# Trench MF25 narrative

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## Introduction

Trench 25 was opened at the beginning of the 2005 season and positioned adjacent to the eastern edge of Trench 18. The focus of this trench was to investigate the cobbled area to the east of Trench 18 which was first discovered in 2004, and to establish the function of the cobbling (e.g. was it part of a street, courtyard or path), and its relationship to the workshops west of it in Trench 18.

Continuing east from Trench 18 the cobbles (25008) were well laid for three metres and then disturbed for another seven metres (25012). It has been noted that all the trenches in this area (e.g., Trenches 15, 18 and 32) showed that the archaeology had been much disturbed through ploughing with average soil depth over bedrock being little more than 40cm. There is also strong evidence of trench robbing for building materials, either during or post the Roman occupation. The cobbling seems to be aligned with the gate entrance through the *temenos* wall, discovered late in the season and could therefore, be a 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 to south across Trench 25. The path consisted of several layers of different materials laid on top of each other which seems to represent two phases, 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 junction at this point 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 in Trench 2 just to the east.

The overall dimensions of Trench 25 were 2m wide and approximately 30.5m in length. The north/south trench bisected the path approximately ten metres along its length eastward. This north/south trench was set two metres north and two metres south of the main trench and overall measured 6.6m long by 1m in width.

Compared to other areas of the site where cobbling was laid there was a low level of pottery finds recovered. It has been noted that there appears to be an association of high levels of pottery with cobbling perhaps being used co-mingled with other materials to establish a base upon which to lay the cobbles. Context (25002) represented the earliest layer over the cobbling and across the disturbed area and yielded 273 sherds of Roman pottery. Beneath this, contexts (25005) (25006) and (25007) were contexts that represent the surface of the path particularly in the disturbed area (25012) and around the area of the north/south path junction. These contexts were seen as gravelly mortar and cobbling. A total of 190 sherds of pottery were recovered. Context (25003) was a relatively small section of the trench just beyond the cobbling and within the disturbed area (25012), this context consisted of an accumulation of stones, mortar and a considerable amount of CBM. It is through this section that the north/south path was positioned. Within this context a further 55 sherds of pottery were recovered. Context (25004) ran from the eastern junction of the two paths to its eastern

boundary, a distance of about 17 metres. Within this area 640 sherds of Roman pottery and 108 sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered.

**Important Layers**

**(25002)** Layer. This layer was composed of soft mid-brown loam that contained pottery sherds, animal bone, flint (natural), stone, glass, metal, CBM and charcoal. This layer may have been a dump or later spread of material as it overlay both the cobbling in the west of the trench (25006) and (25008) and the disturbed area (25012) directly beyond it.

**(25003)** Layer. This layer was an accumulation of soil with a mixture of stones and mortar and made up the central part of the junction with the north/south path. Also included in this accumulation were pottery sherds, animal bone, flint (natural), plaster, charcoal and a considerable amount of CBM. This layer does typify a base layer upon which cobbles were laid.

**(25004)** Layer. This layer was an extensive area that stretched from about 2m on the east side of the path junction for 18m to the end of the trench. This was a featureless section of the trench that comprised of compacted yellow/brown loam within which pieces of pottery, animal bone and flint (natural) together a number of Copper-alloy small finds.

**(25005)** Layer. A layer of mortar in the central section of the trench close to the path junction.

**(25006)** Layer. A small area of cobbling and formally part of the main cobbling in (25008).

**(25007)** layer. This layer consisted of stone and CBM and was probably part of the foundation layer from which the cobbles had been removed.

**(25008)** Layer. An extensive area of cobbling in the immediate 3m of the western end of the trench and may have been part of the cobbled areas associated with trenches 15 and 18. The cobbling in this area was primarily to the north side of the trench that consisted of a flat strongly cobbled surface that appears to have been a second layer of cobbling. To the south of this cobbling there were two areas (25010) and (25011) which were probably areas where the cobbles had been removed.

**(25009)** Layer. This was an uneven layer of scattered stone forming a break through the cobbling and exposing CBM. This was probably plough damage.

**(25010)** Layer. Two small areas close to Trench 18 that sit side by side without any signs of **(25011)** cobbling and probably areas that have been robbed out. These areas consisted of sandy loam, gravel and small pieces of CBM.

(**25012)** Layer. This layer formed the overburden of the path directly beyond the cobbled area and leading up to the path junction. This layer was made up of scattered light coloured stone with oyster shell, pieces of tile and animal bone forming a rough surface.

**(25013)** Layer. This context was a small area between (25012) and the path junction. This part of the path surface was constructed of mortar with a foundation (25014) of stone cobbling and brown patches of soil with small stones.

