and 12 are 3rd and 4th century. Topsoil and subsoil deposits produced 19 small finds and the finds rich colluvial wash layer (21,002) produced 25 small finds. Ten of the small finds, including the most spectacular finds from the whole trench, were discovered in the water-logged pit [21,010]. So, the remaining layers and fills only produced a very small number of small finds. The water-logged pit [21,010] produced a very interesting assemblage of organic objects as well as two complete late Roman greyware pots, deliberate stabbed, and part of a cattle skull with the muzzle and horns deliberately removed. The organic finds included a complete willow basket with its base cleanly sliced off and signs of deliberate cuts, a worn but complete late Roman leather shoe, and a small cut-down wooden writing tablet. All of the finds demonstrate that the items deposited in this pit were largely deliberately defaced or 'ritually killed' or were at the end of their functional lives, before being deposited. Thus, marking them as offerings to the gods or the ancestors. Several fragments of worked wood including large fragments of wooden stake and a perforated piece that looks semi-anthropomorphic were also recovered from the pit. These might also have had a ritual function. Finally, three human bone fragments were found in this trench, all in layers and none associated with any kind of cut, These were an adult femur head in (21,002); a juvenile skull fragment in (21067); and an infant skull fragment in (21,081).

Reference

Hingley, R. 2006. The deposition of iron in Britain during the Later Prehistoric and Roman Periods: Contextual Analysis and the Significance of Iron. *Britannia,* Vol. 37, 213-57.

Roman Phase

CUTS:

Waterlogged Pit [21010] was squarish in plan with rounded corners. A rectangular access slot which appears on plans was actually dug by the excavators in 2004 and was not part of the archaeology. The pit measures *c.* 2m x 2.2m with a *c.* 1.8m x 0.8m extension and with a depth of *c.* 1.4m. The profile was steep and angled on the north side and less steep on the south side and on the west side three large worn slabs are set one above the other seemingly acting as steps to access the pit, possibly to make it easier to place offerings. The pit was

probably modified over the years and widened at the top as the lower layers gradually silted up, trapping the various deposited objects within the silts. The weathering cone in the upper portion of the pit shows it was open for some time, but as all the dateable finds seem to be 4th century, it seems unlikely that it was created much before this.

There are 24 fills in all, with what appeared to be sterile slumping layers (e.g. 21085, 21084, 21064) between fills representing episodes of ritual deposition. There were finds both at the top and at the bottom of the pit, which must have been water-logged right up to the top, otherwise the organic finds would not have survived. It is probable that episodes of ritual deposition, with gaps in between, were concentrated over a number of short periods of time, possibly over a period as little as 50 years rather than hundreds of years. The fact that all of the dateable objects from top to bottom seem to be 4th century in date would support this theory. Below are all the fills in roughly stratigraphic order from top to bottom:

Fill (21,011) is the top fill of pit [21,010], overlain by subsoil or washed colluvium layer (21,002) and overlying pit fill (21,015). This grey clay layer contained one 4th century Roman coin and 12 Roman sherds of 4th century date.

Fill (21,012) is a collection of irregular limestone rubble, loosely positioned within fill (21,011). Probably just a dump of material in the same phase as (21,011). No dating material was found in this fill.

Fill (21,015) is a small sandy gey lens on the west edge of the pit, situated below (21,011) and above (21,038). No dating material was found in this fill.

Fill (21,016) is a grey silty clay layer stretching across much of the pit and measuring up to *c*. 0.3m deep and containing much fibrous and organic material. It lies below fill (21,015) and above lens (21,038) and larger fill (21,065). This fill may abut or lie above a thin layer at the side of the pit, which is (21,025). This fill contained only 16 sherds of 4th century Roman pottery but also the Roman leather shoe (SF 4839) and a complete late Roman greyware pot (SF 4840), placed upside done and deliberately and cleanly stabbed with something like a narrow-tipped spear. This was very similar to the complete pot found in basal layer (21,080) but smaller. A small fragment of leather was found inside the pot. One eroded Roman coin was found, but too unrecognisable to date. Various animal bone fragments were also recovered, including a cattle hoof, pig cranium fragment, and various sheep/goat bones.

Fill (21,025) seems to be a thin grey clay lining evidenced in the upper part of the pit, possibly below or abutting the level of fill (21,016). No dating evidence was found in this lining fill.

Fill (21,031) is another dump of large stones within a pit fill, possibly fill (21,016), but the contexts are confusing, and it may be the same stones as (210,012) further up the pit. Therefore, relationships are unclear. It either lies above fill (21,015) or above (21,065).

Fill (21,038) is a small grey sandy lens on the north side of the pit just below (or possibly part of) (21,016). There was no dating material in this fill.

Fill (21,037)/(21,039) is a thin layer of dark silty soil on the north edge of the pit with a lighter sandy lens (21,039) within it. These lie below fills (21,016) and (21,038) and above fill (21,026). There were no pottery finds or other dateable material.

Fill (21,026) is described as a compact gravel and silt mix lying below pit edge fill (21,037) and above narrow pit edge fill (21,040) and (21,041). However, this segment was excavated in 2006 and the relationship to the fills in the main half section drawn in 2010 is very unclear. It seems likely that it may be the same as or at least the same phase as fill (21078), which would put it below and earlier than fills (21,077) and (21,066). All that can be said is that it is situated in the mid to lower section of the pit. No pottery was found in this fill but fragments of wood including SF 6293, a long thin wooden stake, were included. See fill (21,078) below.There was no pottery in this fill.

Fill (21,064) was on the northern edge of the pit, a dark grey to black sandy clay deposit with no finds. It lies below (21,016) and above fill (21,077). It abuts both fills (21016) and fill (21,065) below that, and in terms of phasing must predate both. It has been described as a sterile slumping layer between phases of ritual deposition.

Fill (21,085) is a yellowish grey clay deposit on the southern edge of the pit abutted by fills (21,065) and (21,066). This is another sterile slumping deposit. similar to (21,064) on the opposite side of the pit. It must precede these abutting fills and it is situated directly above (21,086), the stone slabs or -steps' set into this southern edge. There is no dateable material in this fill.

Fill (21,065) is a dark silty clay fill with some limestone inclusions, *c.* 0.25m thick and running across the centre of the pit and abutted by sterile layers (21,064) and (21,085) respectively on the south and north sides of the pit. It is overlain by fill (21,016) and overlies fill (21,077) and (21,066). This fill contained no pottery or animal bone.

Fill (21,084) is a whiteish-brown clay deposit on the northern edge of the pit, similar to the other sterile deposits on the pit's edges (e.g. (21,064) and (21,085)). It precedes and is abutted by fill (21,077) and lies over fills (21,078) and (21,079). Another sterile slumping deposit with no finds.

Fill (21,040) is a thin lens of grey clay on the north edge of the pit and overlies thin lens (21,041). The stratigraphy is unclear but it may be overlain by (21,026) which itself might equate/be the same as fill (21,078) identified in the fuller excavation of this pit years after this context was identified. It may also be overlain by fill ((21,084) but the relationships are unclear. There were no finds in this fill.

Fill (21,041) is a thin black organic lens on the north edge of the pit and directly below fill (21,040). As with the latter fill, the stratigraphic relationships are unclear.

Fill (21,077) is a thick grey to black sandy clay deposit in the middle of the pit, with a maximum depth of *c.* 0.35m. It is overlain by fill (21,065) and overlies and is later than fills (21,066) and (21,078). Only three Roman sherds were found in this fill, but there were some unusual organic finds. The most important was an almost complete Roman willow basket (SF

6408) with its base cleanly cut off and deliberate stab marks in its side. Some fragmentary willow straps suggests it originally had a lid. Some thicker longer pieces of willow (SF 6413) were also found in nearby fill (21,078) and these may represent remains of a handle from the basket. Like other votive finds in this pit, this basket was made unfit for human use, so it was clearly only for the use of the gods. A piece of wooden stake was also found in this fill.

Fill (21,066) is a grey-black sandy clay deposit on the south side of the pit and is overlain by fills (21,065) and (21,077). It overlies and is later than fills (21,085) and (21, 078). Only six Roman sherds were found in this fill but there were a few sheep and pig bones.

Stone 'steps' (21,086) consisted of at least three large flat limestone slabs that seem to have been set into the south-west edge of the pit, about halfway down. They are arranged in a staggered pattern in the manner of a staircase and have been interpreted as a way of descending into the pit in order to place votive material. The stones vary in size but the biggest is *c.* 0.3m x 0.3m and all are worn on the upper surface. The stone steps do not occur in any section and the records are unclear as to what was above or below them but they were probably on the same level as fills (21,077) and (21,066) in the section facing them. Set halfway down the pit, these 'steps' would have silted up and been more submerged in the later phases of this pit's use.