**(25014)** Layer. This context formed a widespread foundation base for the path and was noted as the base for (25013) and in the northern section of the north/ south path. This was a compacted layer of stone with mortar.

**(25015)** and (**25016)** two foundation layers that formed the base of the path in the northern extension and central part of the main path beneath (25008). These layers consisted of lightly compacted soil together with pieces of pottery, animal bone, metal and CBM.

(**25017)** Layer. A foundation layer in the east half of the northern path extension. Consisted of large cobbles, pottery, stone, metal, CBM and animal bone. The animal bone included the jaw, ribs and shoulder bones of a domestic animal (cow). Contexts (25023) and (25024) and (25026) were also foundation layers in the northern extension.

**(25019)** Layer. An area of cobbling/tightly packed surface 35mm thick, located in the northern path extension. This area included cobbling in (25026).

**(25020)** Layer. Patches of yellow mortar, some compacted up to 30mm thick. Thought to be possible repairs to the cobbling in (25019).

**(25022)** Layer. Formed a foundation layer in the southern path extension. Consisting of mid-brown soil together with limestone, CBM, flint, metal and charcoal.

**(25025) (25028) (25029)** and **(25030)** were various foundation layers in the southern path extension.

**Pottery Analysis**

In total there were 2,131 pieces of pottery recovered from Trench 25 made up of 124 sherds of Iron Age pottery and 2,007 sherds of Romano-British pottery. The Iron Age pottery was entirely type PCW (Iron Age Coarse Ware) the bulk of which, 108 sherds, came from context (25004). This context was the area of the trench that ran from the junction of the path to the eastern extremity of the trench. This surface may represent the original Iron Age occupation level. This context also yielded the largest amount of Roman pottery sherds at 640. Three other contexts yielded large amounts of Roman pottery, (25000) topsoil with 440 sherds, (25002) with 273 sherds and (25022) with 110 sherds. The range of Roman pottery types was broad with most pottery types represented. Nine pottery types made up the bulk of the sample and are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| RFWR. | Roman Fine Ware Reduced (grey to black) | 612 sherds. | 30.4 % |
| RCWR. | Roman Coarse Ware Reduced (grey to black) | 520 sherds. | 25.9 % |
| RFWOX. | Roman Fine Ware Oxidised (orange/red) | 240 sherds. | 11.9 % |
| RCWO. | Roman Coarse Ware Reduced (orange/red) | 122 sherds. | 6.0 % |
| SM. | Samian Ware | 97 sherds. | 4.8 % |
| OXFRS. | Oxford Red Slipware. | 84 Sherds. | 4.1 % |
| RFWW. | Roman Fine Ware White | 72 sherds. | 3.5 % |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Decorated | 60 sherds. | 2.9 % |
| RWW. Roman White Ware | 48 sherds. | 2.3 % |

These pottery types account for 92.4% (1,855 sherds) of the pottery recovered.

**Small Finds Analysis**

In total 139 small finds were recovered and significant among these were 81 3rd to 4th century Copper-alloy Roman coins and 12 items of jewellery, which together make up 66.9% of the finds

**The Roman Coins**

Thirty (37 %) of the Roman coins came from context (25000) topsoil and in most circumstances such coins would not be regarded as being archaeologically significant. However, much of this area had been very disturbed through ploughing with soil depths over bedrock little more than 40cm. It is probably only the few finds at the lowest levels that are still in their place of deposition. Therefore these 30 coins will remain as part of the sample.

Within the overall group of coins, it was possible to identify 13 minims, eight minimissimus and eight radiates. The range of contexts from which the majority of coins were found is as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Context (25000) topsoil. | 30 coins | 37.0% |
| Context (25002) Cobbled area at west end of trench. | 26 coins | 32.0% |
| Context (25003) Central area of mixed rubble. | 1 coins | 1.2% |
| Context (25004) Eastern section of the trench. | 12 coins | 14.7% |
| Context (25005) At path junction, centre of trench. | 1 coin. | 1.2% |
| Context (25007) Cobbled area at west end of trench. | 8 coins | 9.8% |
| Context (25008) Cobbled area at west end of trench. | 1 coin. | 1.2% |
| Context (25009) Cobbled area at west end of trench. | 2 coins. | 2.4% |
| Context (25015) Foundation layer in northern extension. | 1 coin. | 1.2% |

**Jewellery Items**

The group of jewellery items was made up of one Copper-alloy bracelet, two Copper-alloy bracelet fragments, one Copper-alloy earring, two Copper-ally brooches, two Copper-alloy hairpins, one bone or antler hair pin, one Copper-alloy necklace link and a glass bead.

**Other Small Finds**

The remaining miscellaneous group of small finds was made up of a range of odd pieces of Copper-alloy and iron fragments together with 12 glass vessel fragments and five bone pins.