Fill (21,078) [and (21,026)] is a yellowish grey sandy clay fill lying below fills (21,066) and (21,077) and above fill (21,079). Its maximum depth is *c*. 0.28m. Only nine late Roman sherds were found in this deposit, but there were some very interesting animal bone and organic finds. These included small cut down wooden writing tablet SF 6348; some thick sections of willow SF 6413 which may represent the handle of the willow basket found in the fill above; a fragment of perforated twisted branch or root that looks very anthropomorphic SF 6354; a semi-complete cattle skull with the horns and muzzle deliberately removed SF 6796; and two long thin pieces of wood, possibly stakes (SF 6293 and 4870); a songbird skull; and a flint core. These were clearly votive finds placed in the pit rather than ordinary rubbish. Fill (21,026) is described above and was recorded four years before the full sectioning of the pit and was positioned in the lower part of the pit but above the narrow 'foot'. Records are unclear but it may be the same context as (21,078).

Fill (21,079) [and (21,027] is a grey-brown sandy clay fill, ranging from 0.10 to 0.25m in depth. It is overlain by fills (21,078) and (21,084) and lies above primary fill (21, 080). Apart from four sherds of Roman pottery, some animal bone including calf, cattle and pig bones, and a preserved wood fragment, there was very little in this fill. Fill (21,027) maybe part of the same fill, but the stratigraphic records are not clear. This fill contained two small fragments of wood (possibly worked?), small finds SF4871 and 4873.

Fill (21,080)/(21,030) is the primary fill and fills the narrow 'step' at the bottom of the feature. This narrow step was originally thought to be an earlier narrow shaft like cut [2035] which was cut by the main pit [21,010], but the interpretation changed in later years and it is now seen as part of the same cut and its fill (21,030) is one and the same as (21,080). Fill

(21,080) is a yellowish-brown sandy clay *c.* 0.30m deep and overlain by (21,079). Seven late Roman sherds of 4th century date were found in this fill, plus a complete Roman greyware pot SF 6384, very similar to the one found in upper fill (21,016), but larger. It was also deliberately pierced by a narrow sharp implement, another example of an object being killed or sacrificed as part of the ritual of offerings to a god.

Cut [21020] was found just to the west of the waterlogged pit but only one edge was identified so the nature of this feature is unclear. Said to have cut down as far as the natural and to be filled by (21021) and (21022) but the site paperwork is inconsistent and no finds were discovered in these 'fills'. Could be the edge of a foundation trench for 'pathway' or cobbled area (21008)?

Cut [21035] was seen in the earlier 2006 excavations to be the bottom shaft-like part of waterlogged pit [21010] and interpreted then as an earlier feature cut by the much larger pit. It was only seen in quarter section however. This definition was ignored by excavators in later seasons, so the fill (21030) of this 'earlier cut' was not equated with fill (21,080) which post-2006 was said to be the fill of this narrow 'shaft-like' bottom of the pit [21010] and not part of an earlier cut. It certainly remains a possibility however, that the bottom narrow 'foot' of the larger pit may be the lowest part of an earlier and separate narrow shaft e.g. [21035], reaching below the water level and functioning as a well. The only fill (21030) of this potential earlier cut contained no pottery but there was part of a curved ceramic tile and some large chunks of limestone. If it is the same as fill (21080), identified and excavated in later seasons where the whole feature was opened up, this fill contained a complete late Roman pot SF 6384. This pot is the same date and was ritually pierced in the same way as another similar late Roman pot found in the upper fill of pit [21010], so we do not have a wide range of Roman dates from the lowest fill to the upper fill. So if lower fill (21030)/(21080) is part of an 'earlier' shaft-like precursor to the waterlogged pit e.g. cut [2035] we might have expected finds from at least a century earlier or more, not finds of exactly the same date as found in the upper, namely 4th century, A.D. It is possible this late Roman pot was added later into this fill after a larger pit was opened above it. But the definition of this lowest part of the pit as an earlier feature must remain uncertain.

Cut for stone drain [21059] and Drain structure [21060] is a wide slot running in a NNE/SSW direction across the width of the western end of the trench. It is part of the southern section of the main stone-lined drain that runs across the site from the centre of the arena down towards the River Ock. The stone drain is built into a rectangular cut [21059], slightly wider at the top. In this area the main drain cut width at the top is *c.* 1.1m with a depth of *c*. 0.7m from the top of the drain capping stones to the base. It has straight sides and a flat bottom. The cut is lined on each side, on the base, and on the top with limestone slabs [21060], leaving a narrow drain channel of *c.* 0.45m width between the stone lining (see description of drain structure under **[21060]** below). The top is covered with a patchwork of large flat limestone slabs to cover the drain fully. There are three soft silty fills in the area inside the stone drain lining, in order from the top (21062), overlying (21106/21111), then basal fill (21112). None of these fills contained any finds except one eroded Roman coin SF

2874 in fill (21111), which may be 4th century in date. The drain cuts decorative limestone cobbling (21103) and possibly also (21061) and is overlain by (21048).

Curvilinear gully/ditch [21070]/[21087] is a long curving ditch or gully to the north of the waterlogged pit and terminating at the east in a rounded end. The width of the feature is 0.5m – 0.8m and the section uncovered is *c*. 7m in length. The depth of the ditch is extremely shallow, ranging from *c.* 5cm to 10cm. Overlain by (21002) which produced 4th century Roman pottery. This ditch is probably part of a circular gully and the rounded end may represent an entrance through it. This feature was originally seen as the drip gully from an Iron Age roundhouse but it is very shallow for such a feature. Alternatively, it might be a boundary ditch around the ritual waterlogged pit. As single fill (21071) contained no prehistoric finds but 35 sherds of Roman pottery dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries A..D, it seems most likely it is a Roman feature, perhaps a boundary of some sort?

Ditch [21075] = same as beam slot [21101].

Natural water course [21082]is described as a cut possibly created by water erosion, situated between the waterlogged pit and gully [21070], *c.* 0.6m across. Filled by (21083), which contained no finds except a flint scraper. Not enough evidence that this is anything but a natural feature.

Curved gully [21087] = same as gully 21070 is a short section of a ditch or gully on the same trajectory and to the east of gully [21070]. Its width at *c.* 0.7m is similar to gully [21070] and it seems to be part of the same feature. There is a gap of *c.* 1.3m between the terminal end of [21070] and the position of this eastern section of the gully, but no curved terminal end appears in the short stretch that was excavated. Single fill (21088) contained no pottery.

Robber cut [21098]/[21068] and wall [21099] is situated very close to beam slot [21101] and on exactly the same SE/NW alignment. It lies between the water-logged pit to the east and the stone-lined drain to the west. The cut measures *c*. 0.7m across has vertical sides and a flat base and is *c*. 9cm deep. It cuts layer (21108) and is filled by wall [21099] and sandy fills (21056) and (21057). The stones of [21099] range from *c.* 1cm to *c.* 14cm in length and represent the remains of a heavily robbed wall.

Beam-slot [21101]/[21075] is a linear cut with parallel edges and flat base on exactly the same SE /NW alignment as nearby robber or wall cut [21098]. It is situated in the central part of the trench about halfway between the waterlogged pit and the Roman stone drain. It is overlain by subsoil (21002) which contained 4th century pottery and cuts layer (21110). The width is *c.* 0.5m and the depth is *c.* 0.2m deep. Single fill (21102) contained no finds. Probably a beam slot which must have had some relationship to wall [21099] in [21098] given its close proximity and the matching alignment. Did one replace the other in terms of some kind of structure?

Posthole [21113] is a small posthole with a flat base, measuring *c*. 0.16m with a depth of *c*. 10cm. It cuts through cobbled surface (21109) and is overlain by (21096). It is situated in the

northern central part of the site just SW of gully [21070]. Single fill (21114) contained no finds.

STRUCTURES:

Drain structure [21060] is part of the major stone-lined drain that runs NNE/SSW from the centre of the arena down to the River Ock and passes through the west end of Trench 36. The foundation cut for this structure is [21059], see above for details. The stone sides of the drain are made up of about 7-8 flat limestone slabs each one about 0.25 in width and about 8cm in depth. The top stones sealing the drain were usually very large and stretched across the whole width of the drain, as they do in the section revealed in Trench 21. Here the stones measure *c.* 0.9m to 1m across with a depth of *c*. 12cm. There are some places where the capping stones are less wide and extra infill stones have been added. None of the limestone slabs appear to be mortared together.

MAIN LAYERS:

Layer (21002)/(21089) is a finds-rich colluvial wash layer, probably resulting from successive flooding and hill-slope wash. This colluvial layer spread across a large area to the west of gully [21070]. It contained *c*. 1,500 Roman sherds of 4th century date.

Layer (21005) fine gravelled surface abutting east edge of waterlogged pit and covering an area about 3m from the east edge of the waterlogged pit running eastwards. Overlain by (21004) and overlies (21006). Like the other cobbled or gravelled surfaces near the waterlogged pit, this may be linked to ritual activities in the area of the pit, allowing easier access to it. There is no dating material from this layer.

Layer (21008) cobbled area abutting west edge of waterlogged pit, made up of limestone cobbles, seemingly laid flat, gravel, and some flint. This layer is overlaid by the late Roman context (21002), overlies (21022), and abuts (21009) and (21021). There are some stones set on their edge, which may represent kerb stones, implying this may be a path or track. As it approached the west side of the pit where the pit extension containing what is interpreted as steps down into the pit is situated, this cobbled surface may be a formal path for people to approach the pit and leave ritual deposits. There is no dating material from this layer.

Layer (21009) is an extensive gravelled area made up of angular limestone. It extended from water-logged pit [21010] to the north as far as the curved gully and also to the east and west for *c.* 6-7m. Overlain by (21002) and overlies (21019) and (21012). It may represent the need for a clean and drained service area for activities relating to the waterlogged pit. There is no dating material from this layer.

Layer (21067) is a dark pottery rich layer immediately to the north of waterlogged pit [21010], extending just to the south of gully [21070]. It is overlain by subsoil layer (21002) and overlies (21081) and (21082). It contained a very large amount of 2nd and 3rd century Roman pottery (some 949 sherds), which may suggest intense activity connected to the ritual waterlogged pit in this area.

Layer (21073) is a pottery-rich sandy clay layer near the end of gully [21070] and is cut by it. It may be the same as layer (21072), and is overlain by the late Roman layer (21002). It contained 119 sherds of Roman pottery dated to *c.* 2nd century AD.

Layer (21090) is a compacted layer of limestone and grit of varying sizes in the area immediately east of robbed wall [21099]. It is overlain by subsoil (21001). It appears to be a dump of material rather than a feature and may represent demolition material. It contained only four Roman sherds.

Layer (21094) is a finds-rich dark layer within the area defined by gully [21070] and to the north of the water-logged pit. The water-logged pit [21010] cuts this layer. It is probably the same context as layer (21067), but this is not certain, particularly as (21067) produced 2nd to 3rd century pottery rather than the mostly 4th century pottery found in (21094). This context is overlain by (21089) and overlies layer (21096). It contained 653 sherds of mostly the 4th century and quantities of animal bone.

Decorative cobbles [21103] are situated at the western end of the trench and abutting the stone-lined drain [21060] on its western side. This is probably only part of a much larger area of cobbles (most of which lies outside our trench). The cobbled surface is cut by the cut for the stone-line drain [21060] and overlain by the late Roman layer (21002). The cobbled surface is made up of flat angular limestone pieces, ranging from 4cm x 1cm to 150cm x 90cm, pitched at a 40 degree angle. The cobbles are grouped into two circular patterns which leave a blank circular space in the middle. Between these two circular areas is more stone cobbling. As the cobbled surface was cut by the great drain which ran from the centre of the arena to the River Ock, it represents activity in this area which preceded the main construction phase of the arena and stone drain. There was no dating material from this context.

Layer (21109) extensive cobbled area covering most of the trench to the east of wall [21099] and surrounding the water-logged pit. Made up of well compacted small limestone pieces ranging from *c.* 5cm x 5cm - 10cm x 15cm. Overlain by (21081) and overlies (21108). Two parallel depressions were noted apparently running through this area in a SE/NW direction and these have been interpreted as wheel ruts. The water-logged pit was cut through this cobbled surface. This surface contained a mix of finds including flint and animal bone plus six prehistoric sherds and 4,747 Roman sherds, which is a very large assemblage. Clearly there was a lot of Roman activity in this area before the waterlogged pit was dug and in use. The wheel ruts perhaps suggests this was connected to a route down to the River Ock and perhaps a known crossing potin in this section of the river as it was in Roman times.